

## **Division Trauma and Forgiveness**

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### **Abstract**

The primary goal of this thesis is to critically review studies that try to understand the historical experience of the division of the Korean peninsula and its development through trauma theory. It is judged that their study has a challenging aspect to the already known trauma research, but also has limitations and problems at the same time.

Efforts to understand division in Korea have been developed in various academic fields. Therefore, this study, first of all, focuses on clarifying the differences between division trauma research and past division studies. To that end, this study will review the necessity of research on division trauma, which trauma researchers say, and identify the characteristics of understanding division violence they have, and also examine the characteristics of division trauma. In addition, this study will critically analyze the direction of healing from division trauma, which they prospect. The prospects for integrated narratives

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that overcome the narratives of division and the prospects for the restoration of national commonality will be the main targets of criticism. Finally, while comparing and crossing the understanding of forgiveness in the Bible and the prospects for healing by division trauma researchers, I will look for a direction in which division trauma research can be further deepened and expanded. Although it does not present a sufficient theological analysis, this study is part of a longer one to find the interface between Korea's Minjung theology or peace theology and the study of division trauma.

• Key Words

Division System, Division Structure, Division Violence, Division Trauma, Fundamental Trauma, Korean War, Forgiveness, Healing

## I. Introduction

The primary goal of this article is to critically review studies that try to understand the historical experience of division and its development through trauma theory. By emphasizing the unique characteristics of the division of the Korean peninsula, they see that the experience of division violence is special and that the trauma, called division trauma, also has unique characteristics. Therefore, their division trauma research has aspects that challenge the already known trauma theory, but at the same time, it also has limitations and problems that appear while emphasizing its uniqueness. So, this article is an effort to critically analyze the limitations of these division trauma researchers and, at the same time, examine the possibility of further expanding their efforts.

Studies on the trauma related to the division are also important for Korea's Minjung theology and peace theology. According to the understanding of many Korean social scientists, philosophers, and historians, reading the historical experience of division through trauma theory is an extension of the already ongoing reading of the Korean people's "Han." It is also an effort to further develop the reading of "Han(恨)". As is already known, "Han(恨)" is a key concept in Minjung theology's understanding of Minjung. According to Minjung theologians, "Han(恨)" is the emotion or feeling that Minjung, who has experienced oppression and frustration through specific historical events, has accumulated within themselves. On the one hand, it is an emotional state dominated by a sense of defeat, futility, and resignation, but on the other hand, it

is also an emotion that contains the tenacity of the people as the socially underprivileged. Minjung Theology has tried to understand the historical wound inflicted on Minjung with the concept of “Han(恨)” and has read the possibility of Minjung Liberation from Minjung’s psychology and emotions formed by the historical harm. Therefore, the idea of reading the scars left on Koreans by the violence of division with the trauma theory has a deep connection with the history of Minjung theology reading and interpreting Minjung’s Han(恨). Research on the trauma of division is also an effort to read more concretely the trauma inflicted on the people by division and at the same time to understand how the trauma exerts an influence on the people’s life and struggle full of frustration and hope. It is in line with the interpretive tradition of Minjung theology. And reading the life of people through trauma would mean reading the people as a traumatic subject. This can be a possibility to show a more concrete understanding of Minjung as the subject of theology and biblical interpretation. So it can be a new chance for theological and biblical interpretation. In addition, it can be a new possibility of peace theology in that it allows us to see concepts such as justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation from the perspective of healing trauma. Therefore, this study is also an effort to explore new possibilities of Minjung theology and peace theology from the study of division trauma.

## II. Why is Trauma Research Necessary?

There can be very different ways of understanding the

historical experience of division. However, recent studies on the historical experience of division require a more direct focus on the victims of division violence and a more detailed analysis of the victims' violent trauma experiences. The place that provided the direct impetus for the creation of this article is a small Minjung theology gathering under the name of "Peace Theology Forum." Here, too, the trauma of division is a very important topic of interest.

However, interest in trauma and trauma theory outside of theology is by no means new. Efforts to understand the pain of the victims of the 5.18 Democratization Movement in Gwangju in 1980 and those who were exposed posthumously from the perspective of trauma theory have been going on for a long time. In 2012, the Gwangju Trauma Center was established, and this year a National Trauma Center dealing with victims of widespread state violence was established in the same city. Recently, even in the area of state compensation, the way to reflect the mental damage caused by state violence is gradually opening. In particular, the sinking of the ferry Sewol in April 2014, which killed 304 people, sparked public interest in trauma. Voluntary research on the trauma suffered by victims, survivors, and their families has occurred extensively, and various practices to heal them have attracted the attention of society.

If so, what reading of the historical experience of division as a traumatic experience can add to the research and understanding of the division experience we have been doing so far? More simply, why is trauma research necessary to understand the experience of division?

When looking back on the history of the Korean Peninsula,

which is said to be the history of the people's Han (恨), and the modern history of Korea, which has experienced colonialism, war, division, and dictatorship, it is natural to be interested in traumatic wounds and their healing. Our people have been constantly forced to make choices in modern history. The choice of pro-Japanese under colonialism, the selection of ideology in the Cold War post-liberation situation, and the choice between South and North Korea in the context of the Korean War were forced decisions that had nothing to do with the intention or will of the Korean people.<sup>1</sup> It was a life-threatening choice that could not even predict the consequences of it. It was a choice to use violence against someone for no apparent reason to do so. The process of that forced choice was also the process of becoming citizens and people in South and North Korea. Survival itself was an experience of violence and loss, and the step of belonging to a community itself was a process of forming a traumatic subject. Therefore, understanding this trauma and finding a way to heal it is crucial for reconciliation and unification.

However, social scientists who talk about division trauma emphasize the difference between their own and other ways of understanding the violent experience of division. First, they emphasize that reconciliation and unity among people are more important than any other unity. According to Lee Byung-soo, "Overcoming the division must be the unification of people, not just the unification of the land. ... If there is a premise that must be preceded to resolve hostility and communication between South and North Korea, it is that first of all, both

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1 Kim Jong Kun, "A Study on the Substance of Division Trauma through Oral Survey", *Tong-il-immunhag(The Journal of the Humanities for Unification)* 51(Jun 2011): 38.

sides must try to care for the wounds of the people created by the violence of division. ... Healing the trauma of division is the most important task for inter-Korean communication and integration.”<sup>2</sup> According to trauma researchers, even if political or physical unification is achieved first if the emotional foundation of communication and integration through trauma healing is not created, the division is more likely to regress in a more problematic way rather than being resolved.<sup>3</sup>

Second, those who study the division trauma claim that trauma research is necessary to directly face the reality of people’s suffering beyond ideological barriers. For them, trauma theory is something that “not only exposes the illusion of ideology that ignores or blocks the voice of human suffering but also has the power to go beyond ideological perspectives and face the reality of human pain.”<sup>4</sup> They understand that the history of trauma theory is one of the struggle against all the social barriers that prevent people from seeing the suffering of their victims. After all, the most important obstacle is the dominant ideology of society. The dominant ideology plays a key role in not only continuing but also exacerbating the victim’s trauma. Therefore, interest in the healing of trauma is by no means only concerned with the subjective or psychological realm. It also includes efforts to expose the fictitiousness of the society’s dominant ideology.<sup>5</sup>

Third, they say that we need to pay attention to the division

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2 Lee Byung Soo, “Nature and Ethics inherent in the Trauma of Division,” *Epoch and Philosophy* 22(2011):154.

3 Kim Sungmin, “Toward Integration Narrative beyond Division Narrative; Humanities for Unification Searching for the Way of Healing the Trauma of Division,” in *The Institute of Humanities for Unification, The Way of Healing the Trauma of Division* (Seoul: Kyungjin Publishing Company: 2015), 4-5.

4 Lee Byung-soo, “Type and Direction of Healing in the Trauma of Division,” *The Journal of the Humanities for Unification* 52(2011): 49-50.

5 Ibid., 5.

trauma to understand the reality of division more holistically. The pain of division is not limited to those who directly suffered from violence and separated families. It permeates deeply into all areas of our life, including politics, economy, and culture. Not only is it located deep in the psychology of each individual, but it is also located in the background of collective emotions.<sup>6</sup> However, the pain and wounds of division and the division trauma are not allowed to express themselves. The “normality discourse”<sup>7</sup> of society, which constantly insists that it was an exceptional situation at that time in the past, and our society is normal now, and the public discourse of a divided country that defines the other party as the enemy, are blocking the expression of the division trauma. Research on the division trauma is to make it possible to reveal the trauma that cannot be seen, heard, or verbalized like this and to find a way to heal it. According to sociologists who are interested in the division trauma, Baek Nak-cheong’s “division system,” Lee Jong-seok’s “division structure,” and Park Myung-lim’s “division order” represent structural understandings of division. However, the structural understandings fail to show the psychological and emotional dimensions of division internalized into individual and collective lives. Therefore, division trauma researchers emphasize that interest in trauma is absolutely necessary to understand the divided reality more holistically.<sup>8</sup>

Fourth, they believe that interest in the division trauma is

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6 Lee Byung Soo, “Nature and Ethics inherent in the Trauma of Division,” *Epoch and Philosophy* 22(2011): 159-160.

7 Kim Jong-gon, “The Healing of Division-Violence Trauma and Politics,” *The Journal of the Humanities for Unification* 74(2018): 58-61.

8 Lee Byung-soo, “Type and Direction of Healing in the Trauma of Division,” *The Journal of the Humanities for Unification*, 52(2011): 49.



essential in order to understand and overcome the persistent nature of division violence. Not only is the division trauma not verbalized or healed, but it has been repeatedly reproduced in the process of creating a divided country and its people in both the South and the North. However, the division system or structure cannot last long only through coercive means. The reason why the division system is maintained and the division violence can be continuously reproduced is because there was the voluntary consent of the people of the two Koreas who internalized the division narrative created by the division system. Trauma researchers believe that research on division trauma is absolutely necessary in order to properly understand the psychological structure of this voluntary consent and to dismantle and heal it.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, they argue that the study of division trauma can open a new way for solidarity between the victims of division violence in the South and the North by allowing them to sympathize with each other's pain.<sup>10</sup>

### III. Characteristics of Division Trauma

#### 1. Characteristics of Division Violence

The understanding of division trauma has an inseparable relationship with the understanding of division violence. Therefore, to understand the trauma that researchers on division trauma speak of, we must first look at their understanding

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9 Ibid.

10 Kim Jong-kun, Lee Beom-ung, Lee Jae-seung, Han Soon-min, Kim Jong-gon, Park Jae-in, Kim Gwi-ok, Jeon Yeong-ui, *Empathy and solidarity of pain & healing of division trauma* (Seoul: Hangugmunhwasa, 2016). See the introduction and Part I of this book.

of division violence. From my observation, division trauma researchers' understanding of division violence seems to have two characteristics. First, they inherit the understanding of it held by those who developed theories about division system, division structure, or division order in the past. The second important feature of their understanding of division violence is their insistence on revealing the very unique and self-sustaining mechanism of violence production created within the unique division structure of the Korean Peninsula. They acknowledge that the studies of previous generations have well explained the multidimensional nature of division violence and, furthermore, have given a certain explanation to the phenomenon that violence is inherited over time. However, they criticize previous researchers for failing to fully explain the unique and self-sustaining production structure of division violence. With this critical stance, research on division trauma is making great efforts to identify the unique mechanism of division violence.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding the complex and continuous nature of division violence, there have already been studies by Kim Dong-chun and Kim Byeong-ro. According to Kim Dong-chun, "Unlike the division of other countries, the division of the Korean Peninsula can be seen as a routinized and institutionalized state of civil war. A state at war inevitably has a character distinct from that of an ordinary state in terms of its functions, goals, and resource mobilization. Above all, the most important thing will be the mobilization of the people to win the war and the control over members. So while externally, the two Koreas have coexisted

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11 Kim Jong-gon, "The Healing of Division-Violence Trauma and Politics": 43-51; Lee Byung-soo, "A 'Positive Peace' as the Realization of Peace on the Korean Peninsula", *Epoch and Philosophy* 28(March, 2017): 128-129.

through repeated hostile confrontation, competition, and intermittent dialogue, but internally, they have implemented strong policies of mobilization and control.”<sup>12</sup> This explanation by Kim Dong-chun is about the normalization and routinization of division violence in a divided country. Kim Byeong-ro also talks about division violence, which, according to him, is “a grave and unjust killing of people inflicted by the situation of division on the members of the two Koreas.”<sup>13</sup> Going one step further, he borrowed Johann Galtung’s three-dimensional diagram of violence (direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence) to explain the diverse and complex aspects of division violence.<sup>14</sup>

Division trauma researchers not only accept the abovementioned two scholars’ understanding of division violence but also acknowledge that Johann Galtung’s understanding of the three dimensions of violence is an important tool to understand division violence. However, they evaluate that the explanation of division violence based on Johann Galtung is insufficient to explain the unique mechanism of producing violence in the division of the Peninsula. Lee Byung-soo and Kim Jong-gon are representative researchers of division trauma who explore this unique mechanism of violence production. Lee Byung-soo evaluates Baek Nak-cheong’s division system theory, which views division as a system rather than a structure or order, as much more helpful in explaining

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12 Kim Dong-choon, “South Korea’s State Violence and National Division: Act of Violence against the ‘Outsiders’ in a Habitualized Civil War,” *Democratic Society and Policy Studies* 23(January 2013): 111.

13 Kim Byung-ro, Suh Bo-hyuk, *Division Violence: A Peace Studies Reflection on the Militarization of the Korean Peninsula* (Seoul: Acanet, 2016), 14.

14 Ibid., 14.

the unique mechanism of violence production.<sup>15</sup> Kim Jong-gon is also trying to explain the “self-sustaining mechanism” of division violence in more detail. According to him, the reason why division violence continues and is not resolved is not because of the brutality of the event itself. Quoting an American sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander, he argues that events themselves are not inherently traumatic and that “trauma is a socially endowed and attributed characteristic.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, he argues, “the problem lies in the way the divided nation manages the history of division and war as a collective ‘imagined traumatic memory’.”<sup>17</sup> After all, it is through this, that is, the way in which a divided country manages imaginary traumatic memories, that a unique and self-sustaining mechanism of violent production on the Korean Peninsula is created and maintained. Through this mechanism, the divided nation, on the one hand, makes it impossible to express the guilt of killing a fellow countryman. And this mechanism requires recognizing the people he or she killed as an enemy who invades and destroys his or her life, and, therefore, must be eliminated. This unique way of managing the memory of violence is the mechanism of continuous and self-sustaining production of violence. In other words, through this mechanism of self-sustaining violence production, division violence is not only not resolved but is continuously reproduced. The trauma caused by violence inflicted on an individual is not only unhealed but is in the process of constantly worsening.

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15 Lee Byung-soo, “A ‘Positive Peace’ as the Realization of Peace on the Korean Peninsula”, *Epoch and Philosophy* 28(March, 2017): 132.

16 Kim Jong-gon, “The Healing of Division-Violence Trauma and Politics”: 49.

17 Ibid., 49.

## 2. Characteristics of Division Trauma

Based on the above-mentioned understanding of division violence, trauma researchers provide various explanations for division trauma. When the term trauma is used in relation to the historical experience of the Korean Peninsula, including division and war, it seems to be used in two directions. One is the concept of “division trauma,” which is being used in this article, and the other is the concept of “historical trauma.” Lee Byung-soo, Kim Jong-kun, and others focus on the Cold War division system and use the concept of division trauma.<sup>18</sup> According to them, division trauma is the wounds inflicted on individuals by the division of the Korean Peninsula, the Korean War, and the killings, violence, and state control that followed. On the other hand, Kim Jong-gon and Eum Chan-ho broaden their horizons to modern and contemporary history. So they prefer the term “historical trauma”. According to Um Chan-ho, who discusses the potential of history to heal trauma, “Koreans have suffered several ‘historical traumas’ through modern and contemporary history, such as imperialist aggression, the Korean War, struggles for democratization under dictatorships, and dichotomous ideological disputes.”<sup>19</sup> For him, historical trauma does not only directly affect those who have suffered from violence. The historical trauma determines the dominant ideology of a divided society, thereby causing fatal harm to state, nation, and social groups. Thus, he argues that when this historical trauma does not find the right way to heal, it will become a decisive obstacle to the present and future life of not only each individual but also

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18 Kim Jong-kun, “A Study on the Substance of Division Trauma through Oral Survey”: 39.

19 Eom Chan-ho, “History and Healing: Centered on the modern history of the South Korea”: 411.

the entire community.<sup>20</sup> ‘Division trauma’ and ‘historical trauma’ are not very different in content. However, because it focuses more on the Cold War division, ‘division trauma’ seems more appropriate for the current discussion. Now, we will discuss the characteristics of division trauma suggested by these researchers.

**Fundamental Trauma:** The first characteristic of division trauma can be found in the expression “fundamental trauma”<sup>21</sup> mentioned by Lee Byung-soo. As a way to explain the fundamental nature of division trauma, Kim Seong-min and Park Young-gyun argue, “In the case of the Korean Peninsula, it had a stronger collective will, or ‘national libido,’ that was formed in its long history and could not be explained by the Western concept of nation or people.”<sup>22</sup> However, when this ‘national libido’ comes to Lee Byung-soo, it becomes a desire that the nation should become the state itself. According to him, nation=state was to be achieved according to national libido, but the Korean War violently and decisively frustrated the flow of national libido. However, the Korean War(1950-1953) violently and decisively disrupted the flow of that national libido. Therefore, the trauma formed by the violence of the Korean War is a trauma caused by the frustration of the national libido, and it is the ‘fundamental trauma’ affecting all people living in the Korean Peninsula. Lee Byung-soo writes:

The Korean War served as a ‘fundamental trauma’ for the divided subjects of the Korean Peninsula, and became a key

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20 Ibid., 412.

21 Lee Byung-soo, “Type and Direction of Healing in the Trauma of Division”: 54.

22 Kim Sungmin and Park Youngkyun, “Introductory Reflections on the Trauma of Division of the Korean peninsula,” *Epoch and Philosophy* 21(2010): 27.

basis for forming and maintaining the ruling order of both South and North Korea after the war. According to LaCapra, foundational trauma has the characteristics of a fetishistic narrative, which constitutes the origin of the identity of a specific group. The trauma of the Korean War has also been sacred and given a special meaning, so it has become a founding myth that forms the origin of the identity of the two divided nations. The process of forming a founding myth is the process of making the memory of a specific group accepted by members of society and making that memory a dominant or universal memory. In other words, it is the process by which the politics of memory works. In the process where memories of a specific group acquire universality, 'typical' memories of war are accepted and internalized by members of society, and the substance of standardized memories appears as 'official history.'<sup>23</sup>

In summary, 'fundamental trauma' comes from frustration in the process of a nation becoming a nation-state, and it is a trauma decisively formed by the Korean War. This trauma not only serves as the basis for the identity of each divided nation in the north and the south but also serves as the basis for the formation of a nation and the identity of each individual on both sides. Therefore, division trauma researchers, who insist on a qualitatively different national libido from the drivers that have formed Western nation-states, argue that the fundamental nature of division trauma cannot be properly understood by emphasizing only the generally known oppressive aspects of the

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23 Lee Byung-soo, "Nature and Ethics inherent in the Trauma of Division": 163.

nation. Within this argument, which refers to the division trauma as a fundamental trauma, it can be agreed that the trauma of the Korean War has become a founding myth that forms a divided nation in both the South and the North. However, it is not easy to agree with the idea that division trauma can be resolved through the realization of a national libido that seeks to achieve nation = state.

**Comprehensive and Collective Trauma:** Even in terms of the nature of the events and the timing of the violent experience that caused the trauma, division trauma is very diverse and very comprehensive. Focusing on the South, it covers a long period of time, over 70 years from the Jeju 4.3 Uprising in 1948 to today, when the issue of North Korean defectors is becoming an important concern. Even in terms of the nature of the case, it is so wide and diverse that it is difficult to limit its scope. Violent left-right confrontation before the war, war(1950-1953), separation, forced defection, kidnapping, guilt-by-association system in which the ideological choices of ancestors, parents, or families determine the lives of their descendants, forced migration that formed the Korean diaspora all over the world, and so on. Division violence includes all such experiences. Furthermore, the diversity of such incidents speaks of the complex nature of division violence and division trauma. This complex nature becomes more comprehensive when the division structure and order operate as a criterion or standard for judging all areas of daily life that are not directly related to division. As Kim Jong-gon puts it, “‘workers’ strikes and demands for the right to live, which are guaranteed by the constitution, the raising of questions about the country’s neoliberal biopolitics, and even the



activities of legitimate parliamentary parties, are all interpreted, (by a state within division structure,) as activities threatening national security, inciting civil war and destroying the state, and all of them are subject to state violence.”<sup>24</sup> So, in the division structure, everyday life is entangled with division violence causing division trauma. However, trauma researchers try to see this diversity and complexity as a more active possibility than an obstacle to understanding or healing trauma. It is true that experiences of various traumas become the negative basis and background on which the violent narrative of division is created and maintained on both sides. However, the diversity and complexity may be the potential to create a more integrated narrative for more fundamental healing.<sup>25</sup>

As the description of division trauma thus far amply suggests, division trauma necessarily includes individual psychological and physical trauma, but it is by no means limited to individual dimensions. The division trauma rather emphasizes the collective social psychology that is manifested by the social violence of hatred and hostility. However, it is not at all an attempt to reduce the personal to a collective experience of violence and trauma. Rather, it is the position that experiences and traumas of violence on both dimensions cannot be properly understood without considering the deep connection between the individual and the collective. Although researchers do not seem to be explaining this sufficiently, judging from their accounts of collective social psychology, the collective nature of

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24 Kim Jong-gon, “The Healing of Division-Violence Trauma and Politics”: 50.

25 Kim Jong-kun, Lee Beom-ung, Lee Jae-seung, Han Soon-min, Kim Jong-gon, Park Jae-in, Kim Gwi-ok, Jeon Yeong-ui, *Empathy and solidarity of pain & healing of division trauma* (Seoul: Hangugmunhwasa, 2016). This book is an example of efforts to intersect traumatic experiences.

the division trauma is an attempt to maintain tension with the unique aspects of individual trauma rather than dissolving it.

**Current and Daily Trauma:** As mentioned earlier, Kim Dong-chun explains that the division of the Korean Peninsula is “a state of civil war that has become routine and institutionalized,” unlike divisions in other countries. In other words, the conditions for division violence to continue from within have been systematized. So, in the divided country of Korea, the trauma of division is not only related to the past but is ongoing in the daily lives of citizens. Survivors of traumatic events in the past, including war, are experiencing aftereffects. However, under the divisional system or structure where painful memories are not allowed to be verbalized and sublimated, the aftereffects are not only ongoing but are likely to worsen. According to Kim Jong-gon’s explanation, quoting Brecht’s lines, the current state of division trauma is not a valley of darkness and bitter cold where “sounds of grief” resound. It is a forced silence in which not only the sound of lamentation but even the slightest groan is blocked. Under the violence of division, a small “moan of pain only translates into treason.”<sup>26</sup>

The trauma of division is transmitted across generations on an individual and collective level and is constantly reproduced under the division system to become present. The time of violence is not the past, but it is constantly being replayed now. The range of production of violence and trauma extends to the realm of everyday life. According to Lee Byung-soo, “The principle that it is okay for a communist to die is internalized and reproduced in today’s capitalist economic order and legal

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26 Kim Jong-gon, “The Healing of Division-Violence Trauma and Politics”: 50.

order.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, even the common people and the public’s “logic of conduct” are determined by the trauma of division. In other words, the violent narrative of division, formed and sustained by the division trauma, continues to operate within the mechanism of the public’s daily life, which is non-reflective rather than reflective and subconscious rather than conscious. The narrative of division is “a narrative in which hostility between the South and the North deepens and fixes the division structure. It does not only appear in the emotional dimension internalized collectively over a long period of time in the daily lives of North and South Koreans, that is, in the unconsciously internalized tendencies. It works even at the level of an ideology that has become a belief.”<sup>28</sup> And this narrative of division again forms a cultural structure of violence that reproduces violence and trauma.

#### IV. Path to Healing Division Trauma

So far, we have looked at the important characteristics of division trauma research conducted under the banner of unification humanities. To summarize their understanding again, the fundamental nature of division trauma was formed by the experience that the realization of nation=state was violently frustrated by the Korean War that occurred in the process of creating a division order after colonialism. Afterward, this fundamental trauma is transferred, reproduced, and

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27 Lee Byung Soo, “Nature and Ethics inherent in the Trauma of Division”: 164.

28 Ibid., 166.

strengthened across generations in the ever-perpetuated violent system, structure, or order of a divided nation. In the process, the violent and hostile narrative of division became the identity narrative of the state and its people and was internalized into all dimensions of individual and collective life, eventually becoming the narrative of everyday life. In fact, the phenomenon of internalizing the narrative of division itself is a kind of symptom caused by trauma. Trauma, which has not had a chance to be healed or resolved, rather accepts, internalizes, and normalizes the violent and exclusive narrative of division in order to hide itself. And those traumatic subjects become people who agree and conspire to maintain and strengthen the violent division system based on the narrative of division.

Based on this explanation, the healing path that the division trauma research suggests can be summarized into four. First, the ultimate goal must be to achieve a unified nation-state in which national libido can be fully realized. Trauma researchers, of course, are saying that a unified state should not be the retrospective and romantic nationalism of the past that “reaffirms and strengthens tribal identities.”<sup>29</sup> They see that a unified nation should be a new form of unity between nation and state that emerges in the process of overcoming the violence and trauma of the division system. In search of this new form of unity, the study of division trauma goes beyond political and economic approaches to achieve territorial unification and explores the problem of the mind, which is the seat of division narratives and consciousness. So, this study calls itself a humanities approach

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29 Lee Byung-soo, “Type and Direction of Healing in the Trauma of Division”: 61.; Lee Byung-soo, “Reflections on the National Commonality,” *Epoch and Philosophy* 22(September, 2011): 115.

to the unification or unification of humanities. However, the ultimate goal lies in the complete realization of nation = state.

Second, for the healing or unity of the mind, the most important specific practice that division trauma researchers think of is to crack the already internalized and routine narrative of division. They see the need to open a path toward an integrated narrative of reconciliation and healing from the gaps in the cracks. It is to overcome the memory of violence distorted by the narrative of violent division. For this process of overcoming, it is necessary to create a narrative of reconciliation and unification through which individual and collective life can be newly constructed. Therefore, division trauma researchers believe that the victims of division violence should be given opportunities to state their experiences beyond the violent and exclusionary narrative of division. Opportunities to freely state their experiences should be given continuously, not only once. The process of continuous statement is the process by which the victims verbalize their experiences and memories anew. It is a process in which victims find their way to escape from the captivity of the narrative of division and a process in which they find a way to heal themselves. According to division trauma researchers, it is a process of finding an integrated narrative for reconciliation and healing between the South and the North.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, they have collected the dictations of various and extensive victims, and it is clear that this in itself is an important achievement. And in the process of intersecting traumatic narratives, derived from the oral statements of these diverse

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30 Kim Jong-kun, "The Social Discourse Model of the Solidarity of Pain and Integrated Narrative through < Gang-do-mongyurok >," *Journal of Literary Therapy* 40(July, 2016): 195.

victims, they claim, the path to an integrated narrative can be more clearly envisaged. There are various narratives of victims of division in the South and North, and in the Korean diaspora worldwide, “various transformations of ethnic identity”<sup>31</sup> are appearing. Trauma researchers argue that by intersecting these narratives, a more integrated narrative about “ethnic commonality,”<sup>32</sup> which is the basis of territorial unification, must be found. They emphasize that a safe space is absolutely necessary to open the possibility of the emergence of a national integration narrative through the process of intersecting narratives. It should be a “safety network” or “safe zone”<sup>33</sup> that is relatively free and safe from the oppressive and violent division system or division structure. This is a space to create new stories and memories for healing and overcoming division, and a space where victims can renew their way of life. Furthermore, it is a space and community that creates a vision of a unified national community as a new form of community life.

Thirdly, the problem of healing division trauma and overcoming the division narrative is by no means a matter of individual incidents or isolated individuals. In that respect, Korean division trauma researchers point out the limitations of Western trauma theories. According to Kim Myung-hee, “trauma theory from a psychological and medical perspective misses the core point in terms of diagnosing the cause and establishing a direction for healing by ignoring that trauma is originally a

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31 Lee Byung-soo, “Type and Direction of Healing in the Trauma of Division”: 61.

32 Ibid.

33 Kim Jong-gon, “The Healing of Division-Violence Trauma and Politics”: 52-53.

socio-political process that occurs in human relationships.”<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, “it is positivist in that it understands trauma only as the psychological response of isolated individuals, and it has reductionist limitations in that it removes the social layer and process that exist between the event and the agent’s mental response.”<sup>35</sup>

Of course, division trauma researchers also acknowledge and respect the differences in trauma experiences among individuals. However, individual experiences alone cannot properly understand the division trauma that individuals are experiencing. In particular, it is not the individual who is decisive in understanding, diagnosing, and overcoming the strong continuity and dailiness of division trauma under the division system. What is important to understand its continuity and dailiness is not the difference in experiences between individuals but the “social process” that manages the different experiences of violence among individuals. This ‘social management process’ not only has a decisive influence on the process in which the experience of violence becomes a trauma but also serves as a strong background for not only sustaining but also reproducing the trauma. Lee Byung-soo says, “According to the process of socially managing and processing victims of state violence, the pain of a specific victim may or may not lead to trauma, and even if trauma occurs, the severity of the trauma depends on the social process. The degree may vary. This social process depends on the systemic and cultural

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34 Kim Myung-hee, “The Social Construction of Trauma -A Case Study of ‘Family Trauma’ in Bereaved Families during the Korean War in relation to the Complications of Rectifying the Past,” *Sahoe-wa-Yeogsa(Society and History)* 101(March 2014): 317.

35 Ibid., 318.

character of the society in question.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, it is not the violent event itself that is decisive for the formation of trauma. Most crucial to it is the social process of managing and resolving violent incidents and experiences. Therefore, division trauma researchers argue that the healing of division trauma is a matter of transforming the process, system, or order of handling individual or collective experiences of violence in our society.

Fourth, if the key task for the healing of division trauma is to transform the social process of managing the experience of violence, we should ask what determines that social process. It is the division system that enforces the social process of sustaining and reproducing the trauma of division. The system of division is a structure that has caused political and ideological violence and is now forcing the process of managing experiences of massacres and other forms of violence. Therefore, it is meaningless to speak of recovery or healing without the complete dismantling of the division system.<sup>37</sup> In the end, division trauma researchers insist that a new politics is absolutely necessary to completely dismantle the division system. What stands out is Kim Jong-gon’s proposal on Rancière’s politics of dissensus. According to him, “Politics cannot be reduced to institutional or parliamentary politics. Politics is concerned with creating the sensory conditions in which the wounded can have words to express their pain and be heard socially.”<sup>38</sup> In the words of Jacques Rancière, whom he quotes, politics is needed in which “the discord between the

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36 Lee Byung-soo, “Nature and Ethics inherent in the Trauma of Division”: 159.

37 Lee Jae-seung, “The Grammar of Reconciliation--Citizen politics is hope,” *Reading Korea through Trauma* (Seoul: Yuksabipyungsa, 2014), 172.

38 Kim Jong-gon, “The Healing of Division-Violence Trauma and Politics”: 57.



two worlds manifests itself in one single world.”<sup>39</sup> The point of this politics of disagreement is not to encourage a politics of confrontation. Rather, it refers to politics that make gaps and cracks in the world of universal senses. It is a politics that makes the unseen visible, the unheard audible, and the politics that makes what was just noise become language and narrative. It is such a politics that can verbalize the expression of pleasure or pain that has not been verbalized and read it as a request for a higher level of change. The aforementioned “safe zone” or “safe space” can be seen as a demand for space and community that can realize the politics of dissensus.

From the point of view of division trauma researchers, one of the things to be most wary of for the politics of dissensus to completely dismantle the division system is “normality discourse” or “normalization discourse.” The discourses of apology and forgiveness dominated by the state are representative examples of such normality discourses. They view the division system, which continues to exert influence on individuals, societies, and national lives, either as a temporary exceptional phenomenon or as a past. After all, these are discourses that try to prevent the experience of division violence from becoming an expression of disagreement that cracks current politics. And they are discourses that contribute to legitimizing and maintaining the division system that has been deeply and thoroughly internalized.<sup>40</sup>

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39 Ibid., 57.

40 Ibid., 58-61.

## V. The Problem of the Uniqueness of Division Trauma

While more theoretical criticism and review of division trauma studies are postponed to the next article, I will evaluate its overall framework first. Researchers are concentrating on understanding the unique characteristics of division trauma in order to find the right way to heal it. They are trying to explain the unique nature of division trauma formed in the special circumstances of the Korean Peninsula, which is different from the trauma caused by general state violence and is distinguished from the division trauma of other divided countries. A basic theoretical premise for this goal is that the social processes that post-process violent experiences are far more important than the events themselves. This procedure of post-processing determines not only whether or not it will become a trauma but also the nature of the trauma.

Therefore, great efforts are being made to explain the unique nature of the post-processing of incidents, that is, the special structure, order, or system that produces and reproduces the trauma of division. Explaining the uniqueness of social post-processing of violent experiences means, after all, to explain the division system (structure or order) from the perspective of the continuation and reproduction of division trauma. In other words, they understand the unique nature of division as a system or structure that causes and sustains division trauma. They call the system or structure “the mechanism of spontaneous self-sustaining violence production.”

However, the idea of identifying the unique nature of the division system as a social post-processing procedure of violence

experiences and a mechanism of violence production seems to limit the perspective of division trauma researchers. This is not to say that exploring the specificity of the division system or the special nature of its violence-producing mechanism is itself a problem. And I do not mean to say that efforts to identify such uniqueness or particularity necessarily limit the field of view. However, the 'uniqueness' in the study of division trauma has a limiting aspect. It is problematic for them to focus only on the division system that is developing between South and North Korea while avoiding the role and relationship of the division system as a sub-system of the global capitalist system. I do not believe that the uniqueness of the division can be revealed only when the perspective is narrowed.

The most concrete example of such a limited view is, first, the lack of effort to explain the nature of the Korean War and its violence, which most thoroughly realized the ideology of the Cold War. The idea that war or violence itself is not a problem in the formation of trauma is unacceptable. The situation of war and violence and the process of dealing with the experiences thereafter are by no means separate. Therefore, it is believed that the nature of violence inflicted on victims and the nature of trauma created afterward already have a deep connection. There is no way to explain the trauma of division without explaining the complex nature of the violence, which is imperialistic, colonialistic, and cold war at the same time. According to novelist Hyun Ki-yeong, there was a formula called "Baek-Sal-Ill-Be"<sup>41</sup> during the 4.3 massacre. The formula states that if you kill 100 civilians, you can kill one red guerrilla. According to

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41 Hyun Ki-yeong, "Iron and Flesh", in *Majimag Teuri(The Last Shepherd)*(Seoul: Changbi, 2006), 147.

historian Kim Deuk-joong, the process of massacre in Yeosu and Suncheon was a situation in which, if someone was pointed at, they could not defend themselves and were simply killed.<sup>42</sup> Another novelist, Lee Cheong-jun, in his novel *The Wall of Gossip*, testifies to the violence that forces people to make choices that cannot guarantee their life no matter what choice they make.<sup>43</sup> Without explaining how such inhumane violence was possible, we cannot explain the trauma of division or the social post-processing procedure that followed.

Second, another dangerous hypothesis created by the obsession with the uniqueness of the division trauma is the mythic goal of realizing a nation=state. Not hiding such a goal may be from a sense of duty to become humanities for unification of mind that can support territorial unification or political and economic unification. However, it seems to me that the trauma researchers' goal that the nation should become wholly a state, falls itself into the trap of the "normality discourse" they so criticize. In other words, it seems that the overcoming or healing of trauma is subordinated to the realization of the mythical goal of nation=state. Regarding this, skepticism and doubts are already emerging among researchers of division trauma. In particular, it is revealed everywhere that they cannot hide their skepticism about the role of the state. Lee Jae-seung's reading of novelist Hyeon Ki-young and Kim Jong-gon's reading of Yanbian writer Ryu Yeon-san are examples.

All of them try to read the division trauma in a different way than they have read so far. They are especially sharpening

42 Kim Deug-jung, *The Birth of the Reds: The Yeo-Soon Incident and the Formation of an Anti-Communist State* (Seoul: Seonin, 2009), 300, 295-315

43 Lee Cheong-jun, *The wall of Gossip* (Seoul: Moonji Publishing Company, 2011). 133-261.

their critical awareness of the state. For them, colonialism and division is the experience that a state or a nation can become “cannibals who prey on humans rather than a means for the good of humans.”<sup>44</sup> In view of the fact that they create social processes that maintain and reproduce traumatic states, do not the state and nation have unavoidable dangers? This is not to say that finding a way to heal the division trauma that can be effectively achieved within the scope of a nation-state is meaningless. However, as Hyun Ki-young shows, the violence of 4.3 cannot be properly understood without considering the role of the United States, and it continues even now through the greedy order of imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism.<sup>45</sup> The complete dissolution of the division system is in fact no different from saying that we must resist the barbarism and violence of the state to the end. However, the division system is not one that operates by itself. It is a system of division that operates through imperialistic and colonialistic relations. Therefore, to resist the state’s barbarism and violence to the end must be resistance to colonialism and imperialist hegemonic order, and at the same time resistance to the greedy capitalist order. If we follow Hyun Ki-young, the goal of realizing the equivalence of nation=nation should be readjusted towards the realization of a de-imperial, de-colonial, de-cold war, and de-capitalized community.

Lee Jae-seung’s reading of Hyeon Ki-young’s *Thirsty Spirits* and *Steel and Flesh* shows the limits of the nation-state much more clearly.<sup>46</sup> Kim Jong-gon is also reading *Forest of Life*

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44 Lee Jae-seung, “Shamanistic Initiatory Illness as a Metaphysical Guilt: Reading Hyun Ki-Young’s <the Thirsty Spirits>”, *Minju-Beobhag(Democratic Legal Studies)* 57(2015): 249.

45 Accessed December 16, 2022, <http://www.jejusori.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=212749>.

46 Ibid.

by Ryu Yeon-san, a Korean-Chinese writer in Yanbian, to overcome the narrow view of a nation that can be had in a divided country.<sup>47</sup> He interprets this novel as abolishing the nationalistic and nationalistic sublimity itself, which is named as 'HangmiWoncho,' which means resisting the United States and helping North Korea, 'national emancipation,' 'patriotism' and 'martyrdom.'<sup>48</sup> But I believe we need to go one step further. In Hyun Ki-young's *Steel and Flesh*, 'flesh' is life. The dream of healing the division trauma that Hyun Ki-young reads from the history of 4.3 seems to be moving in a much more transnational and more life-centered direction than in the past. Ryu Yeon-san's *Forest of Life* should also be read more deeply.

To summarize the last scene of this novel, the main character is a Korean-Chinese hunter with two younger brothers who are participating in the war as soldiers in South and North Korea, respectively. However, the impact of the war reached the land where the Korean-Chinese people lived across the Yalu River, and hunting was encouraged to provide food for the army on one side during the war. This hunter meets a tiger on his last hunt. The tiger's deadly attack on the hound the hunter cares for is getting closer and closer. He must pull the trigger to save the hound and catch the tiger. However, in the fantasy of a tired and disheartened hunter, his two younger brothers are fighting each other, with one telling him to shoot and the other not letting him shoot. He never pulls the trigger. In the end, he too, accepts the tiger's attack and meets his end.

It is not only the loftiness of the state or nation that is

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47 Kim Jong-gon, "The Subject against Divided Nationalism, 'Writer'- Based on Yu, Yon-san's 'Forest of Life'," *Eo Mun Lon chong* (Korean Language and Literature) 68(June 2016): 225

48 *Ibid.*, 123.

collapsing in that brief moment. Our beliefs about life and civilization are collapsing at the same time. The contradictions that lie in human life and civilization, in which one has to kill someone in order to live, are clearly revealed. And the hunter's death is a more fundamental question of life itself that needs to be addressed in the future. Therefore, Yuyeonsan's *Forest of Life* should be read as more than a story about war or a country. It is not only skepticism and despair about war and the state that fill the forest. It is a forest where fundamental doubts about the present life reveal its endless depth, and it is a forest full of tangled questions about a new life. From my point of view, the imaginations of the two novelists about the order of division and its violence seem to far exceed the framework of the critics' thinking. As such, their imagination of overcoming the trauma of division is far ahead of that of trauma researchers. The writers' outlook on healing the trauma of division seems to be opening the door to the entire world of life beyond the boundaries of nation or state.

## VI. Division Trauma and Forgiveness

Finally, I would like to think about the healing process of division trauma from a biblical understanding of forgiveness. This story is connected with the context in which Jesus repeatedly speaks of forgiveness and belief in forgiveness. However, the way Jesus talks about forgiveness is completely different from what we expect. According to common sense, forgiveness is the process of holding the guilty person

accountable, asking for repentance, and then forgiving him, reconciling him, and returning him to the community. However, Jesus does not hold the guilty sinner accountable; he rather blames those who made the sinner sin. Jesus' accusation against them is very harsh. He says that a person who causes others to sin would be better off drowning in the sea with a millstone. In Jesus, sinners are the victims, and those who cause them to sin are the perpetrators. Now, forgiveness is for the victim, not the perpetrator. In common sense, forgiveness is what the victim gives to the perpetrator, but it is the victims who should be forgiven as Jesus said seven times a day.

Then the story about "faith the size of a mustard seed" is connected. The faith here is the ability to cause a mulberry tree to be uprooted and planted in the sea. However, in the Gospel of Matthew, that faith the size of a grain of mustard seed becomes the ability to lift and move mountains (Mt 17:20). There is obviously some connection between the aforementioned people who make others sin and the mountain that is said to be able to be thrown into the sea. In Jesus' eyes, those who have the exclusive right to judge and atone for sins are the ones who make people sin. And they were the powerful people who were active in the background of the temple located on the very mountain Jesus pointed out. After all, in Jesus, forgiveness or belief in forgiveness frees those who are being oppressed by existing order and those on top of it.

Jesus, completely overturning the meaning and usage of the word forgiveness, meets a group of ten lepers while passing between Galilee and Samaria. Although we eventually learn, these ten lepers did not belong to the same ethnic group or



community. Apparently one of them was a Samaritan. Even if you imagine that some of the ten people were not Jews or Samaritans, or even if you imagine that all ten people came from different racial backgrounds, the message of the story would not change much. However, all ten must have suffered the shock and pain of being excluded from the community they originally belonged to, so it can be seen that despite the differences in racial and religious background, they lived as a group and shared pain and hope.

Toward Jesus passing by, they ask for mercy. And Jesus' reply to that request was that each one return to the community to which each of them belonged, and show his or her own body to the priest of that community. At this time, Jesus is speaking of priests in the plural. Perhaps it is to say that the communities and priests each of them had to go to were different. However, while they are on their way back, the disease is healed. In this story, we now expect to see what the ten people's reaction to being cured will be. Nine out of ten each return to their community, show their healed bodies to the priest, and then return to being members of the community. But one Samaritan, when he discovers that he has been healed on the way, turns around and runs to Jesus instead of going to the priest in Samaria where he lived. He prostrates himself to Jesus and expresses his gratitude, and Jesus praises him for his faith.

I think this story contains important implications regarding trauma and forgiveness, especially regarding the division trauma of the Korean Peninsula and its healing. First of all, I think this story has an aspect that exemplifies the reactions and attitudes that people who have been trapped in division trauma

will show in the healing process. And at the basis of this story, there is a hope for a more fundamental change, analogous to the dream of the complete dissolution of the division system that division trauma researchers long for. For Jesus, faith the size of a mustard seed in forgiveness is the belief that the oppressive order that keeps people sinning can be dismantled. The division system is a structure that makes people commit sins. So, for those who live with division trauma, the belief in forgiveness is the belief that the division system that sustains the division trauma can be dismantled.

However, for the nine people who returned to their communities, the process of forgiveness stopped halfway without making any fundamental changes. It would not be meaningless just that the nine lepers were healed of their illness and returned to the community they originally belonged to. It cannot be said that their trauma has completely healed and that they are completely free from the captivity of violence and trauma. Perhaps, they interpret the time they were lepers as an extremely exceptional moment, and then return to the community they originally belonged to and settle down in that community. The structure of condemnation and exclusion of the community has not changed at all. However, they no longer question the structure of condemnation and exclusion. As long as the purpose of healing is only to return to the community, its structure of condemnation and exclusion cannot be questioned. They have accepted the structure or order that banished them from the community, and their experiences of violence and trauma are still under the control of the exclusionary order.

However, the Samaritan made a different choice. He stopped

on his way to Samaria. He turned around and he runs to Jesus, not to Samaria. The process and experience of healing developed from him created a completely different belief. It was a belief beyond the justification that one should return to the community he originally belonged to. It was the belief that the order of condemnation, discrimination, and exclusion could end, and that everyone could escape from that violent order. This is the faith in forgiveness that Jesus spoke of. So Jesus could declare to the Samaritan, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well (Lk 17:19)." He must have been a person who had a double traumatic experience of being racially and religiously excluded because he was a Samaritan, and socially and culturally excluded because of his illness. And such a dual experience may have made him make a different choice, and also have a desire for a more fundamental change. In any case, what is clear is that for Jesus and the Samaritan, forgiveness is a belief in the fundamental dissolution of the discriminatory and exclusive order. And forgiveness is the act of freeing people completely from the captivity of that evil order. So forgiveness is the emergence of a new humanity living in a new order.

The forgiveness of Jesus is not to pardon the perpetrator while leaving the structure of the offense intact. The goal of forgiveness is the dismantling of the structure of harm that constantly produces the guilty or the victim. Likewise, research on division trauma also aims to fundamentally dismantle the division system as a structure of harm. Jesus' forgiveness was realized in the Samaritan leper. He is a new human living in a new order, freed from the order of discrimination and exclusion. The study of division trauma also draws a new order and a new image of

human beings freed from the captivity of the division system and the narrative of division. Such a hope is contained in the pursuit of an integrated narrative that overcomes the narrative of division.

I think our efforts to overcome division should have a more transnational and global perspective. As trauma researchers say, I believe that our pursuit of reconciliation and unification must go beyond ideology, but at the same time, in the face of climate and ecological crises, our efforts to overcome division must go beyond anthropocentrism. The understanding of division violence and division trauma should also be deepened and expanded to the ecological dimension. The dismantling of the division system should also be the pursuit of a more fundamental transformation that includes the ecological dimension. I believe that in the pursuit of this more fundamental change, the study of division trauma and the biblical vision of forgiveness must meet.

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