

Sangyil Park. *Korean Preaching, Han, and Narrative*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 179 pages, \$ 74.95.

For many Korean believers, listening to preaching is the climax of the worship service. Park reemphasizes the central role of preaching in Korean worship services. For Park, preaching is “an imaginative and poetic construal of an alternative world of meaning” (69). However, in Park’s perspective, the Korean pulpit has been a “didactic” and “dry cognitive” activity in the form of “topical” and “expository” preaching. In order to “revitalize” Korean preaching, Park proposes narrative preaching as an “alternative” preaching style for Korean believers. He employs a famous folktale, *Chunhyangjun* and *minjung* theology as dialogue partners for his own narrative preaching. He argues that Korean preaching should heal the *han* of the Korean believers, *minjung*, and transform their lives by adopting the “cathartic value” that is effectively used in *Chunhyangjun*.

In the first and second chapters, Park explains important terms like *han*, *minjung*, and *minjung* theology and articulates how storytelling functioned for the *han* of the *minjung* in the traditional Korean society. According to him, *minjung* are “those who are politically oppressed and socially marginalized throughout Korean history, and [*han*] is the feeling of an internalized anger or grudge the [*minjung*] hold inside their hearts as a result of oppression and marginalization” (1). Park observes that *minjung* theologians who were involved in the grass roots’ struggle for justice in Korea during the 1970’s tried to bring “the stories of *minjung*’s *han* and the Story of the gospel” (14) in order to give the *minjung* the vision for God’s new world. He argues that in the traditional Korean society like the *Chosun* dynasty (1392-1897), storytelling was an effective way to deal with the *han* of the oppressed. The storyteller, *Kwangdae*, like a preacher today, creatively performed a folktale by crafting the story for various audiences. The audiences often participated in the performance by laughing, weeping, and shouting with the storyteller. This participation used to bring a “cathartic experience” to them, which healed their *han*.

In the third chapter, Park introduces several theories for the development of *Chunhyangjun* and analyzes it by using an “Aristotelian understanding of plot and catharsis.” According to him, *Chunhyangjun* had grown out of a shamanic ritual performed to heal the *han* of the *minjung* during the eighteenth century. *Kwangdae* transformed the ritual into public entertainment for common people by adding various narrative devices such as plot, metaphor, and humor. Park believes that in *Chunhyangjun*, the “cathartic effect,” through a careful plot like a dramatic achievement of social justice at the end and humor, healed the *han* of the audiences. He argues that Korean preachers should gain an insight from the narrative devices of *Chunhyangjun* such as “stitching stories together,” inviting “listeners to enter the inner world of the story,” and using repetition and humor that brought catharsis and transformation to the audiences.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, Park examines the “narrative preaching” theories of Fred Craddock, Charles Rice, Eugene Lowry, and Henry Mitchell from the Korean cultural perspective. The examination helps him propose his own “Korean narrative preaching theory.” He argues that Korean narrative preaching should bring the stories of Korean believers and those of the Bible together to induce relevant message in Korean contexts. He thinks that the “cathartic effect” of preaching that can be achieved through narrative movement, imaginative language, and humor can heal the *han* of Korean Christians and change their lives.

This is a fascinating book in the sense that Park brings a story of *minjung*, *Chunhyangjun*, and homiletic theories together to propose an alternative preaching style for the “cognitive and

ideational” Korean pulpit. In this aspect, Park somewhat achieves what he suggests for Korean preaching: it should “stitch” stories of *minjung* and biblical stories together for appropriate message for Korean believers. Although many readers may agree with his argument that *han* could “represent the nation’s collective emotion” (2), some of them may find it oversimplification that Korean believers who listen to preaching are *minjung*.

This book is very helpful not only for the preachers want to use their cultural heritages for an effective preaching ministry but also for those who hope to see how current narrative preaching scholarship is moving forward. This book is also a lively voice of a Korean homiletician, which is very much needed in the field of homiletics.

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