

Kim Chi-Ha's *Han* Anthropology and Its Challenge to Catholic Thought

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The Korean anthropology of han remains an untapped resource for envisioning Roman Catholic soteriologies within a globalizing context. Han refers to the deep wounds of the violated that are imbued with energy that will cause either creation or destruction. One means by which Catholic theologians can engage han is through the writings of Korean poet Kim Chi-Ha (b. 1941). Kim's works, Groundless Rumors: The Story of a Sound, Torture Road—1974, and Chang Il-Dam, provide evocative and challenging images of han and how God works for the salvation of both sinned-against and sinner in this world. Kim's artistic rendering of han in his works challenges Catholic soteriology to attend as thoroughly to salvation for the "sinned-against" as to salvation for sinners.

Keywords: Kim Chi-Ha, *han*, sinned-against, Catholic soteriology, Minjung theology

THE Korean anthropology of *han* remains an untapped resource for envisioning and articulating Roman Catholic soteriology within a globalizing and intercultural context. Whereas many mainline Protestant theologians—particularly Suh Nam-Dong, Andrew Sung Park, and Wonhee Anne Joh—have engaged with “thick descriptions” of *han* and brought them into dialogue with Christian theology, few, if any, Roman Catholics have engaged with *han* in a similar vein. One means by which to rectify this lack of interaction with *han* is to engage with the *minjung* writings of Korean poet/playwright/political dissident Kim Chi-Ha (b. 1941) and

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his evocative images of *han* that are centered on salvation for the “sinned-against.”¹

In this article, I will offer an introduction to and a cultural outsider’s interpretation of *han* through the writings of Kim Chi-Ha, and then discuss their importance for articulating a Roman Catholic soteriology within a globalizing and intercultural context. First, I will reintroduce Kim’s life and the underlying concerns in his writings. Second, I will discuss some of the meanings associated with *han* through insights from linguistics, psychology, history, politics, and gender dynamics. Third, I will examine two images in which Kim illustrates *han*: the sound of the mutilated innocent man, Ando (“K’ung ... K’ung ...”), and Kim’s own “dark night of the soul” into *han* where he encounters God through becoming “collectively-chained flesh” with his fellow prisoners. Fourth, I will discuss Kim’s understanding and proposal of *dan* as a constructive response for resolving *han*, and then illustrate *dan* with Kim’s poem *Chang Il-Dam*. Fifth, I will discuss how Kim’s understanding of *han* and *dan* can inform Roman Catholic soteriologies through a focus on an inculturated vision of earthly, fragmentary salvation for victim and victimizer, the salvific potential within religious and cultural hybridity, and unexpected encounters with God and salvation in a community of “collectively-chained flesh” that walks the road of *han*. Finally, I will briefly show how Kim’s *han* anthropology challenges Roman Catholic soteriology to focus on the “sinned-against” and not only sinners.

I. Kim Chi-Ha: A Reintroduction

Kim Chi-Ha’s prominence within the Roman Catholic community reached its height in the 1970s.² This decade in South Korea was defined by the military dictatorship of Park Chung-Hee (1961–79), who, through his policies of economic development and authoritarian control, engaged in repressive measures against artists, intellectuals, political adversaries, and others, such as students and labor organizers. Park’s dictatorship, the

¹ The term “sinned-against” originates from the work of Raymond Fung. See his “Compassion for the Sinned-Against,” *Theology Today* 37 (July 1980): 162–69. For the purposes of this article, I am defining “salvation” as suggested by Edward Schillebeeckx, who proposes moments of fragmentary salvation that are God’s incomplete but realized works of healing, liberating, forgiving, and reconciling in *this* world that will not come to fulfillment until the eschaton. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 646–842.

² Kim’s given name is Yong-Il; he later adopted Chi-Ha as a pen name for his antiregime writings. Chi-Ha carries a twin meaning of “grass stream” and “underground,” both of which are pronounced identically, but the latter of which is Kim’s intent.

earlier regime of Syngman Rhee (1948–60), and the later rule of Chun Doo-Hwan (1979–88), after Park's assassination, provided the context for the rise of the modern *minjung* movement and its Christian theology.

Kim, along with many other writers, artists, students, and activists, was part and parcel of the modern *minjung* movement and helped to articulate its primary concerns and goals. The word *minjung* (民衆) consists of two Chinese characters, *min* meaning “people” and *jung* meaning “the masses.” David Kwang-sun Suh remarks that the term *minjung*, although essentially untranslatable, points to those who have been “politically oppressed, economically exploited and culturally alienated.”³

Park Chung-Hee imprisoned Kim in 1970 after the publication of the narrative poem *Five Bandits*, which critiqued and satirized Park's ongoing plan for economic development for South Korea. Kim converted and was baptized into Catholicism in 1971, when he discerned a revolutionary potential in Christianity for salvation of both oppressed and oppressor. During a subsequent imprisonment in 1974, Kim was sentenced to death by a military tribunal. His sentence, however, was commuted to life imprisonment because of the outcry of the international community, and in particular writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre. During this time, Kim was an outspoken Christian, political dissident, poet, internationally renowned “prisoner of conscience,” nominee for Nobel Prizes in Peace and Literature (1975), and the recipient of the Lotus Prize (1975). At the height of Kim's international fame, Catholic activist Daniel Berrigan characterized Kim as a “Catholic resister ... who so clearly embodies the healing, the heroism, the chutzpah, the lyrical and tragic, the mask of grotesquerie—and perhaps most important of all, the spinal courage, the articulated, stalking, indomitable *no* which today is the chief ingredient of that vocation. Quite a human. Quite a Christian.”⁴ Kim was released from prison in 1980 in the wake of the assassination of Park Chung-Hee.

Kim, however, understood his primary identity to be that of a poet and only secondarily as a Catholic Christian. He described himself thus: “I am a poet. And the poet is the man who stands in the midst of the miserable lives of the poor, shares their agony and suffering, and expresses it in poetry. He should give hope to the poor by finding the cause of their unhappiness and trying to remove it and by dreaming a better future and presenting

³ Volker Küster, *A Protestant Theology of Passion: Korean Minjung Theology Revisited* (Boston: Brill, 2010), xii–xiii.

⁴ Daniel Berrigan, “From a Korean Prison: A Path to Life,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 9 (April–June 1977): 16.

its fruits to them. Hence, we call the true poet the flower of the common people.”⁵

Kim no longer considers himself a Roman Catholic or a Christian. He turned his back on Roman Catholic Christianity because he began to perceive it as little more than a gateway for the cultural and economic neocolonialism of Korea by the United States and the West.⁶ His post-Cold War poetry has reflected this change in thinking, and Kim’s more recent poetry shows a Buddhist and shamanistic sensibility rather than his earlier Christian sensibility. Kim continues to write, but the majority of English translations and collections of his poetry were published before his release from prison in 1980.

II. What Is *Han*?

Currently, there is no fully adequate treatment or “thick description” of *han* in the English language. *Han* is truly untranslatable and requires an in-depth study of Korean linguistics, history, politics, gender and class dynamics, religion, artwork, poetry, and theology. A comprehensive analysis is beyond the scope of this article, yet I must provide an introduction to *han* before engaging with Kim’s work.

To begin, *han* is neither an abstract concept nor a philosophical category in the Western, Kantian, sense. *Han*, essentially untranslatable, is akin to an anthropology—shaped by culture and religion—that refers to the deep wounds carried by oppressed and violated individuals, groups, and peoples. Chang-Hee Son provides a philosophical-linguistic analysis of *han*. Son, whose work is based on the philosophy of *hanism* of Kim Sang-Yil,⁷

⁵ Kim Chi-Ha, as cited in the preface to *Heart’s Agony: Selected Poems of Chi-Ha Kim*, trans. Won-Chung Kim and James Han (Fredonia, NY: White Pine Press, 1998), 9–13, at 10.

⁶ Volker Küster, *A Protestant Theology of Passion*, 148 n. 46. Chan J. Wu argues that Kim’s more recent poetry shows a Buddhist and shamanistic sensibility. Wu argues that Kim’s writings show a “poetics of full-emptiness” and an interior turn away from politics. See Chan J. Wu, “Introduction: Cosmic Buds Burgeoning in Words; Chiha Kim’s Poetics of Full Emptiness,” in Kim and Han, *Heart’s Agony*, 15–33. Wu highlights two poems in particular: “My Home” and “A New Church.” In “My Home,” Kim longs for communion with the cosmos rather than explicitly with the God of Jesus Christ. Kim writes: “And You, the Cosmos, / Are the home / To which I shall return in the end.” In “A New Church,” Kim’s vision of church coalesces with the ecological environment and the cosmos. He concludes this poem with a vision: “My / New church / Church of grass, soil, and water, / New / Society of Jesus / Am I dreaming?” (Kim Chi-Ha, “My Home” and “A New Church,” in Kim and Han, *Heart’s Agony*, 95, 98).

⁷ The foundation for *hanism*, or a philosophy of *han* (韓) —“nonorientability”—is found within late twentieth-century Korean studies that worked with a hermeneutic of suspicion toward the works on Korean history that had been accepted as authoritative. These had

notes a difference between three separate *hans* that are written and pronounced identically in the Korean language but are based in differing and unequivocal Chinese characters. Son makes a distinction between what he calls the *han* (韓) of *han* philosophy, the *haan* (恨) of *minjung* theology, and the Southern Han (漢) people of China. Son traces the origin of *haan* (which is transliterated *han* in this article) from two characters (恨), on which the full character is based. Son argues that the first character carries the meaning of “heart” or “mind,” and the second the meaning “to remain still or calm.”⁸ Son describes the fullness of the character as connoting a tree with roots stretching very deeply into the earth. As Son writes, “*Haan* is used to describe the heart of a person or people who has/have endured or is/are enduring an affliction but the pains, wounds, and scars are not always apparent and visible because they are the kind that occur deep within the essence, core being, or heart of a person ... *haan* connotes a mind’s or a heart’s affliction and struggle with a deep emotional or spiritual pain which either poisons the entire being or even ends up nourishing the person.”⁹

Jae-Hoon Lee provides a nuanced psychological understanding of the nature of *han* (恨) through a dialogue between Korean culture and the psychological work of Carl Jung and Melanie Klein. He highlights three interconnected manifestations: *won-han*, *hu-han*, and *jeong-han*. To simplify each variant: *won-han* is based in aggression and has the energy to lash out; *hu-han* is the nihilistic woundedness that is a full collapsing in on oneself, empty, and destructive; *jeong-han* has two variations, immature and mature. Immature *jeong-han* is a resigned, depressive state that could lead to mental illness, despair, and disengagement, while mature *jeong-han* is a healing manifestation of *han* that Lee analogizes to *agape*. It is the negative

been written primarily by Japanese colonizers who saw little value in traditional Korean culture and philosophy, as well as Westerners who worked within a Sinocentric paradigm in which Korean culture was little more than a mere derivative of Chinese culture. Kim Sang-Yil and other scholars used this hermeneutic of suspicion to attempt to retrieve the deep roots of Korean culture, particularly through the culture of an earlier Dong-i people who allegedly carried the philosophy of *han* (韓). See Sang-Yil Kim, “What Is Hanism?,” in *Hanism as Korean Mind: An Interpretation of Han Philosophy*, ed. Sang Yil Kim and Young Chan Ro (Los Angeles: Eastern Academy of Human Sciences, 1984), 10–15; Sang-Yil Kim, “Hanism: Korean Concept of Ultimacy,” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 9 (March 1986): 17.

⁸ Chang-Hee Son, *Haan of Minjung Theology and the Han of Han Philosophy: In the Paradigm of Process Philosophy and Metaphysics of Relatedness* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

and destructive energy of pain and woundedness transformed into a positive and constructive energy expressed in love for self and others.¹⁰

The works of Andrew Sung Park and Wonhee Anne Joh also are of great importance for understanding *han*. Park's basic definition is that *han* is a multifaceted "abyss of pain" and a "wounded heart" that is the residue of violence unleashed on the innocent. Park describes *han* as a "black hole" and a festering wound whose energy must be channeled and resolved either to give life or to give death to one's self and others.¹¹ Wonhee Anne Joh quotes the work of Wang-Sang Han: "*Han* is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, a sense of helplessness because of overwhelming odds against one's feeling of total abandonment, a feeling of acute pain and sorrow in one's guts and bowels."¹²

Finally, *han*'s roots tap into the depths of suffering in Korean history. In crystallizing this painful history, Ham Sok-Hon has described Korea as the "Queen of Suffering." As Ham writes, "This land, this people, events big and small, its politics and religion, its art and thought—all that is Korean bespeaks suffering. It is a fact, however shameful and painful."¹³ Not only was the Korean peninsula subject to centuries of invasions and pillaging by regional powers, but also there were internal causes of *han*.

For example, during the Yi (Joseon) Dynasty (1392–1910), neo-Confucianism was adopted as the official state religion rather than Buddhism, Daoism, or shamanism. An emerging *yangban* class codified this philosophy into a governing structure that led to a heightened stratification between the rich minority and the poor majority. The contemporary roots of collective *han*, however, tap into the nineteenth- and twentieth-century invasions by the Russian, Chinese, and Japanese militaries. Of these, the Japanese were particularly brutal in their attempt to eradicate Korean language and culture. In addition, the internal violence and political oppression that was part and parcel of the various Korean military dictatorships that followed the Korean War deepened the *han* of the masses. For example, this internal strife included the inception of the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), which engaged in secret arrests and torture of artists, intellectuals, students, and suspected Communists, as well

¹⁰ Jae-Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds—Han* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 35–49.

¹¹ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 15–20.

¹² Wang-Sang Han, quoted in Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), xxi.

¹³ Ham Sok-Hon, *Queen of Suffering: A Spiritual History of Korea* (London: Friends World Committee for Consultation, 1985), 22.

as the South Korean military's violent suppression of antiregime protests, such as the Kwangju massacre (1980), in which hundreds, if not thousands, of civilians were killed.

Moreover, the suffering of women during the long history of the Korean peninsula has been severe. Particularly after the Yi Dynasty's adoption of neo-Confucianism, Korean women became fully subordinated in three obediences: to their father, to their husband, and to the eldest son. In addition to this internal structure that caused much *han* for women, there were external factors as well. For example, in the twentieth century the Japanese pressed tens of thousands of Korean women into sex slavery to be "comfort women" to Japanese soldiers. As Chung Hyun-Kyung has pointed out, the experience of Korean women became the very embodiment of *han*. She calls them the "*han* of the *han*" and the "*minjung* within the *minjung*."¹⁴ Chung has pointed out that the *han* of women is most severe and mostly overlooked. The *han* of women is so pervasive that some have argued that *han* should be applied almost exclusively to the woundedness of women.¹⁵

In short, *han* has a sociopolitical "fourfold dimension" that was formed through the unfolding of Korean history. Theologian Suh Nam-Dong describes this fourfold dimension as follows: (1) colonization and invasion by regional powers such as China, Japan, and Mongolia that threatened the very existence of the Korean nation and people; (2) the tyrannical rulers who inflicted great suffering on the Korean people; (3) neo-Confucianism's strict subordination and oppression of women, so that "the existence of women was *han* itself"; and (4) the overwhelming number of Korean peasants who were officially registered as hereditary slaves and thus treated as government property throughout Korean history.¹⁶ In addition to the observations offered above by Son, Lee, Park, and Joh, this brief historical overview fleshes out *han* and offers an entry point for engaging Kim's writings.¹⁷

¹⁴ Chung Hyun-Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 42. See also Chung Hyun-Kyung, "Han-Pu-Ri: Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," *Ecumenical Review* 40, no. 1 (1988): 27-36.

¹⁵ Yani Yoo, "Han-Laden Women: Korean 'Comfort Women' and Women in Judges 19-21," *Semeia* 78 (1997): 37-46.

¹⁶ Suh Nam-Dong, "Towards a Theology of Han," in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Committee on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 55-69, at 58.

¹⁷ One fundamental problem that I am unable to investigate in this short article is the post-colonial problem of "orientalism" when interpreting *han* and Kim Chi-Ha's work from a US, English-speaking, Anglo perspective and context. This work of intercultural hermeneutics through a semiotic understanding of culture must be outlined in a separate article. To better understand "orientalism," see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York:

III. Kim Chi-Ha's Poetic Retrieval and Articulation of *Han*

Kim once described himself as a “priest of *han*,” and he delves deeply into the breadth and depth of the *han*-ridden masses in Korea.¹⁸ *Minjung* theologian Suh Nam-Dong has argued that Kim is “the person who has done the most to develop *han* as a theme in Christian theology.”¹⁹ Generally, Kim thinks *han* is the *minjung*'s experience of oppression that also carries the energy for social transformation. Kim writes that “accumulated *han* is inherited and transmitted, boiling in the blood of the people,” and possesses “the emotional core of anti-regime action.”²⁰ Kim also emphasizes the intense negativity of *han*, for, as Joh points out, *han* is never innocent.²¹ Its deep negativity cannot be underestimated, and one of Kim's sharpest descriptions of *han* is “a people-eating monster.”²² For him, *han* is a “ghostly creature” that “appears as a concrete substance with enormous ugly and evil energy.”²³

For Kim, *han* is so prevalent within Korean history that he discerns its mark even on the landscape. He encounters the ghosts of *han* in locations of historical tragedy and importance. For example, Kim cries:

What
 Crumbles around me?
 What is that shouting
 At Hantan-ri field where the wind's beautiful white ripples

Pantheon, 1978). For the foundation of a theory of intercultural hermeneutics, see Robert J. Schreiter, “Christian Witness in a New Modernity: Trajectories in Intercultural Theology,” *Concilium* 323 (2011/1): 27–36; Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997); Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985).

¹⁸ In this article I have relied on translations of Kim's work offered by other scholars. For an introduction to the intricacies of translating Korean poetry into English verse, see David McCann, “A Personal Introduction to Korean Poetry,” *Korean Studies* 14 (1990): 119–34. See also David McCann, Introduction to *The Middle Hour: Selected Poems of Kim Chi-Ha* (Stanfordville, NY: Human Rights Publishing Group, 1980), 3–11.

¹⁹ Suh Nam-Dong, “Towards a Theology of *Han*,” 63.

²⁰ Kim Chi-Ha, quoted in Suh, “Towards a Theology of *Han*,” 64.

²¹ Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 25–27.

²² Kim Chi-Ha, quoted in Suh, “Towards a Theology of *Han*,” 64.

²³ Kim Chi-Ha, quoted in Suh, “Towards a Theology of *Han*,” 64. In Kim Chi-Ha's outline to his play, *Sacred Place*, he characterizes *han* as a “metal eating monster”; the full quote runs as follows: “*Han*, separating itself from human emotion, becomes substantial and grows into a ghostly creature. It appears as a concrete substance with enormous ugly and evil energy and rules and commands all of the prisoners. It is a hero, ghost, and a leader of a religious faction; how do I describe all this?” (ibid., 64).

Kiss the sun-warmed ground?
 What is it that crumbles
 Little by little?²⁴

Also, he reflects on the landmark of Mt. Chiri and declares:

The sight of the snow-covered mountain
 Makes my blood boil.
 Green bamboo shoots
 Inflame my heart.
 Under the bamboo trees
 Under the mountain
 Crimson blood still runs.²⁵

Although Kim encounters *han* in the landscape of the Korean peninsula, he most often characterizes it as an aspect of being human. Two clear examples of this anthropological manifestation are found in two of Kim's longer works, *Groundless Rumors: The Story of a Sound* and *Torture Road—1974*.

The Sound of Han—“K’ung ... K’ung ...”

Kim's famous poem *Groundless Rumors: The Story of a Sound*, for which he was later imprisoned, provides the first example: a haunting symbol of *han* through the sound (*K’ung ... K’ung ...*) created by the mutilated man Ando. Kim's long poem is a satirical, grotesque poem full of irony and dark humor, and as it unfolds, he describes an incessant and disturbing clanking noise (*K’ung ... K’ung*) that is making many of the wealthy and powerful residents of Seoul break out into cold sweats and tremble in fear.²⁶ Kim slowly reveals that this sound comes from the remains of a man named Ando. Ando is a decent man, hardworking, ethical, harmless, and meek. Ando continually tries and fails to make a better life, and much of his failure is due to the political, economic, and social corruption within Seoul. Kim writes that despite all of his best efforts, Ando is unable to prosper.

Tortured, chewed, battered and bit, kicked, bloodied, trampled
 into the ground;
 even the tiny bit of money he had hidden away under his clothes

²⁴ Kim Chi-Ha, “At the Field,” in Kim and Han, *Heart's Agony*, 39.

²⁵ Kim Chi-Ha, “Chiri Mountain,” in Kim and Han, *Heart's Agony*, 52.

²⁶ David McCann points out this humor and irony. See his preface to Kim Chi-Ha's “The Story of a Sound,” in *Contemporary Literature of Asia*, ed. Arthur Biddle, Gloria Bien, and Vinay Dharwadker (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 466.

for the journey back home was stripped away. He was squeezed
 flat,
 beaten shapeless as a bowl of mush,
 half dead, a walking corpse, and then what?²⁷

After much struggle and failure, the hapless, hardworking Ando finally breaks down one day. He plants both of his feet firmly on the ground and screams to the heavens, "Agh! What a dog's life this is!"²⁸ Immediately, the police arrive, arrest him, and bring him to trial for a multitude of crimes against government and society. These crimes include "Insufficient Veneration For The Fatherland,"²⁹ explained as

'The crime, your honor, of standing on the ground with his two
 feet
 and spitting out groundless rumors ...'³⁰

... [and] the crime of promoting the clarification of personal self-esteem,
 fostering in turn the development of spiritual and
 ideological self-reliance which inevitably nurtures the
 consciousness leading to anti-state riots.³¹

The charges are absurd, the trial is a farce, and Ando is found guilty and sentenced to bodily mutilation: his head, legs, penis, and testicles are cut off; his hands are bound together, and his trunk is tied with a wet, leather vest; even his throat is stuffed with insulation so that he can make no sound during a sentence of 500 years of solitary confinement. Despite all of this, Ando is determined to resist. He attempts to cry out:

Dear mother, I shall return home;
 return, even though I die.
 Though my dead body be torn
 in a thousand, ten thousand pieces,
 I shall return.
 Through this wall,

²⁷ Kim Chi-Ha, "The Story of a Sound," in *Contemporary Literature of Asia*, 466–79, at 468–69.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 471.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 472.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 471.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 472–73.

over the next,
 even as a spirit
 I shall pierce and vault
 these red brick walls.

I shall return, mother;
 even in death, I shall return.³²

But Ando is unable speak. So, he rolls what's left of himself, his trunk, against the prison walls. This creates the incessant, disturbing, clanking sound (*K'ung* ... *K'ung* ...) that is heard all throughout Seoul. This is the source of the sound that stirs up fear, loathing, and anxiety among the powerful. It is also the sound whose story causes those in the streets to talk "while a strange light flashes from their eyes."³³

Ando and the sound of *K'ung* create a haunting symbol of the *han* of the *minjung*: an incessant sound and festering wound that demands attention, troubles the consciences of the violators, and gives a strange kernel of hope for the healing of the violated. Ando has been physically, psychologically, and spiritually mutilated. Yet his resistance, his banging against the walls of prison, creates both a threat and a hope. Kim shows this double possibility in the "strange light" in the eyes of those on the street, as well as in the fear and disgust that Ando's sound stirs up in the violators. *Han's* threat is bloody revenge and violent revolution, or perhaps suicide and mental illness. These negative resolutions are variations that Jae-Hoon Lee would term *won-han*, *hu-han*, and immature *jeong-han*. *Han's* hope, however, is also found in this same situation. The "strange light [that] flashes from their eyes," the eyes of the oppressed, could lead to self-assertion and liberation, and the fear and anxiety of the oppressors could lead to repentance. These positive resolutions are a variation akin to mature *jeong-han*. Kim hopes that the *han* possessing Seoul will lead to creation and not destruction. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of the impact of Ando's sound on the residents of Seoul leaves the question hanging as to how this *han* will be resolved.³⁴

³² Ibid., 474.

³³ Ibid., 475.

³⁴ Kim characterizes Ando's reaction to his mutilation as shamanistic. Ando refers to flying like the birds and returning to his mother even in death. Chong-Sun Kim and Shelly Killen explain the presence of shamanism in many of Kim's writings: "Always the poet writes of return. 'Kung' returns the dismembered Ando to his mother; the poet goes back to where his father died. For the archaic shamanistic mind, the dead return when they have been wrongly slain; hence, the impulse to cut up their bodies. For the modern mind, the memory of the evil deed returns in the form of conscience. Lady

Kim's "Dark Night of the Soul" into Han

The second illustration is Kim's "dark night of the soul" into *han* that characterizes his long poem, *Torture Road—1974*. In *Torture Road*, the author reflects on his unjust, brutal imprisonment and the ways in which the prison cast all of its inhabitants into the darkness of *han*.³⁵ Chong-Sun Kim and Shelly Killen suggest that Kim's journey is a mystical experience, akin to a "dark night of the soul," but with one caveat: Kim's journey was not individual but part of a collective experience. They argue that "unlike mystics who have travelled the dark night of the soul in solitude, Kim Chi Ha's spiritual journey was made in the company of others who like himself chose truth rather than the lie that could save their life."³⁶

A fundamental paradox resides at the heart of this poem: Kim arrives at a long-suffering gratitude to God for walking this "torture road." Kim is imprisoned unjustly and becomes overwhelmed by the presence of death and despair. Eventually, he accepts the fact that no one, including himself, has hope for leaving this prison and returning home.

Even if you rise
see the blood on the wall,
Like an ancient scream
Chilling, chilling

Pushing hard,
even if you rise
there is still no going home

Oh, rough road, a vagabond would
never come here twice.³⁷

Macbeth cannot ever wash her hands of blood. By going back to the wrong deed and memories of cruel destruction, Kim Chi Ha releases them into the present. By remembering and consciously bearing grief, the poet lifts the shamanistic urge for vengeance into the realm of an action that frees people for renewal. Kim Chi Ha returns in order to go forward into life again" (Chong-Sun Kim and Shelly Killen, preface to *The Gold Crowned Jesus and Other Writings*, ed. Kim and Killen [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978], ix–xl, at xx).

³⁵ One of Kim's allusions to *han* in *Torture Road*: "The mind falls and falls into a bottomless hole beyond all hope, from which it never returns. Thus, nothing but futile, bloody waiting: hell." Kim Chi-Ha, *Torture Road—1974*, in Kim and Killen, *The Gold Crowned Jesus and Other Writings*, 67–84, at 77.

³⁶ Kim and Killen, preface, xxii–xxiii. They continue, "The mystery of the spirit flashes in the poet's mind as a moment of religious, artistic, and political insight."

³⁷ Kim Chi-Ha, *Torture Road—1974*, 76.

Kim and his fellow prisoners, however, encounter a seed of hope and salvation lingering in the darkness. Despite all evidence to the contrary, *han* is not fully victorious in this prison.

Mysterious torture road of candlelight, paradox of overcoming death by choosing death. This was our task: to comprehend this mysterious torture road. In the death room, where the question of death clung to us, I learned of the birth of my son. Oh, God, for the first time I understood your will.³⁸

Here, in the depths of despair and pain, God manifests to Kim in the proclamation of the birth of his son. He is surprised to discover that new life was still possible through, or despite, this hellish place. Kim discovers that he can overcome death and darkness by freely choosing to enter into them. This work, however, cannot be accomplished alone. It is a collective pilgrimage, and he refers to “we” and “us” more so than “I” when describing his religious experience.

Kim discovers that life is indeed possible through the choice of collectively embracing death and the black hole of *han*. As he continues to walk this road and enter into the mystery of his “dark night,” Kim discovers an unexpected and unlikely moment of enlightenment and grace. This moment is inspired by the words of his fellow prisoner Kim Byong-Kon. Byong-Kon receives the death sentence and replies to the authorities, “This is an honor.”³⁹ Kim Chi-Ha also has received the death sentence but finds his friend’s words troubling and nonsensical. He wonders:

Are these the words of saints? Are we saints? ... No. It is not that. What do these words mean? We at last conquered our terror of death. That is right. That is truly right. Writhing every moment and everyday in blood all over that hell, we have overcome.⁴⁰

He continues:

It was not Kyong Sok, individually, Byong Kon, individually, or I individually, who overcame. But all of us triumphed collectively. And triumphing, we elected the seal of eternally divine grace on our death. By accepting death, we overcame death. By choosing death, we collectively gained eternity.

With deep feeling, we gazed into the brilliant flame of truthful life, which began to burn inside our collectively-chained flesh. It was our historical

³⁸ Ibid., 72.

³⁹ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 76.

moment. No, it was not just something of this world. It was religious inspiration. But it was not only that. It was the height of artistic vision. No, it cannot be expressed in words. It was a glittering zenith of wholeness and of all human values and sublimities. I began to feel as if I were in touch with the mystery of the spirit.⁴¹

Kim's mystical experience leads to an insight: poetry and politics, art and social change, can be married in the union of "the power of the political imagination."⁴² He concludes his reflection on his mystical experience and enlightenment in the same way as his friend Kim Byong-Kon. He writes: "The definitive answer to this enigma has been presented to me through the torture road. An extravagant, extravagant moment. At the time, I muttered to myself, 'I thank you,' and those almost unspeakable words, 'I am honored.'"⁴³

Kim's moment of enlightenment and his subsequent gratitude for the "torture road" are difficult to understand. He clearly describes this prison as a place of darkness, terror, and despair. Yet Kim arrives at this moment in which he reenvisioned his imprisonment as an object of gratitude because of his momentary communion with "the mystery of the spirit" and his subsequent insight into the "power of the political imagination." The locus for this mystical experience is the "collectively-chained flesh" he shares with the other prisoners. Together, they find truth, hope, and a glimpse of salvation along the path of *han*. Kim and Killen shed further light on this paradox and argue, "Kim Chi Ha frequently uses the image of a fire that purifies, and like the Christian mystics he perceives the light within the darkness."⁴⁴ As a mystic, Kim is determined to resist and will not succumb to the abyss of *han* into which he has been cast and that permeates his body, mind, and soul.

In the poem's prose conclusion, Kim provides a haunting illustration of the enduring wounds of *han*. He is released and has successfully persevered through the "dark night" of *han*. Nevertheless, Kim's battle with *han* has left his body, mind, and soul scarred and broken. He envisions himself as a severed, hollowed-out finger that has been cast out of the prison. Kim has been cut off from the whole and has become a fragmented being. He writes:

I left my soul behind in prison. An empty shell left the prison. My soul is there, crying. Sobbing madly, it is calling out to my flesh ... to liberate, to be together, to be united. It is crying to meet again. . . . Let's go, to search for my soul. Let's go, go and open the prison gates and set my

⁴¹ Ibid., 76.

⁴² Ibid., 77.

⁴³ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁴ Kim and Killen, preface, xiv.

soul free. Embrace in liberation until the tears run down on my face. To unite, to be one, to be together. My flesh will fight until it meets with my soul. Smashed with beatings into fine, fine pieces blown away on the wind—until then, my flesh will fight.⁴⁵

Kim's narrates his own "dark night of the soul" and in doing so provides an image of persevering through *han*. He is cast into the pit, surrounded by and saturated with brutality and despair. Yet he encounters God's presence within the darkness through his becoming "collectively-chained flesh" with the other prisoners. Although many others have fallen victim to death and despair, and Kim laments his separation from them, he individually emerges from the pit. The "people-eating monster" and "ghostly creature" of *han* has failed to devour him.

Yet Kim remains indelibly marked, scarred, and broken from the road on which he trod. Like Ando, he is determined to resist the injustice that has been inflicted on him as well as its effects. He resolves, "My flesh will fight until it meets with my soul"; and, like Ando's sound *K'ung*, Kim's fight for wholeness represents both a hope and a threat. Kim has hope and will fight for the reunification of his body and soul, which have been violently separated by his tormentors. At the same time, Kim does not offer a vision, positive or negative, of the results or consequences of his ongoing struggle. He continues to carry *han*, and it must be unraveled and resolved. He remains silent, however, as to how this *han* will be resolved. Kim's *han* could be resolved through violent revenge and suicide or personal healing and the creation of a more just society.

IV. "Unity of God and Revolution": Kim's Philosophy of *Dan*

In *Groundless Rumors: The Story of a Sound and Torture Road—1974*, among other works, Kim acts as a priest of *han* who returns to and retrieves original deeds and memories of violence and suffering, which have created *han*, in order to bring them into the present. He intends to create space for the *han*-ridden people, living and dead, to experience justice, healing, and peace and is what Korean shamanism has termed *han-pu-ri*.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Kim Chi-Ha, *Torture Road—1974*, 87.

⁴⁶ As Chung Hyun-Kyung points out, *han-pu-ri* comes from Korean shamanism. This is a ritual means through which *han* is resolved. In Chung's analysis, there are three general movements throughout the duration and various steps of a *kut*. These are "speaking and hearing," "naming," and "changing." Chung describes the first as the shaman enabling the *han*-ridden person(s) or ghost(s) to speak. This often occurs through a dialogue with or even possession of the shaman. This allows the ghost or person to break her/his

Despite the saturation of *han* in Kim's *minjung* poetry, he also imbues his poetry with hope.⁴⁷ He hopes that good will triumph over evil, the oppressed will be liberated, and *han-pu-ri* will occur because God and revolution are intertwined. For Kim, God is immanent, the reign of God through Christ is already here, and salvation from *han* is being embraced by the *minjung*. Kim developed the phrase the "unity of God and revolution" through synthesizing the God of Catholicism and that of the Korean Tonghak (also known as Chondogyo) religion.⁴⁸ The roots of this expression can be found in the Tonghak revolutionary cry "Humanity is heaven!" as the peasants marched against the ruling class. Kim reflects: "I've been grappling with that image for ten years. At some point, I gave it a name: 'The unity of God and revolution.' I also changed the phrase 'man [*sic*] is heaven' into 'rice is heaven' and used it in my poetry. That vague idea of the 'unity of God and revolution' stayed with me as I continued my long arduous search for personal and political answers, and as I became very interested in contemporary Christian thought and activism."⁴⁹

Kim's theology of the "unity of God and revolution" takes flesh in what he calls a philosophy and praxis of *dan*. For Kim, *dan* is a remedy to *han*. It is the

silence and tell the story of her/his *han* that was never brought to light. In the second step, the shaman enables the *han*-ridden person(s) or ghost(s) to name the source that caused the unresolved *han*. In the third step, the community and hearers are emboldened to change the structures of whatever caused the *han* in the first place. Chung, "Han-Pu-Ri," 34–36.

⁴⁷ Kim and Killen observe: "The poet is a saint who calls himself a comic. In 1972, he wrote: 'I'm not a Solzhenitsyn, you know. I'm Kim Chi Ha. Not a tragic figure. A comic, like these bad teeth of mine'" (Kim and Killen, preface, xxiv).

⁴⁸ Tonghak (Eastern Learning) religion was a response to the influence of Western (especially Catholic) learning (called *sohak*) and encompassed a fusion of shamanism, Buddhism, Daoism, and perhaps some elements of Christianity. Its founder, Ch'oe Che-Son (1824–64), proclaimed enlightenment from heaven and taught that all humanity bears divinity. The third leader of the religion, Sohn Pyong-Hui, changed the name to Chondogyo (Religion of Heaven) and proclaimed the unity of God and humanity. This egalitarian vision was at odds with the hierarchy and class oppression practiced by the Yi Dynasty and attracted both peasants and disenfranchised *yangban*. Thus, this religion was the foundation for the Tonghak Rebellions (1876–77, 1888–89) against the Yi Dynasty. These rebellions led to the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) for cultural and political influence over the Korean peninsula. See Chai-Shin Yu, *Korean Thought and Culture: A New Introduction* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford, 2010), 72–75; Kyung-Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea: An Episodic Narrative* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 118–38.

⁴⁹ Kim Chi-Ha, "Declaration of Conscience," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 9 (April–June 1977): 12. As Volker Küster points out, the text of Kim's prison writing was actually penned by Kim's friend Park Young-Nae (*A Protestant Theology of Passion*, 81 n. 11).

cutting off of *han* in order to break the cycles of suffering, revenge, and unjust violence it perpetuates. *Dan* is akin to a necessary amputation of a gangrenous limb in order to save the rest of the body from infection and death. Kim thinks that this practice includes the confluence of personal asceticism, detachment from the world, and a purified reengagement with the world for the purpose of social transformation. Kim writes: "*Dan* is to overcome *han*. Personally, it is self-denial. Collectively, it is to cut the vicious circle of revenge."⁵⁰ Kim explains *dan* further this way: "[It is] to cut all adherence to the secular world in order that one may be for the revolution of the secular world. It is to sever the link which permits circulation. There is a terrible accumulation of *han* which will burn in endless hate, massacre, revenge, and destruction. Therefore we need the repeated cutting which stops the vicious circular explosion and sublimates it to a higher spiritual power."⁵¹ The God, or "higher spiritual power," that Kim suggests in a practice of *dan* is immanent, in full solidarity with the lowest within society, and truly shows that humanity is heaven.

Through a practice of *dan*, Kim shows a conviction that despite *han*'s intense negativity, it can be sublimated and channeled to foster healing, justice, and peace. *Dan* entails both a commitment to nonviolent resistance and an acceptance of the possibility of resorting to an "agonized violence of love." As Kim writes: "I reject dehumanizing violence and accept the violence that restores human dignity. It could justly be called a violence of love."⁵² No bloodthirsty revolutionary, however, Kim continues: "I welcome the violence of love, yet I am also an ally of true nonviolence. The revolution I would support would be a synthesis of true nonviolence and an agonized violence of love."⁵³ An "agonized violence of love" is part of Kim's understanding of the sociopolitical practice of cutting off the cycle of *han*. Although not ideal, it may be a pragmatic necessity in order to foster salvation, liberation, and eventual *han-pu-ri*.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Kim Chi-Ha, quoted in Suh, "Towards a Theology of *Han*," 65.

⁵¹ Kim Chi-Ha, quoted in Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of *Minjung*," in Suh, *Minjung Theology*, 155–82, at 179.

⁵² Kim Chi-Ha, "Declaration of Conscience," 10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Contemporary Christian theologians have criticized Kim's proposal of a philosophy of *dan*. For example, Wonhee Anne Joh critiques Kim from a critical feminist and postcolonial perspective and argues that even a limited, "agonized violence of love" is not a solution. Instead, Joh argues for a nonviolent praxis of *jeong* that is truly transformative and salvific. She argues that *dan* is ultimately insufficient, although sometimes necessary, and instead advocates for a praxis of *jeong*, in which relationships between victim and victimizer are transformed through nonviolent relationships that still lead to justice (Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 26–27, 91–115). Jae-Hoon Lee also offers a critique of Kim's

One of Kim's most dramatic illustrations of *han* and *dan* comes through the invocation of Christian narrative and is found in the notes for the poem *Chang Il-Dam*. Kim's notes show that Chang Il-Dam is a *han*-filled person through personal lineage and sociopolitical circumstance.⁵⁵ He is a convicted criminal who reforms, begins to redistribute wealth, and also becomes a Christ-like figure who kisses the feet of prostitutes and associates with lepers. Chang overcomes his *han* through a religious experience of enlightenment that is a "complete conformity with the *han* of abyss." This refers to his experience of becoming one with those who are cursed and expelled by society, such as robbers, murderers, defrauders, etc.⁵⁶ This conformity with *han* occurs while Chang encounters a prostitute in labor with a child. Suh Nam-Dong observes that Chang "arrives at the deep realization [that] the truth of new life (God) comes into the filthy cesspools of humanity."⁵⁷

Consequently, Chang begins to preach liberation to the people. He gathers disciples and retreats with them into the mountains to teach them the practice of *dan*. Later, Chang and his disciples march to Seoul in order to proclaim the liberation of the *minjung* from their *han*. Chang is betrayed by one of his disciples, brought to trial before the rulers of Seoul, and beheaded.⁵⁸

After three days, Chang rises from the dead, and then the story takes a strange turn. Chang cuts off the head of his betrayer, places the betrayer's head on his own body, and places his own head on the betrayer's body.

philosophy of *dan*. For Lee, a continuous practice of psychological *dan* cannot lead to health and well-being. Although conflict and confrontation are necessary, Lee argues that these must be measured and limited so as not to exacerbate the wounds of *han* and unintentionally lead to more violence. Lee thinks peace and balance within the psyche is the ultimate goal, and *dan* cannot achieve it. In addition, Lee thinks that *dan* is an overly masculinized understanding of love based on an overly masculinized God of conflict. In Lee's opinion, this hypermasculinity that disregards femininity cannot lead to true healing (Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds—Han*, 155–58).

⁵⁵ The text of the poem itself, *Chang Il-Dam*, has been lost. It was confiscated by the Park dictatorship when Kim was arrested in 1974. He never attempted to reproduce the poem but has published references and notes. There are conflicting accounts of the character of Chang and of the plot, and I have attempted to synthesize some of the commonalities among them. The sources on which I rely include Suh Nam-Dong's essays "Missio Dei and Two Stories in Confluence," in *Asian Contextual Theology for the Third Millennium: A Theology of Minjung in Fourth-Eye Formation*, ed. Paul S. Chung, Kim Kyoung-Jae, and Veli-Matti Karkkainen (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 51–67; "Towards a Theology of Han"; and "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung." In addition, I use Kim's "Declaration of Conscience."

⁵⁶ Suh, "Missio Dei and Two Stories in Confluence," 65.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Suh, "Towards a Theology of Han," 65–68; Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," 177–80.

Kim's resurrection image of Chang shows one possibility of *han* being resolved through *dan*.⁵⁹ It is a strange image of a reconciliation based on Jesus Christ's resurrection. Oppressor and oppressed are irrevocably fused together in a new, albeit grotesque, creation. As Kim writes, "It is an expression of Chang's conflicting thought that this is revenge but at the same time also the salvation of vicious men."⁶⁰ Or, as Suh observes, "the head speaking justice and truth is bonded to the body carrying injustice and falsehood."⁶¹

Chang's life shows *dan* through his attempt to cut off the vicious cycle of *han* through nonviolent resistance and proclamation against evil. His resurrection embodies *dan* through an "agonized violence of love" that is meant to overcome sin and evil. In order to begin a process of *han-pu-ri*, Chang literally cuts off the head and becomes one flesh with a man who bears and disseminates *han*.

Chang's resurrection embodies an "agonized violence of love" as a result of the fusion of victim and victimizer into new creations. The limited, agonized violence and cutting of *dan*, for Kim, is necessary in order for these new, reconciled persons to arise. They are a product of *dan*, have been fully separated from the cycle of *han*, and by their very embodied existence transform its negative energy into positive energy that can foster healing, liberation, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Suh observes: "This peculiar combination of the body of the evil man and the head of truth indicates that Kim Chi-Ha thought that even the most wicked villain will be saved in the end. Through the carrier that is the body of the evil man, Chang Il-Dam's good news of liberation, like a wild and stormy wind, goes everywhere."⁶²

V. Three Contributions of Kim Chi-Ha's *Han* Anthropology

Kim Chi-Ha's *han* anthropology offers three contributions to Catholic thought: a unique vision of salvation for both victim and victimizer, a

⁵⁹ Jung-Young Lee, introduction to *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995), 10. Suh Nam-Dong describes four steps in Kim Chi-Ha's understanding of *dan*, which Kim admits comes from the unity of "God and revolution," as he interprets both Catholic Social Teaching and also Tonghak religion. "The first stage in this process is *Shichonju* (worshipping God in the mind), the second stage is *Yangchonju* (nurturing the body of God), the third stage is *Haengchonju* (practicing the struggle), and the fourth stage is *Sangchonju* (transcending death and living as a single, bright resurrected fighter for the people)" (Suh, "Towards a Theology of *Han*," 67).

⁶⁰ Kim Chi-Ha, quoted in Suh, "Towards a Theology of *Han*," 67.

⁶¹ Suh, "Towards a Theology of *Han*," 67.

⁶² Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of *Minjung*," 179.

demonstration of the salvific potential of cultural and religious hybridity, and an illustration of unexpected, collective encounters with God on a road of injustice, despair, and affliction.

Kim's conviction regarding salvation for both victim and victimizer accompanied his conversion to Catholicism. As Kim explained, "I became a Catholic because Catholicism conveys a universal message. Not only the spiritual and material burdens could be lifted from people but also oppression itself could be ended by the salvation of *both* the oppressor and the oppressed. Catholicism is capable of assimilating and synthesizing these contradictory and conflicting ideologies, theories, and value standards into a universal truth."⁶³

Kim's work reflects this concern for fragments of earthly salvation for both oppressor and oppressed, victim and victimizer. Kim shows a preferential option for the "sinned-against" but is not convinced that full salvation is possible without the concurrent transformation of the sinner. The sound of Ando, *K'ung*, and the grotesque resurrection image of Chang Il-Dam demonstrate Kim's conviction. Ando's *han*-ful *K'ung* saturates Seoul and brings hope for healing and social transformation to the sinned-against *minjung* while simultaneously bringing fear and dread to the wealthy and powerful for their sins of commission and omission against the lowly. Although Kim does not offer a resolution in this poem, he suggests that salvation is possible as illustrated by the nagging sound of Ando that resists societal amnesia and apathy. The grotesque resurrection of Chang Il-Dam also illustrates Kim's hope for fragments of earthly salvation for sinned-against and sinner. The irreversible fusion of betrayer and betrayed refashions each man into a new creation that embodies a kind of redeemed existence.

Kim suggests, however, that the realization of fragments of earthly salvation between victim and victimizer is precarious. Ando's *K'ung* and Kim's search for his soul after the "torture road" are symbols of *han* that are imbued with an excess of meaning. These symbols contain both a hope and a threat because *han* is a churning energy that will be resolved. The problem is *how* it will be resolved. *Han*'s threat is the onset of mental illness, social violence and interpersonal bloodletting, whereas its hope is the realization of fragments of earthly salvation, such as personal and interpersonal healing along with positive social transformation.

A second contribution of Kim's *han* anthropology is a vision of cultural and religious hybridity that holds potential for realizing fragments of earthly salvation and constructively resolving *han*.⁶⁴ In his work, Kim brings

⁶³ Kim Chi-Ha, "Declaration of Conscience," 9.

⁶⁴ Referencing Homi Bhabha, Wonhee Anne Joh describes hybridity as a "thick description of historical and geographical situations ... [and] this framework suggests mutual

together Roman Catholic Christianity with traditional Korean shamanism and Chondogyo, and the uneasy interplay of these traditions leads to an inculturation of Catholicism into the native soil of Korea. As Shelly Killen and Chong-Sun Kim observe, Kim is “a charismatic figure who uses the forms of shaman incantations and rich Korean colloquialisms in his poetry [and] ... is the only Asian poet to combine the essence of Christian socialism with his native tradition.”⁶⁵

Kim discusses this religious interplay, and uneasy hybridity, when reflecting on *Chang Il-Dam*. He describes the competing religious and cultural undercurrents as creating a world in transition.

Religious asceticism and revolutionary action, the works of Jesus and the struggle of Ch'oe Che U (founder of the Tong Hak) and Chon Pong Jun (commander of the Tong Hak peasant army), a yearning for the communal life of early Christianity, and a deep affection for the long, valiant resistance of the Korean people are all part of Chang's kaleidoscopic world. So are Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Frantz Fanon's ideas on violence, the direct action of Blanquism, the Christian view of humanity as flawed by original sin, the Catholic doctrine of the omnipresence of God and the Buddhist concept of the transmigration of the soul, the populist redistributive egalitarianism of Im Kok Chong and Hong Kil Tong, and the Tong Hak teachings of *Sich'onju* and *Yangch'onju*. Some of these movements and doctrines combine and coalesce; others clash in mighty confrontation.⁶⁶

Kim further defines the Christian influences with respect to the “unity of God and revolution” by citing aspects of Roman Catholicism. He refers to social encyclicals such as Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), and Pope John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961), as well as to the work of various theologians, such as James Cone, Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.⁶⁷

Kim's hybrid imagination underlies *Chang Il-Dam*, and this work illustrates how *han* and shamanism, Tonghak and Catholicism, collide and

agencies on all sides. Here power flows in multidimensional directions. Certainly one of the salient characteristics of hybridity is ambiguity. The indecision inherent in ambiguity is the very source of its power for being open-ended” (Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 53–54). In other words, hybridity is an indeterminate space, created by the asymmetrical and ambiguous coalescence, collision, and confrontation of diverse discourses of knowledge. This indeterminate space then has a destabilizing effect on set power structures as something new emerges.

⁶⁵ Kim and Killen, preface, xiii.

⁶⁶ Kim Chi-Ha, “Declaration of Conscience,” 13.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

converge in order to envision earthly fragments of salvation. Kim's grotesque resurrection image of Chang, which is a vision of salvation, is comprised of diverse religious and philosophical ideas that are woven into a Christian symbol. Kim brings these diverse religious sources together and creates a hybrid space. Chang's resurrection takes a Christian form and suggests salvation for the sinned-against *minjung*, and their connection to an immanent God. This space of hybridity is asymmetrical, in flux, and has an uncertain, emerging identity. Yet, Kim shows how religious and cultural hybridity also holds the possibility of salvation.

A third contribution of Kim's *han* anthropology is his unexpected, collective mystical experience through a "dark night" of *han* in which he encounters God and experiences universal communion through "collectively-chained flesh."⁶⁸ In other words, Kim offers an image of mystical solidarity caused by mutually shared wounds that also hold the possibility of salvation. Despite being cast into the darkness of a *han*-filled space, Kim finds a purification and renewed understanding of God through a kind of "dark night of the soul." Kim suggests that the journey through *han*, as a collective and unified body, can lead to healing, insight, and an experience of the divine. As Kim writes, "We [in prison] are united by those flashing handcuffs, which chained all of us. We are fused together in the boiling blast furnace in the dark, dark, darkness—the Yongdongp'o prison. It was a presentiment of yellow light that united us ... by smashing down all discriminations: ideologies, colors, dialects, standard languages, the rich and the poor."⁶⁹

Kim's illustration of a mystical encounter with the God of Jesus Christ as a collective experience resonates with the communitarian ethos of Roman Catholicism. Kim suggests that in order to endure the festering wounds of *han* one must journey with a community and become "collectively-chained flesh." He believes that a person as an isolated individual will succumb to the deep negativity of *han*. One finds salvation, and encounters God, within a larger community that also carries *han*. Kim's concluding statement is both lament and protest: "My flesh will fight until it meets with my soul." He finds life through collectively embracing death with his confreres and encounters God within the hellish, *han*-ridden prison. The soul that he seeks is not merely his own but is also part and parcel of the collective

⁶⁸ In addition, Kim and Killen observe that Kim's work is "a mixture of prose, poetry, and incantation, [and] testifies to the poet's alchemic wedding of Korean shamanism with Christian liberation theology. ... Instead of judging evil deeds and condemning people for their wickedness, Kim Chi Ha justifies existence through his own power to transcend pain with love and with communal strength in resisting injustice" (Kim and Killen, preface, xxx).

⁶⁹ Kim Chi-Ha, *Torture Road*, 79.

“soul” of the *han*-ridden *minjung*. Kim finds a scarred, yet ongoing life through this “torture road,” and his resistance to the negativity of *han* was nourished by his fellow prisoners.

VI. Conclusion: Kim Chi-Ha's Challenge to Catholic Thought

Han has been a touchstone for contemporary intercultural challenges to Protestant theologies, and, in particular, traditional doctrines of sin, creation, and atonement theory. In a similar way, *han* anthropology provides an intercultural challenge to Roman Catholic theology but in the realm of soteriology. It is here that Kim Chi-Ha's three contributions shed light on a shortcoming in Catholic thought: the Catholic soteriological tradition describes the human person almost exclusively as “sinner” without offering an equally thorough understanding of the human person as “sinned-against.”⁷⁰ This tradition has focused tightly on the human being as a sinner estranged from God through freely chosen actions. The guilt of the sinner and the sinner's need for forgiveness are the core of soteriological reflection.

Kim, however, suggests that a soteriological emphasis almost exclusively on sin, guilt, and forgiveness is problematic. He accepts that all humans are sinners, but he advocates for a theological appraisal of their context and their lives, so that they are defined as being “sinned-against” rather than as merely sinners. This means that the theological question that Kim poses is concerned with *han* and not sin. The characters Ando, Chang Il-Dam, and Kim himself as portrayed in *Torture Road* may all be sinners. Kim, however, is not concerned with God's forgiveness of the sins of Ando, Chang, and himself but rather with God's resolution of their *han*. These characters have been brutalized, violated, and suffer unjustly. Their suffering is not the result of sinfulness but of being sinned against by other men and women, and of the social structures and political systems that others have created and that others support. The hapless, mutilated Ando, the betrayed, beheaded Chang, and the hollowed-out, severed finger of Kim himself cry out for a healing balm and not a ritual of absolution. Kim shows that *han* anthropology, as opposed to a narrow sin anthropology, is the primary

⁷⁰ This critique and observation is based on Andrew Sung Park's analysis of the Christian doctrine of sin. From a Protestant perspective while also engaging Catholic thinkers such as Karl Rahner and Gustavo Gutierrez, Park argues that priority in this doctrine is given to the oppressor while marginalizing the experience of the oppressed (cf. Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*). Park's claim has roots in Korean *minjung* theology, and in particular the work of Suh Nam-Dong, who credits Kim Chi-Ha with this critique.

problem in need of doctrinal, sacramental, and ritualized soteriological attention in Roman Catholicism.

One need look no further than *Gaudium et Spes* to see evidence of Kim's concern.⁷¹ This document provides an authoritative articulation of the fundamental Roman Catholic anthropology of the human as "sinner."⁷² The Pastoral Constitution rightfully focuses on the sinning creature's alienation from the sinned-against Creator. Kim's *han* anthropology, however, poses a fundamental challenge and suggests that the anthropology of *Gaudium et Spes* needs to be supplemented by an anthropology rooted in the woundedness of the sinned-against creature and the work of the living God of Jesus Christ in healing the victims' wounds. The Pastoral Constitution offers a vision of Christian salvation that focuses primarily on the salvation of the sinner while failing also to focus sufficiently on salvation for the sinned-against creature.

Kim challenges Roman Catholics to revisit, critique, and rethink this anthropology and soteriology, not because it is incorrect but because it is too narrow. All human beings are an amalgamation of both sinner and sinned-against, but one or the other often manifests within a specific situation

⁷¹ This critique of *Gaudium et Spes* needs much more development and explication in order to be convincing beyond a reasonable doubt. This is a shortcoming of this article, and I am unable to pursue that investigation here. I explore the anthropological shortcomings of *Gaudium et Spes* in chapter 1 of my dissertation, the entirety of which is now under review to be published as a monograph.

⁷² "For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. Hence, the focal point of our entire presentation will be man himself, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will" (Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* [*Gaudium et spes*], http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, 3. Similarly, John Langan writes, "Theological anthropology enjoys pride of place in *Gaudium et spes* and provides a basis for the treatment of specific issues" ("Political Hopes and Political Tasks: A Reading of 'Gaudium et Spes' after Twenty Years," in *Questions of Special Urgency: The Church and the Modern World after Vatican II*, ed. Judith A. Dwyer [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1986], 99–122, at 108). In addition, Walter Kasper has highlighted the uniqueness of the focus on the human person. He observes: "*Gaudium et spes* signals the first time a council has consciously endeavored to set forth a systematic account of Christian anthropology in an independent thematic context. There are, of course, statements concerning anthropology in earlier conciliar texts. Nevertheless, such statements are always made in connection with the treatment of individual questions relative to Christology, the theology of creation, or grace. Prior to Vatican II no council had produced a 'general outline' of Christian anthropology. The Pastoral Constitution was the first to attempt to do so" (Walter Kasper, "The Theological Anthropology of *Gaudium et spes*," *Communio* 23, no. 1 [Spring 1996]: 129–40, at 129). My summary here is drawn from GS 3 and 10.

and becomes a site for Christian soteriological reflection.⁷³ Kim's imagery and ideas challenge Catholics to supplement this anthropology with an equally robust description of the human being as a "sinned-against" creature. The soteriological question must be based not only on sin but also on *han*.

⁷³ As Andrew Sung Park points out, all human beings exist simultaneously as sinners and sinned-against. Nevertheless, he argues that we must make a distinction between the two positions in order to account for the particular wounds that have been inflicted on an individual, community, or people group by another individual, community, or people group (*The Wounded Heart of God*, 70).