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As the research of Korean theology continues, the theme that keeps coming up is the idea of having full autonomy and understanding. As I dive deeper into the history of Christianity in Korea, I see more themes of people desiring full autonomy over their lives. As a country that went through decades of oppression, people desire to have a choice and not have that freedom be taken away from them. I also notice a theme of wanting to be understood. This ties in with Minjung theology where people want to alleviate the *han* in their hearts.

In 1910, Korea was taken over by Japan and endured 30 years of oppression. The identities of Korean were taken away while being forced to live as Japanese under the new rule. In 1945, Japan surrendered after the end of WWII. Left behind decades of oppression, the country was divided in half, with the Soviet Union taking the north and United States taking the south. After the traumatizing years of having identities stripped away, the north and the south grew more distant with influences on both sides on how to govern the new country. Talks of reunification failed while growing more polarized on both sides which resulted in the Korean War that lasted 3 years. The Korean Armistice Agreement brought a ceasefire and established the 2.5-mile-long demilitarized zone in 1953, the heaviest armed DMZ in the world today.

Minjung theology emerged in South Korea during the 1970s after the civil war. *Min* means people and *jung* means mass. Minjung directly translates to “mass of the people”. There is a word that Korean people use, “*han*”, to describe the groaning in their hearts due to oppression and injustice. “Han is the Minjung's anger and sad sentiment turned inward, hardened, and stuck to their hearts. Han is caused as one's outgoingness is blocked and pressed for an extended period of time by external oppression and exploitation.”<sup>47</sup> Minjung theology emerged to preach to that

*han* that people felt in their hearts. Minjung theology focuses that God is demonstrably on the side of the poor and the oppressed which is shown all throughout the Bible.

“The Galilean ochlos, an amorphous, and in its membership varying group of people from the Galilean lower class, is the addressee of Jesus’ mission. The call to follow him, which is not only addressed to the apostles, but also to the ochlos, presupposes the will to suffer as well.<sup>5</sup>”

This was the first time that Koreans felt understood in their pain and injustice. Throughout the history of Japanese colonization, the division of the country, and the painful civil war, there was a man stating that God understood the *han* that people were feeling. The context in the Bible resonated with the people as if the context was written for people in Korea. People were able to use their sufferings and pain as a foundation of the relationship between them and God.

With the rise of Minjung theology and the growth of Christianity, people were able to take back their autonomy. No one was forcing them on what to do or who to believe in. This allowed people to find peace knowing that God met them where they were. It ignited seasons of grief, resentment, and anger to come to terms with the suffering from the past.