Korean Protestant Christianity in the Midst of Globalization:
Neoliberalism and the Pentecostalization of Korean Churches

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Abstract

Any understanding of contemporary Korean society would not be complete without some knowledge of its religious culture. Just as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism made important inroads in traditional Korea, Protestant Christianity (particularly in its Pentecostal form), with its remarkable success story in Asia, has become exceedingly influential in modern Korea. Focusing on the elective affinity between neoliberal globalization and experiential spiritualities such as neo-Pentecostalism, I focus on some aspects of generalized Pentecostal beliefs and practices within Korea in this paper. I then discuss the causes, strengths, and weaknesses of the pentecostalization of Korean churches in order to clarify the role of Korean Christianity in world Christianity and in global society. In the conclusion, I address the following questions: How can we understand the growth of Korean neo-Pentecostal Christianity under globalization? What might be the future of Korean Protestant Christianity?

Keywords: Korean churches, shamanism, Pentecostalization, neo-Pentecostalism, neoliberalism, spirituality

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Introduction

South Korea claims to be a regional Protestant "superpower" with a successful mission history (Freston 2001, 61). It has the largest Christian congregation in the world: Rev. David Cho's famous Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC) located in the capital Seoul's financial center. As of 2006,[1] YFGC, which is affiliated with the Assemblies of God, claims about 750,000 members including 136,600 cell leaders. Its enormous buildings holding thousands of worshippers, reflecting the emerging "neo-Pentecostal middle-class" as a new global phenomenon. The term "neo-Pentecostalism" in this paper refers to a new form of Pentecostal religion in which spiritual warfare, exorcisms, immediate healing, and personal prosperity in the here and now have replaced traditional Pentecostalism's emphasis on speaking in tongues; on strict, pietistic morals; and on Jesus' second coming and eternal salvation.[2]

It is also remarkable that greater Seoul is home to twenty-three of the fifty largest mega-churches in the world (Freston 2001, 62). Most of the urban mega-churches in South Korea are Pentecostal in theology and worship. Like the case of Ghana (Omenyo 2005), while previous Assemblies of God in the country were noted for charismatic enthusiasm, currently the phenomenon has found its way into mainline churches, thus blurring the sharp distinction between mainline churches and Pentecostals. As a result, there has been a major paradigmatic shift in the spirituality, theology, practices, and programs of mainline churches in South Korea. Thus, this phenomenon can no longer be regarded as peripheral in the life of mainline Korean churches (such as Presbyterian, Methodist, and so on). This reflects the "pentecostalization of the churches" (Spittler 1988).[3]

1. http://www.cbs.co.kr/chnocut/email/news (accessed on March 4, 2007).
2. It should be noted that this usage differs from the way the term was understood by sociologists of religion in North America in the 1970s, then referring to charismatic renewal in mainline churches, both Protestant and Catholic. For this, see Stalsett (2006a, 4-5).
3. By pentecostalization, this paper refers to the prioritizing of spiritual gifts, physical

Among the non-Western countries, South Korea is a center of evangelicalism, both in numerical strength and missionary-sending importance (Freston 2001, 61). Against the impressive success of Protestantism in a country that experienced so-called compressed modernization since the 1960s, South Korea currently sends more missionaries abroad than any other country except the United States. From this, some passionate evangelicals even predict that it will not be long before South Korea is number one. It should be noted that the Institute of Asian Culture and Development (IACD), a leading exponent of South Korean Christian Zionism, has held an annual "Jesus March" in Jerusalem for the past two years, despite strong opposition from the Seoul government. Recently, in August 2006, thousands of South Korean evangelicals, sponsored by IACD, went to Afghanistan for what was billed as a peace march and were subsequently deported from that Muslim country.[4] Stressing the fact that anti-Americanism is gaining popularity in the world after 9/11, Paul Choe, the head of IACD, has suggested that South Korea should take over the initiative of the world mission from the United States.

Among the main reasons for the so-called Korean Protestant success, I have found that evangelical Protestant Christianity, particularly its Pentecostal form, which arose in the 1950s following the Korean War (1950-1953), successfully draws upon ancient forms of Korean shamanism as well as introducing modern American capitalistic materialism (Kim S. 2006a). It is true that Pentecostal Christianity, focusing on the problems of individuals, lacks a definitive political theology. But the churches, with their emphasis on "experience" rather than on "doctrine," have naturally succumbed to the pragmatic accommodation of authoritarian regimes, thereby and ironically achieving such rapid growth. Because of this, Protestant Christianity —and especially Pentecostalism—is in some real sense viewed within contemporary Korean society as "controversial" (Kim S. 2006a, 37).

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manifestations, and spiritual warfare (demon possession) in the forefront of Christian meaning and ministry.

4. http://www/christianitytoday.com/38517 (accessed on November 18, 2006).

How can we evaluate Korean Pentecostal success?

There are four parts to the argument presented in this paper. First, I will explore the nexus between Korean shamanism and evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity. Second, I will discuss the causes, strengths, and weaknesses of the recent pentecostalization of Korean churches in order to clarify the responsibility of Korean Christianity in world Christianity as well as its role in present Korea. Third, to understand the role of Korean Christianity in global society, I will identify an "elective affinity" (Weber's terms) between neoliberal globalization and neo-Pentecostalism. Fourth, in conclusion, I will address the following questions: How can we understand the growth of Korean neo-Pentecostal Christianity under neoliberal globalization or market revolution?; and what might be the future of Korean Protestant Christianity?

Korean Shamanism and Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity

Any understanding of the characteristics of contemporary Korean society would not be complete without some knowledge of its religious culture as a major cultural phenomenon. Just as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism made important inroads in traditional Korea, Protestant Christianity (particularly in its Pentecostal form) with its remarkable success story in Asia, has become exceedingly influential in modern Korea.

In Korea, pre-Buddhist, pre-Taoist and pre-Confucian indigenous beliefs or old folk traditions, commonly known as shamanism (*musok* or *mu*-ism), lies beneath all the imported religions (Kim S. 2006a, 27). Shamanism—a belief in the spiritual power of nature or belief in a world inhabited by spirits—is the predominant religious ethos of the Korean people (Clark 1961, 174). Put differently, shamanism generally means the belief that mediation between the visible world and the spirit world is effected by shamans. The term is also used to describe many other religions in the world that accept the existence of a supernatural spirit world and animism. Historically speaking,

Korean shamanism encompasses a variety of indigenous beliefs and practices that have been influenced by Buddhism and Taoism. Korean shamanism, or the belief in the intervention of supernatural powers in human life, is distinguished by its search for solutions to human problems through a meeting of human beings and spirits. This can be seen clearly in the various types of *gut*—a shamanistic rite wherein the shaman offers a sacrifice to the spirits—that are still widely observed. Korean shamans are very similar to those found in Siberia, Mongolia, and Manchuria. The role of the *mudang* (shaman) is to act as intercessors between a god or gods and human beings.

Kim Tae-gon (1972), an expert on Korean shamanism, maintains that shamanism was "the source of the Korean people's spiritual energy." It is to be noted that some Korean journalists, psychiatrists and social scientists, including myself, even went so far recently as to suggest that the essence of the so-called *Hallyu*[5] (Korean wave) phenomenon lies in shamanism. It is true that some famous Korean celebrities (pop singers, movie stars, and television actors) are often the descendants of shamanic families. In Korea, shamanism, which has never ceased to play a significant role in people's lives despite a long history of severe persecution, is recently being rediscovered as a uniquely Korean religio-cultural heritage (Hogarth 1999, 332). For example, in a climate of growing nationalism and cultural self-confidence, the dances, songs, and incantations that compose the *gut* have come to be recognized as an important aspect of Korean culture. Also, beginning in the 1970s, rituals that formerly had been kept out of foreign view began to resurface, and occasionally even managers of Western-style hotels or other executives could be seen attending

5. The "Korean wave" refers to the popularity of South Korean popular culture in other countries. The Korean wave began with the export of Korean TV dramas such as *Jewel in the Palace* and *Winter Sonata* across East and Southeast Asia; the growing success of Korean drama was quickly matched in the fields of movies and popular music. Today, observers generally agree that the most likely explanations for the popularity of South Korean shows, singers, and movies throughout Asia is due both to South Korea's high income levels and to the closer cultural affinity they can share as Asian countries. See "Korean wave" in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_wave.

shamanistic exorcism rituals such as *gosa* in the course of opening new branches in Seoul. Shamanistic exorcism rituals are also popular on college campuses.

In the meantime, Koreans are known for their remarkable interest in and wholehearted dedication to their children's education. To explain this, some people attribute it to the culture of religious compensation and ancestral rites (Jang 2007, 9). However, it is to be noted that to a shamanistic person, a child of his or her own blood possesses "religious" significance: a child revitalizes and confirms the existence of all its forebears and relations (Hahm 1988, 65). There is no clear-cut ego boundary between the parents and other close kindred. The close ego ties that link shamanistic parents to their children present a striking contrast to most Western cultures, in which a child's autonomy and self-sufficiency are considered minimum requirements for mental health (Hahm 1988, 66).

It should be pointed out that Christian concepts of religion have greatly affected on how a number of Korean intellectuals view such indigenous practices (Kendall 2004, 249). Although evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity "naturally" meets shamanism or belief in a world inhabited by spirits in the Korean context, a majority of Protestant intellectuals are still strongly against shamanism and dismiss it as mere superstition. This reflects the "cultural paradox" of Korean shamanism (Kim C. 2003).

It is notable that Oxford scholar John Ashton, in *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (2000), recently attempted to understand Paul's religious life by comparing the apostle's experiences with shamanism. It is well known that Paul's effectiveness and Christianity's early growth were largely due to demonstrations of "spiritual power" (Meinhold 1972, 411). Ashton focuses on what Paul "experienced in Christ" instead of what he "believed." In Ashton's view, shamans, like Paul who experienced a kind of dramatic death and rebirth at Damascus, usually receive inspiration through traumatic experiences. In short, Ashton's comparative work on the phenomenon of "spirit possession" leads us to a deep understanding of Paul's relation to the realm of spirits in a world where belief in such beings pervaded peo-

ple's lives (Ellington 2002). Hence British sociologist David Martin, a scholar on global Pentecostalism, can state:

> The world of New Testament Christianity contains "demons" and it announces victory over "the powers." . . . Shamanism and spiritism are nearly everywhere, just below the surface or actually on the surface of contemporary life. Certainly they are on the surface in the Yucatan, in the Sertao, and in Seoul (Martin 1990, 140).

Similarly, Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori in their four-years empirical research on global Pentecostalism finally point out:

> Another explanation for Pentecostal growth is that for people from traditional cultures where shamanism is frequently practiced, it resonates culturally, because Pentecostals also believe in the spirit world. Indeed, one can find many functional parallels between Pentecostalism and animism; for example, in both kinds of practice demons are cast out, people are healed, and individuals are spirit possessed. Hence, the Pentecostal worldview is not all that different from what animistic believers have known, except that there is no longer a need to appease a whole pantheon of spirits through magical means. Indeed, the major difference between Pentecostals and people in animistic cultures is that the former affirm that there is only one spirit, the Holy Spirit (Miller and Yamamori 2007, 24-25).

So believing as they do in the "universal presence of spirits"[6] from indigenous shamanism, it neither was nor is difficult for Korean converts to Christianity to accept the doctrines of the spiritual nature of (a personalized) God. Pentecostalism, like shamanism and the Korean worldview filled as it is with spirits (Hahm 1988), locates "evil," which causes misfortune, traumatic disease, and even the vicious cir-

6. It could be pointed out that the term *sahoe* (社會 society) literally means an aggregation of "spirits." Thus, if we admit the word at face value, then, it means that Koreans are still living in the world of "spirits" rather than that of individuals or groups in Western sense.

cle of poverty, "within" the spirit world. From this, Yoo Boo-woong concludes:

> His [David Cho's] role in Sunday morning worship looks exactly like that of a shaman or *mudang*. The only difference is that a shaman performs his wonders in the name of spirits while Rev. Cho exorcises evil spirits and heals the sick in the name of Jesus (Yoo 1986, 74).

In summary, given the cultural paradox of Korean shamanism and its implication for Korean evangelical/Pentecostal success, I would argue that we should rediscover and reevaluate the positive aspect of the religious function of shamanism. According to anthropologist James McClenon (2002), shamanism is a biologically based spiritual healing practice. He argues that the origins of religious beliefs and healing practices are derived from biological capacities that underlie the hypnotic capacity. This hypnotizability, an inherited trait that produces specific physiological and psychophysiological responses, enhances recovery from disease,[7] as well as promoting survival and reproduction. Thus, we could say that religious people are "survivors."

Pentecostalization of Korean Churches: Causes, Strengths, and Weaknesses

It is generally accepted that the remarkable growth of Korean churches after the Korean War owes a significant debt to the Pentecostal movement. In this context, seeing the advent and unprecedented expansion of the modern Pentecostal movement as one of the most important events within twentieth-century Christianity, I claimed in my paper (Kim 2006a) that the Korean Pentecostal phenomenon,

7. Conditions most amenable to ritual healing through hypnosis involve psychosomatic ailments, somatization, psychiatric disorders, chronic pain, hysterical conditions, and interpersonal problems. See Winkelman (2000).

which was introduced by David Cho, has succeeded since the 1960s on two fronts: first, it can demonstrate phenomenal church growth; and second, there has been a dissemination of Pentecostal beliefs and practices throughout the country.

Causes

Regarding the various causes of pentecostalization, first of all, I would distinguish between the superficial causes and the deeper ones. On the surface level, with reference to history and sociology, the Korean War played a part. Kim Hung-soo (1999), a Korean church historian, argued that when most Koreans desperately needed to solve the problems of "survival" out of the ashes of war, revival movements led by fundamentalists or by Pentecostal churches must have had much more influence on the Korean people than liberal ones, because they promised individual salvation, healing, and blessings, and showed concern for the well-being and life of each individual (Heo 2007).

In addition to this, we could also talk about the historical legacy of early revivalism such as the "Wonsan Revival" of 1903 and the "Pyongyang Holy Spirit Movement" (or the "Great Revival") of 1907 that commenced at a meeting of Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries. It should be noted that Allan Anderson (2004, 145), an expert on global Pentecostalism, has stressed that, unlike Pentecostalism in North America, the Korean "Pentecost" (including tongues) from 1907 began in "mainline" churches—Presbyterian and Methodist. But the significant difference between the Azusa Street Revival (AR), 1906-1909 and the Korean Great Revival (GR) in Pyongyang, 1907 was speaking in tongues. According to Korean church historian Oak Sung-Deuk (2006, 405) of UCLA, the GR did not report any glossolalia. In this sense, he asserts: "The Korean GR was not the Pentecostal revival movement, but a part of the worldwide Holiness revival movement at the beginning of the twentieth century."

It is noteworthy that with regard to the conception of the potential of the Holy Spirit, there is currently no substantial difference

between fundamentalists and Pentecostals in Korea. This is in contrast to most Western theologians' perspective on the two groups. For example, stressing the fact that fundamentalists and conservative Christians in the United States stridently disagreed with the Pentecostals' claim that miracles still take place in the present age, Harvard theologian Harvey Cox (2006, 18-19) insists that Pentecostals are not to be understood as a sub-species of fundamentalism.

In the meantime, regarding deeper level causes, we should consider the significance of Korean shamanism or "spiritism" in terms of religious healing as a necessary condition of pentecostalization in the country. As is well known, the Pentecostal emphasis in Korea is first and foremost on "divine healing" and the "baptism of the Spirit" (Martin 1990, 146). As of 2000, nine out of the 15 largest megachurches in South Korea are, in fact, charismatic or neo-Pentecostal (Hong 2000, 101-104). Why did mainline church authorities recently open up to Pentecostal practices such as spiritual healing after having resisted earlier attempts at pentecostalization? Among several reasons, two factors seem to be of importance in explaining the process of pentecostalization of mainline churches. Firstly, after the 1997 economic crisis in South Korea, church authorities decided to tolerate a certain measure of pentecostalization from below so as to avoid further defection to Pentecostal groups. People were seeing the providential hand of God in the financial crisis of modern Korean. In addition, the financial crisis made medical healthcare very expensive for the majority (especially lower-middle class) of South Koreans, forcing some of them to turn to spiritual healing. Secondly, the authorities had recently rediscovered the significance of Pentecostal worship. As Miller and Yamamori rightly asserts in *Global Pentecostalism* (2007, 23-24), "The engine of Pentecostalism is its worship. The heart of Pentecostalism is the music. It touches the emotions. Pentecostal worship, however, is more than music. (Supernatural) healing is often associated with worship." Surely healing is sometimes a product of the placebo effect. But clearly many people have experiences that they interpret as the product of divine intervention. For them this is "proof" that Christianity is true and that this is the place where

they should anchor their spiritual commitment (Miller and Yamamori 2007, 24).

According to the Ten Country[8] Survey of Pentecostals (October 2006) by the Pew Forum,[9] only one country of the ten surveyed, South Korea, shows that Charismatics[10] are more likely than Pentecostals to report having witnessed divine healing (61% vs. 56%) and experienced (or witnessed) exorcisms (35% vs. 30%). The survey also reports that 92% of Charismatics and 90% of Pentecostals in South Korea completely or mostly agree with the statement that "Angels and demons are active in the world." From this, we could say that "pentecostalization of Korean Protestantism" is a real fact and there are no essential differences between fundamentalists and Pentecostals in terms of belief in the workings of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we could say that in the Korean context, while a shaman performs her/his wonders such as healing in the name of spirits, Pentecostal or pentecostalized pastors, like Paul in the New Testament, exorcise evil spirits and heal the sick in the name of Jesus.

In summary, from this evidence, I would argue that the most important factor that has contributed to the pentecostalization of South Korean Protestantism in such a remarkably short period seems to be the existence of the predominant ethos of indigenous "spiritism" among modern Koreans who care for blessings, wealth and particularly health in this world. If we follow McClenon's "ritual healing theory" of religion (2002), then we could suggest that extraordinary mystical experiences (such as faith healing and possession, etc.) have effects on individuals in complex modern societies similar to the effects they have had on primitive peoples; experiences lead to belief in spiritual forces, not vice versa. In short, in my view, the deeper interplay between shamanism and (neo-)Pentecostalism in the Korean context should be explored further.

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8. United States, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, India, Philippines, and South Korea.
9. http://pewforum.org.
10. Protestants who do not belong to any specific Pentecostal denomination describe themselves as "charismatic Christians."

Strengths

Against the various causes of the recent pentecostalization of South Korean Protestantism—the legacy of the Korean War, the historical heritage of early revivalism and the enduring ethos of spiritual shamanism—in the following, I will discuss some strengths and weaknesses of the phenomenon. Concerning the strengths, I would first emphasize that it is a testimony to the significance and importance of "religious experience" (James 1985) as the true nature of all religions. It is noticeable in this sense that McClenon has observed two things: "Very different cultures often use similar spiritual healing practices" and "Certain types of people benefit from these practices to a greater degree than others" (McClenon 2002, 4). Given the fact that spirit healing is widespread across societies in diverse world religions, one study (Koss-Chioino 2005) examined aspects of the interface between mental illness as defined by psychiatry and spirit healing.

In this context, *Los Angeles Times*, the leading newspaper of the city of immigrants from many countries of the world, has recently explored the link between spirituality and mental health. For example, one writer reported on the third national conference on spirituality and mental health.[11] It was said that the main topic was the importance of spirituality and religion in mental health. Also, one related article quotes a new national study, saying "about a third of those who take care of loved ones with a disease (such as Alzheimer's) feel 'more religious' because of their experiences."[12]

In addition to the above-mentioned theoretical and empirical evidence on "spiritual healing," my personal observations confirm that the most important factor for pentecostalized South Korean Protestantism's extraordinary growth lies in its "healing ministry" through spiritual exorcism or spiritual warfare. Recent Gallup Korea poll results find nearly 30% of Protestants attest to some sort of religious

11. "Exploring the Links between Spirituality and Mental Health," *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 2006.
12. "Many Alzheimer's Caregivers Seek Help in God," *Los Angeles Times*. March 14, 2007.

experiences[13] in their daily lives. This high figure contrasts markedly with 5% for Buddhists and 14% for Roman Catholics (Gallup Korea 2004, 72-75).

Secondly, regarding the strengths of pentecostalization in South Korea, following Cox's insight, I would stress its "internal (or spiritual) dynamics" rather than some sociological characteristics. This deserves closer examination. Cox (2006, 23) insists that Pentecostalism fills the "ecstasy deficit" left by cooler religions, thereby reconnecting people with primitive religion in a splintered postmodern world (such as contemporary Korean society). Why has (neo-)Pentecostalism been so successful in the world including South Korea? In line with Cox's argument, part of the answer, *The Economist* asserts, lies in the "internal dynamics" of the religion: "A Pentecostal service is an unforgettable experience, part religious service, part spectacle, part rock'n roll rave."[14]

In this context, it should be stressed that music is one of the more common methods to propel listeners into an altered state of consciousness or "hypnosis" (cognitive openness) in both shamanism (Hogarth 1999, 23) and (neo-)Pentecostalism.[15] Thus, predicting that Pentecostal Christianity and meditative traditions (in the so-called New Age movement or transpersonal psychology) will survive into the twenty-first century, Don Lattin, co-author of the book *Shopping for Faith* (2002), maintains that they utilize a lot of music. According to him, it is a distinctive kind of music: hypnotic, tribal, industrial music like the music at raves.[16] He continues: "People look as if they're going into exactly the same states—they're waving their arms

13. Healing, a feeling of punishment, a vision of hell or the kingdom of heaven, revelation from the divine or God, a feeling of satanic or demonic temptation, or a sense of being born again.
14. "Pentecostals," *Economist*, December 23, 2006.
15. At the concluding session ("Pentecostalism and changes in the global religious economy") of "Spirit in the World" conference (USC, October 5-7, 2006), Donald E. Miller, the organizer of the conference, affirmed the need to study the role of "music" in Pentecostal growth and experience.
16. Spiritual future shock: an interview with Don Lattin by Colleen O'Connor, http://www/gracecathedral.org/enrichment/interviews/int_19990513.shtml.

around getting into some sort of a trance state and opening up spirituality, getting beyond the ego, or however you want to understand it."

In shamanism, it is well known that the drum is universally used by the shaman as a "technician of consciousness" (Winkelman 2000) to enter into a trance (ecstasy) or possession (spirit) trance (*sindeul-lim* in Korean shamanism). Studies have shown that vibrations from rhythmic sounds have a profound effect on brain activity.[17] The vibrations from this constant rhythm affect the brain in a very specific manner, allowing the shaman to achieve an altered state of mind and journey out of his or her body.[18] So, shamanistic ritual is not possible without the presence of the drum in one form or another. World-famous Kim Deok-su's *samul nori*, a Korean folk music accompanied by four traditional percussion instruments, represents the importance of the drum in Korean shamanism.

Meanwhile, interestingly, it is said that Korean Methodist elder Ra Woon Mong, famous for his charismatic preaching on Spirit baptism and healing, consistently used drums and brass instruments at revival meetings as early as the 1940s. The appearance of drums and a brass band in a Christian worship service was very unusual in those days.

At present, in my mind, both electronic/metal contemporary Christian music (CCM)[19] produced by high-tech bands and various live music or dramatic sounds emerging from the minister, choir, and congregants in luxurious neo-Pentecostal Korean churches also serve religious (healing) functions. Regarding the popularity of CCM in contemporary Korea, we could point out that the rise of "worship

17. It is interesting to see that both *The Economist*'s (Dec. 23, 2006) special survey on the brain and *Time*'s (Jan. 29, 2007) cover story on the brain coincidentally discussed the mystery of consciousness, mind and body, emotions, happiness, etc. This reflects the recent popularity of post-materialism, neuroscience, and alternative spiritual ideologies, including New Age's 'neo-shamanism' in post-war Western culture.
18. "Monks, Shamans, Drum Beats, Primitive Cultures, Rhythmic Sound & The Brain." http://web-us.com/primitivebeats_htm.
19. For a study of the CCM industry and its music, see Brown (2004).

music" and the ways in which this music has influenced the Christian music industry and practices in evangelical communities are especially remarkable in the United States (Clark 2006, 477) and in "Americanized" Korea.

It is to be noted that although the connection between music and trance is not straightforward, one study (Hutson 1999) on spiritual healing in the rave subculture interestingly treats the DJ as a "technoshaman." In this study, the writer discusses shamanism, self-empowerment and spiritual healing in rave discourse. The result of this study supports Lattin's characterization of the role of music. Following Scott Hutson's and Lattin's arguments, I think that the disc jockey's role is similar to that of a Korean shaman and that of a Pentecostal minister such as Rev. Cho of YFGC: "God likes music a lot."[20]

Weaknesses

After decades as the darling of the evangelical world because of its rapid growth, it is a fact that Korean Protestantism as a whole has been stagnating since 1990 to a significant degree. Speculation is widespread concerning the causes—democratization resulting from the Seoul Olympic Games of 1988; the shock of the 1997 Financial Crisis amid economic success; Buddhist and Roman Catholic revitalization; and the perceived social indifference of most churches, among others. Although Korean evangelicals are in an enviable position in Asia of not having to justify their very existence as do Christians, this secure place in society is no guarantee against the subtle danger of irrelevance (Freston 2002, 62).

In this sense, I would focus on the shallowness or limits of Pentecostal spirituality as a weak point of pentecostalization in the country. Theologian Jean-Jacques Suurmond, famous for the most penetrating analysis of Pentecostal experience in terms of mysticism, has maintained that Pentecostals experience conversion (awareness of

20. *Economist*, December 23, 2006, 50.

God) and illumination (experience of peace and joy). But, in his view, Pentecostals are often unable to experience the "dark night" (Christian phase of maturation during which God is seemingly absent) and cannot enter into a deeper experience of union with God (God becoming the core experience of the human soul) (Suurmond 1994, 157-160).

At the moment, we could assert that shamanistic Pentecostals (including most pentecostalized Protestants), who are happy with the so-called gospel of prosperity in South Korea, have a tendency to retain their faith only so long as the monotheistic god proves to be efficacious in tangible ways. Indeed, they seem to desire experience as proof of god's existence. So we could say that Korean Christians, especially Pentecostals/Charismatics, tend to importune god for worldly benefits such as wealth, success and health rather than pray for eternal salvation or suffer (sacrifice) for Him (Hahm 1988, 94).

In this sense, the popular belief of Pentecostal Protestants in South Korea could be categorized as a typical example of the so-called answer theology (in Koyama's terms). Union theologian Kosuke Koyama in *No Handle On The Cross* (1976) distinguishes between "relationship-theology" and answer-theology as follows:

> Jeremiah and Jesus placed their trust in forsaking God! Theirs is no longer the faith built upon God's obvious answer. They believed in God even though God did not answer! It is the profoundest possibility of faith in the covenant relationship. Here we do not see an answer-theology. We instead see a relationship-theology.

Similarly, Princeton theologian John A. McKay (1948) has emphasized the necessity of a mature Pentecostalism for the future of Christendom. From this, it can be noted that awareness is emerging among the religious faithful and secularists alike that a mature spirituality is critical for resilience in the face of life's most devastating experiences (Bersin 2002, 270).

Finally, in order to clarify the responsibility of Korean Christianity in world Christianity as well as its role in present Korea, we should

admit that the social legitimacy (or social relevance) of Korean churches is decreasing. According to the Pew Forum's ten-country survey of Pentecostals (2006, 57), in only two countries, India and South Korea, does a majority of the population (54% in India and 58% in South Korea) say that religious groups should keep out of the political arena. Also, the survey finds that renewalists' involvement in political organizations or political parties ranges from just 1% in South Korea to 19% in the United States. This reflects the social indifference of most conservative evangelical churches in the country.

Thus, I would argue that now is the time for Korean evangelical/Pentecostal Protestantism to, first of all, overcome the inevitable limit of an "answer-theology" which is closely linked to "spiritual subjectivism." In this respect, I would recall the "Afghanistan controversy" related with the peace march in August 2006. On the eve of the day of the march, Pentecostal evangelist Paul Choe, the organizer of the march, declared in a webcast sermon that he himself had received a clear message of approval from God during prayer for the march to take place. The Afghan government in the meantime decided that the march was contrary to the Islamic culture and customs of their country. As a consequence, Choe had to cancel the march just shortly before the scheduled date. His bold intentions signify Korea-centrism, subjectivism, and self-centeredness. Regrettably, these immature and arrogant attitudes toward the world mission are not unusual among Korean evangelicals/Pentecostals and their churches.

Elective Affinity between Neoliberal Globalization and Neo-Pentecostalism

The Pew Forum survey (2006, 51) finds that Pentecostals, in all ten countries, expect their financial situations to improve to some degree over the course of the coming year. Put simply, it is true that Pentecostals have a stronger sense of financial optimism than non-renewalist Christians and the general population. Martin's finding in *Tongues of Fire* (1990, 206) that evangelical religion and economic

advancement often appear in tandem or mutually reinforce each other accurately describes the South Korean situation/realities accurately describes South Korea. Many conservative Protestants, especially neo-Pentecostals, embrace the gospel of success, value and endorse this connection and, in fact, are noticeably more prosperous than people of other faiths or of no faith (Kim S. 2006b, 226). In the 1992 elections for the National Assembly in Korea, 90 of the 299 congressmen were Protestants. This percentage (30%) is twice as high as that of Protestants (15%) in the population. It may be related to the urban middle-class composition of Korean churches (Freston 2001, 68).

The 2003 Institute for Church Growth (affiliated with YFGC) survey finds that despite eroding economic prospects for Koreans due to the 1997 Financial Crisis induced proletariatization, Protestantism stands out among religions as remarkably bourgeois and middle-class in social composition (Kim S. 2004, 215-217). As the primitive Christian church offered the gift of the Holy Spirit to all women and men without discrimination, Charismatic Christianity, including Cho's famous "Threefold Blessing"—salvation for the soul, material prosperity, and physical health (3 John 2)—engenders self-confidence or self-empowerment particularly for those previously economically marginalized (Woodhead 2002, 175).

Pentecostal Protestant churches such as YFGC shifted the traditional interpretation of blessings of the Holy Spirit such that the promise of divine provision of material rewards for true believers, a gospel of prosperity, assumed prominence (Brouwer et al. 1996, 29). This belief sometimes has been labeled "neo-Pentecostal" because it seems quite distinct from traditional Pentecostal theology. Korean Pentecostals such as in YFGC, once at the bottom of the Protestant economic heap, are no longer uniformly poor and meek. As Full Gospel believers have always expected divine intervention in health matters, some may find the neo-Pentecostal promise of and emphasis on material advance an attractive corollary. Interestingly, some young middle-class YFGC members are switching to the esteemed bourgeois Sarang-ui Presbyterian Mega-Church (in the Gangnam dis-

trict), which is neo-Pentecostal but not associated with Assemblies of God (Kim S. 2006b, 228).

In this context, we should pay particular attention to the "elective affinity" between neo-Pentecostalism and neoliberal globalization (Stalsett 2006b, 200). The kind of capitalism most prevalent in the globalized age is strongly marked by neoliberal economic theory and ideology. Thus, liberation theologians usually criticize neoliberalism as a "sacrificial" economy in a resacralization/idolarization of money and of the market (Stalsett 2006b, 200). In their view, people are subservient to the demands of the market. But the Pew Forum survey (2006, 52) reports that there is consistently strong support for a free market economy in all ten countries surveyed. In every nation, a majority of the general population agrees that most people are better off in a free market economy, even though some people are rich and some are poor. On this question, the opinions of Pentecostals and charismatics tend to coincide with those of non-renewalists.

It can be noted that sacrificial theology is at the heart of neo-Pentecostalism (Stalsett 2006b, 204-207). Faith is expected to produce results—concrete and immediate results. But this can only happen through sacrifice such as the offering (of tithe) which is the individual's demonstration of faith. Put simply, generous donations are seen as practical proof of a believer's faith. Thus, we can say that the most striking common aspects of neoliberalism and neo-Pentecostalism are their emphasis on the immediate, the present moment and the sacrificial attitude underpinning their respective ideology/theology and practices (Stalsett 2006b, 200).

Concerning the role of Korean Christianity in global society, it should be pointed out that some well-known Pentecostal leaders of developing countries are eager to learn something from the Korean Pentecostal success. Harold Caballero, the pastor of El Shaddai (a mega-church in Guatemala) and candidate for the presidency of Guatemala in 2007, opened his keynote address at an international symposium entitled "Spirit in the World" with references to "Max Weber" and surprisingly, to the Korean Pentecostal success (and YFGC's David Cho). From this, he confidently predicted that Pente-

costalism could indeed lift his country out of poverty by teaching individuals to be thrifty and officials to abandon corruption.

When I first heard this allusion to South Korean success, however, I felt somehow uncomfortable. It is true that Korean evangelical/Pentecostal leaders, represented by David Cho of YFGC, have emphasized the virtue of diligence and hard work. However, while Korean middle-class evangelicals/neo-Pentecostals (abroad as well as in Korea) are more diligent, hard-working, competitive, and business-oriented than the general population, my observations do not square with the assertion that they are thrifty and free of corruption.

For example, ethnic Korean churches in the United States are one of the few social outlets where first-generation immigrants, who started on the lower rungs of the social ladder in America, can display the trappings of success—whether through their children's achievements or their own luxury cars. Thus, some young, native-born pastors often make the observation that (Korean) immigrant churches are dysfunctional and hypocritical religious institutions that demonstrate a negative expression of Christian spirituality for the second generation (Kang 2007). To me, the validity of such an audacious opinion, shared by American-born Korean pastors, is an open question. However, I would emphasize that Korean immigrant churches' emphasis on prosperity has a dual aspect, both positive and negative. For some American-born or American-reared pastors, the "gospel of prosperity" is a difficult thing to handle properly, whereas for some first generation pastors and congregants, it empowers them, thereby fortifying them from the competition as well as from the devil.

Moving beyond the issue of thrifty, when it comes to the issue of corruption, as of 2007, regrettably, South Korea is still perceived by foreign businessmen as the fifth most corrupt country of thirteen Asian countries.[21] According to the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC)'s survey, the corruption score of South Korea was 5.44 in 2006 and increased to 6.3 in 2007.[22] This suggests that South

21. Table of corruption scores among 13 Asian economies graded. http://www.antara.co/id/en/print/?id=1173836690.

22. On a scale of zero to ten, zero is the best possible score. The Philippines (9.40) is

Korea is failing to properly tackle corruption. It is to be noted here that, according to the Pew Forum's survey (2006, 64), only 62% of the general population in South Korea say that corrupt political leaders are a very big problem. Moreover, a surprising 53% of Pentecostals and 59% of Charismatics perceive corruption as a particularly serious problem in the country. Therefore, it is true that the most serious problem concerning corruption in South Korea at present, as was reported by most foreign correspondents in Seoul, ironically, is that the general population (including Christians) do not perceive corruption as corruption. This needs further examination.

It is noteworthy that shamanistic ethics are relative and situational; no attempt is made to judge human conduct according to an absolute standard (Hahm 1988, 62-72). The shamanistic person has no simple black-and-white dualism against which to judge the goodness, justice, or righteousness of his actions. In short, truth becomes relative. Since s/he acknowledges no transcendent state of human existence, this-worldly existence is the only one that matters. Also, shamanistic values are not easily divided into strictly private and public spheres. From this, it has been always easier for the shamanistic person to conceive of the country as a very large, extended family—with the ruler as its head—than to transfer his/her loyalty and affection to such abstractions as nation, state or commonwealth.

Before advocating as a role model for developing countries, Korean evangelicals/Pentecostals and their churches should, in my mind, tackle the issue of the secular shamanistic worldview concerning thrift, consumption, and corruption more seriously than is now being done. To accomplish this challenging task, a "positive or mature expression" of Christian spirituality should be sought by the leaders of Korean Protestantism.

As of 2002, among the fifteen largest Protestant mega-churches—with estimated congregations of over 10,000 people each—in South Korea, three are located in the Gangnam district, renown for its rich

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perceived by foreign businessmen as Asia's most corrupt economy. In contrast, Singapore (1.20) is seen as the cleanest economy.

middle-class residents. My observations confirm that most prosperous Korean churches (including the fifteen mega-churches) are "neo-Pentecostal" in theology, worship, and practice (Kim S. 2004). Martin (1990, 143) has dubbed this Korean Protestant scene "a spiritual enterprise culture." The economic miracle achieved by the consolidation of Korean conglomerates, *jaebeol* (*chaebol*) (such as Samsung and Hyundai), has a parallel in the organization and demographic miracle attained by the religious *jaebeol* of YFGC (Brouwer et al. 1996, 17).

Korean neo-Pentecostal Protestants in the midst of neoliberal globalization betray a growing middle-class orientation that prefers a religion of success to one of suffering. "Does God want you to be rich?" A growing number of Protestant evangelists raise a joyful "Yes!" in response.[23] While the teachings of David Cho seem to take their tone from the American ministries of the so-called Faith Movement as one of many strands of what Gorden Melton refers to as the Pentecostal "family" (Melton 1978), they are taught alongside demonology, shamanism, and animism, which have more in common with traditional indigenous Korean forms of religion than North American fundamentalism (Cox 1995, 213-215; Hunt 2000, 340). But all in all, as Steve Brouwer and others (1996, 28-32) puts it, with the market revolution, "Pentecostalism goes middle-class." In this sense, the case of the neo-Pentecostal movement in present South Korea with its emerging economy is no exception. In short, the popularity of the so-called health and wealth gospel or "answer-theology" rather than "relationship-theology" in South Korea reflects the continuing influence of this-worldly Korean shamanism to Christians as well as the commercialization and self-centered materialism of contemporary evangelical Christianity (Harrison 2005, 14).

Meanwhile, British sociologist Matthew Wood (2003, 174) highlights the presence of spirit possession in conditions of rapid social change such as neoliberal globalization over which ordinary people, especially the working class, have little or no power. It is to be noted

23. "Cover Story," *Time*, September 18, 2006.

that, since the 1997 Financial Crisis, increasing numbers of urban South Koreans, especially lower-middle class (self-employed and small business people) have turned to traditional shamans in order to propitiate ancestors and deities, as they engage in "high-risk enterprises at the margins of the Korean economic miracle" (Kendall 1996, 516).

Concluding Remarks

It would be unwise to try to understand the spread of evangelical/Pentecostal Protestantism without reference to sociology. But I want to come back once again to *The Economist*'s excellent report on Pentecostals: Pentecostalism is not only burning through the "cities of the dispossessed." It is also consuming the business and professional elites of the developing world.

With regard to the key reason for the Korean Pentecostal success, given the substance of the quote noted above, I would conclude that despite South Korea having experienced one of the most extraordinary economic and social transformations in history—moving from a traditional rural society in the early 1960s to a hyper-urban industrialized one in the 1990s—the country's Pentecostal success vividly demonstrates the inner spiritual dynamics of the religion. In this sense, the present study bolsters the case for a link between "experiential spiritualities" (e.g. spirit possession, healing, etc.) and the resurgence of both neo-Pentecostalism and shamanism in the Korean context.

Next, I would like to comment on the "Afghanistan controversy." The haughty attitude of some South Korean evangelical fundamentalist figures, such as Paul Choe, who are eager to proselytize Muslims, could be considered an example of "spiritual imperialism." There have been repeated warnings over the years that the Pentecostal fire will burn itself out.[24] But, as exemplified by the "Afghanistan contro-

24. *Economist*, December 23, 2006.

versy," so far the warnings have not proven accurate.

As Samuel Huntington (1997, 109), who recently compared South Korea's development with the underdevelopment of Ghana in his preface to *Culture Matters* (2000), pointed out, economic prosperity to East Asians (including South Koreans) is alone proof of "moral superiority." We, therefore, could argue that, within the global village, cultural affirmation follows material success; hard power generates soft power. This partially explains the religious zeal of the South Korean evangelicals/Pentecostals who ended up being deported by Afghanistan.

Finally, based on the discussion so far, I would suggest the following features as the future of Korean Protestant Christianity. First, the shamanistic influence that has always been such an important part of Korea's cultural history will continue to have a strong impact on the manifestation of Korean Pentecostal spirituality in the global village. As several studies on the quality of life have concluded that religious persons are survivors (McClenon 2002) or tend to be healthier and happier (Ferriss 2002; Koenig and Cohen 2002), the positive aspect of the religious function of shamanism in modern Korea could be rediscovered by Pentecostal scholars who have a deep interest in shamanism and who attempt to formulate a theology in dialogue with it.

Second, In contemporary Korea where uncertainty and corruption still rule as a consequence of a lack of trust among the inhabitants, there apparently is and will continue to be more need for a God to trust in. Conventional wisdom shows that faith holds a clue to relief from anxiety. Additionally, religious communities cater to our social needs and to our need for someone to whom we can offer love and devotion (Grinde 2005, 281). There is an inverse relationship between the importance of the Christian faith and general trust in fellow citizens (Warren 1999). It seems ironic but the prospect of Korean Protestantism depends partially, therefore, on a general level of trust among the Korean populace themselves. Even though the concept of secularization is still somewhat controversial, if South Korea follows the United States in terms of social development, then South

Korea may turn out to be a reverse example of what Grace Davie in her book *Europe*: *The Exceptional Case* (2002) calls "belonging without believing"—that is, "believing without belonging."

Third, given the fact that "answer-theology" is more widespread than "relationship-theology" in the prosperous neo-Pentecostal megachurches amid neoliberal globalization, there seems to be little chance that Korean Protestant Christianity (particularly in its Pentecostal form) will overcome its limits as a "religion of the status quo"—a religion that lacks ethical sensitivity or a communal ethic—in the near future.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim's (1912) account of religious experience as the "effervescence" that occurs in large religious gatherings (such as YFGC) leads to the prediction that such experience may be less likely to take place when a person is alone (Hay and Socha 2005, 595). The public practice of prayer or meditation, however, may encourage other kinds of activity, for example, reflections on the effect one is having on people nearby. It could lead to self-aggrandizement that obscures immediacy, that is encouraging spirituality as relational consciousness (Hay and Socha 2005, 597). Like Jesus' advice to pray in one's private room with the door shut, retiring into privacy is about encouraging awareness of immediacy; it catalyzes relational consciousness that is distinguishable from conventional or traditional spirituality as an individual, private matter. Relational consciousness allows for the possibility of a communal ethic and, for the religious believer, a sense of relationship with a God who is experienced as immanent (Hay and Socha 2005, 598).

Finally, despite Korean Protestantism's recent decline in social legitimacy, its foreign export of religious enthusiasm, as exemplified in the "Afghanistan controversy," paradoxically, appears to be increasing in intensity for the time being.

The expansionist conviction of Korean Pentecostal missionaries who are imbued with ideas of "global spiritual conquest" (Anderson 2007) seems to be shaped by Korean Christian Zionism, which is a product of premillennial eschatological expectations, the increase of anti-Americanism in the world after 9/11, and Korean moral superi-

ority drawn from the country's economic success. Korean biblical premillennialists, who strongly support Israel, believe that the nations of the world have to be conquered for Christ before his reappearance to rule the earth. They suggest that South Korea should take over the leadership of the world mission from the United States. From this, we can say that their religious fanaticism is not likely to be exhausted soon.

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