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# The Impact of Han-Ryu on Pastoral Ministry in Korean American Churches

By  
EZRA SOONG KIM

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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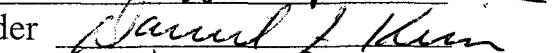
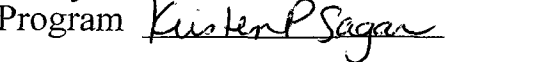
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## ABSTRACT

Korean television dramas, part of the Han-Ryu phenomenon (means “Korean Wave,” HR hereafter), have become immensely popular not only among Koreans in the United States, but also among members of Korean churches in this country. Korean churches in northern California are no exception to this phenomenon. The purpose of this study, thus, was to understand how Korean pastors in northern California relate to Korean dramas in their ministry, particularly in their counseling and sermons.

Two main research questions guided the study. The research questions were: (1) “To what extent do Korean pastors in northern California relate to the Korean dramas?” and (2) “How do Korean pastors in northern California relate to the Korean dramas in their counseling and sermons?” This study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with seven Korean pastors in northern California.

This study was significant for three reasons. First, this research may make Korean pastors in northern California more aware of the HR phenomenon that comes with HR dramas. Second, this research may make them aware of the spiritual and cultural conditions of their congregation members. Third, this research may also provide an opportunity for Korean pastors to become more aware of their own cultural status.

The results of the interviews can be summarized into “common views” and “different views” among the interviewees. The first common view is that most of the interviewees are well aware of Korean dramas. Second, all of the interviewees enjoy watching the dramas because they are valuable educational resources, and they can help people to find their identity as a Korean American in the United States. Third, most of the interviewees do not use the dramas as illustrating materials in personal counseling or

visitations, but they sometimes use them in their sermons. Finally, all interviewees in general have a positive view toward the Korean dramas at the level of pastoral ministry.

However, the interviewees did not agree on all aspects of the topic of study. Four main differences were discovered in: (1) patterns and habits of watching Korean dramas, (2) reasons for watching (other various reasons), (3) reasons for being temperate in utilizing the dramas, and (4) evaluating the positives and negatives of Korean dramas.

Three recommendations were made by the researcher. First, for the Korean pastors as a postmodern individual with HR dramas, it was recommended not to watch dramas with a dualistic habit. Second, it was recommended that the interviewees, as pastors of Korean churches, must find other positive spiritual alternatives to help their congregants who are addicted to drama-watching. Third, it was recommended for the Korean pastors that more awareness of extended cultural understanding in relation to other HR genres as well as HR drama, and more utilization of HR dramas in their ministries, are needed.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In Sharan Merriam's description of qualitative research, the first motive for a qualitative research project is "to raise a question about something that perplexes and challenges the mind."<sup>1</sup> Merriam's guidebook also points out that researchers can find a motive for their work from observing "everyday activities."<sup>2</sup> In light of her guidance, this research focuses on a phenomenon that has perplexed Korean American ministry leaders greatly in recent days. It is the "Han-Ryu" (HR, hereafter) phenomenon's invasion into Korean churches in the United States. Korean television dramas, part of the HR phenomenon, have become immensely popular not only among Koreans in the United States, but also among members of Korean churches in this country. In the research conducted for this study, bewilderment over the HR phenomenon prompted Korean ministers to consider two specific parties that contribute to this phenomenon. The first party is the "Korean dramas," which serve as the main driver of the HR phenomenon. The other contributing party consists of the Korean churches in America, within which the HR phenomenon is readily evidenced and observed.

Here, the researcher must briefly clarify what the HR phenomenon is. The word "Han-Ryu" is a newly-coined derivative word consisting of two separate words. "Han" is a shorthand notation of "Han Kook," meaning "Korean," and "Ryu," whose direct translation is "ocean flow or wave," stands for a phenomenon arising from the effects of

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<sup>1</sup>Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 58.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

some influence. So “Ryu” can be translated as a trend, a phenomenal impact, a syndrome, or a wave. Therefore, the “Han-Ryu” can be understood as an influence of the Korean culture, or a Korean phenomenon, seen in other cultures. The most commonly accepted and widely used translation of “Han-Ryu” is the “Korean Wave.”<sup>3</sup>

How did the HR come about, and where is it going? In relation to the direction of this research, the researcher would like to consider answers to these questions in a spatial sense, by dividing the sphere of HR influence into three regions. The first region represents the broadest sphere of influence; with each of the next two, the focal region narrows. The first region of influence is the whole world, with particularly strong influence in Asian countries. The second region is America, where most Korean immigrants live. This region includes the Korean communities and churches that are spread throughout the cities of America. The third region is the Korean community of the Sacramento area and nearby Bay areas.

First, this study examined the HR’s global influence. In the beginning of 2000, the HR started out with a few dramas produced by Korean-television broadcasting companies, the first exemplary one being *Winter Sonata*.<sup>4</sup> After gaining popularity in Korea, it took the islands of Japan by storm. Yonsama, the main male character of the drama, with his warm heart, captured the hearts of middle-aged women in Japan.<sup>5</sup> With this drama, “the perception of Japanese women toward Korean men has changed;” the

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<sup>3</sup>Hye-Shil Choe, *Story-telling in Korean Dramas* (Seoul: Saemoonsa, 2007), 13-4.

<sup>4</sup> Hirata Yukie, *Japan That Spends Korea: Han-Ryu, Woman and Dramas* (Seoul: Book World, 2009), 106-50. This book introduces “Winter Sonata” as the drama, among many others, that had the most powerful influence on Japan. In relation to this, we can get more detailed information in chapter 2 with some related literature.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 103.

drama also “encouraged many Japanese people to learn the Korean language and travel to Korea.”<sup>6</sup>

The next representative example was *Dae Jang Keum*, which was produced in 2004. This drama expanded the HR’s sphere of influence beyond Asian countries into the rest of the world. Its humanistic story is about a woman during the Lee Dynasty, who started as a cook in the king’s palace and ended up being palace medical personnel. *Dae Jang Keum* has been exported to over sixty countries, including countries in Asia, Africa, South America, and Europe.<sup>7</sup> In Iran, the audience share went over ninety percent, and one Indian viewer wrote a letter to the producers in Korea saying, “I have learned the true meaning of life after watching *Dae Jang Keum*.”<sup>8</sup>

With the popularity of these dramas, Korean television networks have competitively concentrated on producing more dramas. In the case of daily series, Korean dramas at most last for a series of 120 shows. For weekly series shown once or twice a week, the series end typically after sixty shows. This means that unceasing stories have been produced in Korea, as the survival of each Korean television network depends highly on its viewer ratings.

The second region of the HR’s influence is the Korean immigrant community and the Korean churches in the United States. The population of Korean Americans in the United States is estimated at about 1.42 million.<sup>9</sup> Mostly they live in big cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Seattle. It

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<sup>6</sup> Editorial, *The Korean Times*, January 10, 2011..

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Editorial, *The Korea Times*. , May 27, 2011.

is estimated that there are over four thousand Korean churches in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Most of these are located in big cities as well. Along with churches, Korean grocery markets are easily found in every city in which Koreans live. In the corner sections of all the Korean grocery markets are stores that rent video recordings of Korean dramas. Many Koreans stop by these rental places after shopping for their groceries to pick up videos of Korean dramas. This is a familiar scene, easily observable in any Korean grocery market in America. In a way, it is a symbolic scene, illustrating the current cultural situations of the Korean immigrant community.

Examining the widespread influence described above led the researcher to wonder whether the areas of Sacramento and northern California, where he resides, are exceptions to this phenomenon. Are Korean Christians exceptions to the phenomenon? These questions are investigated in the following discussion of the third region of the HR sphere of influence. The region of northern California, where the researcher resides, includes Sacramento, which is the capitol of California, and big cities such as San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland. The Korean population in this region is estimated to be approximately one hundred and twenty thousand.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 290 churches meet in northern California (Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland, and Monterey), including some that subscribe to heretical beliefs.<sup>12</sup> Except for a few large churches, most churches have congregations made up of fewer than one hundred members.

The cities of northern California are no exception, compared with other cities in the United States, when it comes to their Korean residents frequently renting bundles of

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<sup>10</sup> 2011, January 18. *The Korea Times*. By the end of 2010, Korean churches in US numbered 4,144. And 1,313 are in California.

<sup>11</sup> *The Overseas Korean Daily*. The exact number is 126,301.

<sup>12</sup> GID Design ed., *2011 GID Design Northern California Korean Business Directory*.

Korean-drama videos from Korean grocery markets. When Korean pastors in northern California visit the homes of their church members, they often see bundles of video tapes near the members' television sets. And one common topic of conversation among church members is the story of some Korean drama they have watched. Korean dramas have become an integral part of these people's lives. In other words, the "Han-Ryu" has already invaded the churches in this region.

### **Purpose and Problem Statement**

One important topic to consider at this point is how Christians should view the "Han-Ryu" phenomenon. Particularly, how should Korean pastors view it? These pastors hold a position of leadership not only in Korean churches, but also, whether actively or passively, in Korean communities. Pastors who have negative opinions of the HR's invasion into churches will discourage their members from watching Korean dramas. In contrast, the pastors who have positive opinions will tend to encourage watching dramas and may also use HR stories in their sermons. The Korean pastors in northern California are no exception.

There is a possibility that this phenomenon could be of great help in ministry if used properly. It is the researcher's intent to provide some guidance in detecting, identifying, and taking advantage of this possibility. Therefore, the objective of this qualitative research is "to understand how Korean pastors in northern California relate to Korean dramas in their ministry." The following research questions will be asked:

1. To what extent are Korean pastors in northern California interested in Korean dramas?

2. How do Korean pastors in northern California relate to the Korean dramas in their ministries of visiting and counseling congregants?
3. How do Korean pastors in northern California relate to the Korean dramas in their sermons?

### **Significance of the Study**

As a minimum, this research will provide Korean pastors in northern California with awareness of the HR phenomenon. It will provide them with awareness of the HR dramas' invasion into the lives of their congregation members and of the necessary, resultant shift of paradigm in their ministries. There are at least three aspects to this awareness. First, the Korean pastors will have an opportunity to become more aware of the status of the "fields" in which their congregation members live. Pastors must know the cultural icons that reflect the contemporary culture of the world. In fact, pastors must be at the forefront of this effort. Therefore, the pastors must not be ignorant of the postmodern culture that surrounds the audiences of their sermons. I believe that this research will contribute to such awareness.

Second is the awareness of the spiritual and cultural conditions of the "congregation members." The pastors will be able to understand the congregants' spheres of life and how they move about within them. The pastors will come to understand who their congregants are, what they live for, what their interests are, and how they express their interests. Culture is a way of expressing life, and humans are principal agents of culture. Therefore, the pastors will know their congregation members better if they understand people's culture. Specifically, even through the HR phenomenon itself,



pastors can grow to understand their congregations better. The current research will contribute to this pastoral understanding of the HR phenomenon.

Third, the role of a preacher is to connect the two worlds – “heaven and earth.”<sup>13</sup> Korean pastors must deliver the words of God to congregations that are hooked on Korean dramas. Pastors are spiritual ambassadors on the earth and, at the same time, cultural ambassadors from heaven. Therefore, they must find the common ground existing between the two realms. Then they can use this understanding as a tool to deliver the words of heaven more effectively. From that point of view, this research also provides an opportunity for pastors to become more aware of their own cultural status.

### Definition of Terms

**Han-Ryu:** Newly-coined terminology, widely used in the past ten years. “Han” means “Korean,” “Ryu” means “ocean flow” or “wave.” “Han-Ryu,” then, is a figurative expression that refers to a strong Korean cultural influence on other countries. It is mostly commonly translated as “Korean Wave.”

**Han-Ryu phenomenon:** A powerful social and cultural influence of the “Korean Wave” found in other countries. Includes the influence not only from Korean dramas but also from Korean movies, popular music, so-called idol stars (young pop singers), fashion, and food.

**Han-Ryu drama:** Major genre that has stirred up the Han-Ryu phenomenon. These dramas are produced in Korea and exported to foreign countries.

**Korean immigrant church:** Korean churches founded by Korean immigrants, mostly in America.

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<sup>13</sup> See John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 10.

**Korean Churches in northern California:** “Northern California” is generally accepted (in the Korean immigrant society) as the wider region that includes San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Sacramento, and Monterey. Thus, “Korean Churches in northern California” means the Korean churches in that region. About three hundred Korean churches are located in northern California.

**Bay Area:** Metropolitan areas of the tri-cities, San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose.

**Bay Area Korean Church Association and Sacramento Area Korean Church**

**Association:** Associations of Korean Churches in respective areas. They meet periodically to plan joint services and events on specific occasions such as Easter and Christmas.

**Postmodernism:** Prevalent thought and cultural phenomena at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. As a belief system that developed “post” modernism, it denies objective truth, yet instead supports the idea of the subjective “self” of human beings. It follows subjectivism, pluralism and relativism rather than objectivism.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kuk-Won Shin, *Postmodernism* (Seoul: IVP, 1999). See “Introduction”, chapter 3 and chapter 5.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to understand how Korean pastors in northern California relate to Korean dramas in their ministry. In order to study this, four areas of literature will be reviewed in this chapter: (1) Han-Ryu (HR) and Korean drama, (2) Korean immigrant churches, (3) Postmodernism and Korean dramas, and (4) Postmodern pastors.

#### Han-Ryu and Korean Drama

##### Origin of Han-Ryu

In chapter one, a concise introduction of HR and its global influence was included in order to provide the background of this study. In this chapter, the researcher will take a more detailed look at the background and history of HR. Surprisingly, the origin of the word “Han-Ryu” came from China, not Korea. Further, contrary to popular understanding, the genre that created the seismic wave of HR was not the Korean drama to which this study is related. Rather, HR started with popular music. In 1999, the Korean government produced a compact disk (CD) collection of Korean popular songs and distributed six thousand CDs in Chinese, three thousand CDs in Japanese, and three thousand CDs in English.<sup>15</sup> The producing company in charge of the Chinese version set up a radio program called “Seoul Music Salon” at a Beijing Music Radio station to play

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<sup>15</sup>Choe, 13-4.

Korean popular songs an hour each day.<sup>16</sup> The term HR was first used in this Chinese radio program.

Prior to the formation of this newly-coined word, the Chinese had used the word, “Han-Ryu,” with a different meaning, but the same pronunciation.<sup>17</sup> “Han,” in Chinese characters, is 寒, meaning “cold.” Han-Ryu (“cold wave”) had been used by the Chinese to signify “new trend” or “powerful trend.” With the introduction of popular Korean songs, they switched 寒 (meaning “cold”) with 韓 (meaning “Korean”), because both characters have the same pronunciation.<sup>18</sup> No one knew that this seemingly small fortuitous event would lead to a big-bang event of great magnitude, but the big-bang actually happened. The phenomenon of the HR, which everyone thought would be short-lived, has continued to grow with the advent of Korean popular dramas.<sup>19</sup> This ever-growing cultural wave is called the “Han-Ryu phenomenon,” and the word has turned into a somewhat well-accepted social terminology.

While defending the scholarly view of the HR phenomenon, Han-Hye-Chung Cho used a more sensational term: the “Han-Ryu Craze.” Her scholarly definition of HR is as follows, “The Han-Ryu Craze is a trend in enjoying and consuming Korean popular culture such as songs, dramas, fashion, tourism and movies, spreading among the people, particularly among adolescents in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam since late

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 14

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

1990's.”<sup>20</sup> As she explained, the expressions “HR phenomenon” and “HR Craze” describe the cultural consumption of items exported to the surrounding countries, particularly the enormous phenomenon developed through Korean dramas.

### Korean Dramas in Han-Ryu

Korean drama, more than any other genre, spearheaded the HR phenomenon. Hirata Yukie said, “Among Korean popular cultures, the most popular genre in many regions of the world is the television drama.”<sup>21</sup> However, there is a potential misunderstanding of which one must be aware. Because the origin of the term HR is the Beijing Radio Station, and the genre was popular songs, one might deduce that Korean popular songs initiated the HR movement, and then Korean dramas followed. However this is not true. Rather, the dramas were the first to plant the seed of the HR phenomenon, well before the Korean popular songs.

Scholars agree that the HR movement started during the latter part of the 1990's. Dong-Hoo Lee states, “Korean trendy drama that was the main contributor of the HR Craze in Asia during the late 1990's became a cultural product that elevated Korea's national pride.”<sup>22</sup> As indicated by Lee, Korean dramas started the HR movement in the late 1990's, before the term HR was coined in the Beijing Radio Music Studio.<sup>23</sup> Yukie considered 1996 to be the start of HR drama craze, when the dramas such as *Doctor Brothers* and *All-In* became popular in Vietnam.<sup>24</sup> Following that, *Soon-Poong OB/GYN*,

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<sup>20</sup>Han-Hye-Chung Cho, “Han-Ryu Craze as a Symptom of a Global Cultural Movement” in *Han-Ryu and Popular Culture of Asia*, ed. Publishing Department of Yon-Se University (Seoul: Publishing Department of Yon-Se University, 2009), 2.

<sup>21</sup>Yukie, 20-1.

<sup>22</sup>Dong-Hoo Lee, “Cultural Formation of Korean Trendy Dramas” in *Han-Ryu and Popular Culture of Asia*, 126.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Choe's explanation regarding this information. Cf. also footnote 1 and 2 in this chapter.

<sup>24</sup>Yukie, 21.

*Star in My Heart*, *Autumn Tale*, and *Winter Sonata* became popular in China and Taiwan. In Japan, due to the popularity of *Winter Sonata*, a Korean tourism guidebook with the theme of this drama has become a best seller.<sup>25</sup>

This phenomenon was also evidenced in the continuous increase of the television network's revenue from the export of television dramas since the late 1990's. For example, the export revenue increased from 5,384,000 dollars in 1996 to 26,687,000 dollars in 2002.<sup>26</sup> Between 2001 and 2002, the export revenue jumped by whopping 52.7 percent.<sup>27</sup> This data on the export revenue of the Korean dramas confirms that either 1996 or 1997 was the beginning year of the HR phenomenon arising from television dramas. Thus, one can conclude that the HR phenomenon originated from the Korean dramas.

Now, it is necessary to take a look at a few examples of the HR phenomenon brought by Korean dramas. As was mentioned in chapter one, the sphere of influence of the Korean dramas is not only limited to the Asian countries around Korea. From the actual examples of global influence, beyond Asian countries, one can truly realize the wide influence of the HR phenomenon. *Sea-God* has been broadcast in Turkey and India, *Full House* in Finland, *Winter Sonata* in Ghana and Tanzania, *Dae Jang Geum* in Egypt, and *All In* in Uzbekistan and Swaziland.<sup>28</sup>

The strong influence of *Winter Sonata* was representative of all of these dramas. *Winter Sonata* was produced in 2002 by KBS, one of the representative broadcasting companies in Korea. After enjoying popularity in Korea, with the audience share of 23.1

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Choe, 14. See also Editorial, *The Dong-A Daily*, March 14, 2006..

percent, it was exported to Japan in the following year.<sup>29</sup> In Japan, it gained instant popularity, symbolizing the HR phenomenon.<sup>30</sup> The main male character, Yong-JoonBae, and the main female character, Ji-Woo Choi, were treated like heroes in Japan. When Yong-JoonBae visited Japan to meet his fans on April 3, 2004, five thousand people went to the airport lobby to greet him. At a meeting with his fans at Shibuya Auditorium, two thousand people participated.<sup>31</sup> In a survey performed by the Asahi Newspaper in August, 2004, forty percent of the respondents answered affirmatively to the question, “Have you watched the Korean drama, *Winter Sonata*?”<sup>32</sup> At any rate, *Winter Sonata* had become a drama that represented the HR phenomenon. It played a decisive role in projecting positive images to Japan, a nation with which Korea had maintained an uncomfortable relationship due to the painful history of the Japanese colonization of Korea from 1910 to 1945. This drama performed a role of a cultural evangelist, putting the past behind and enabling the reconciliation that had not been achieved diplomatically.

In addition, *Winter Sonata* gained popularity not only in neighboring countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, but also in countries that had previously not kept a close relationship with Korea. As a prime example, in Egypt, *Winter Sonata* enjoyed such popularity that wives urged their husband to be home before the drama started at 9:30 PM.<sup>33</sup> Those who had watched the drama said, “*Winter Sonata* made the soul of Egyptians cry.”<sup>34</sup> This drama was able to move the people of the world, including many

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<sup>29</sup>Yukie, 106.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>33</sup>Choe, 14.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

that famous politicians and renowned scholars find difficult to reach. This drama became a turning point in demonstrating the power of the HR wave.

In Korea's neighboring country, Japan, *Winter Sonata* has developed into something more than a television drama to be watched and enjoyed. The popularity of the drama culminated in a tour package built around the sites that appeared in the drama. After watching *Winter Sonata*, Japanese tourists started coming to places in Korea where the drama was filmed, and this tour package continues to be popular even today.<sup>35</sup> The sites of the tour include the city of Choon-Chun and other locations of the drama. It even includes Room 348 of the National Cancer Center, where the main character, played by Yong-JoonBae, was hospitalized in the drama.<sup>36</sup> One of the options of the tour package is a sleep-over in the hospital ward, Room 348.<sup>37</sup>

This response demonstrates that one HR drama created a gigantic cultural phenomenon, which enabled a considerable number of consumers to enjoy Korean cultural products. What is even more amazing is that this is happening to foreigners in countries that have different cultures and languages. Soo-Yeon Lee comments on the phenomenon in Japan (particularly among Japanese women), "HR dramas are entertainment and pastime. At the same time, they became solace and compass in their life."<sup>38</sup>

As all of this demonstrates, HR is a gigantic phenomenon. HR drama leaped over the boundaries of nation and race and became a cultural device that enabled people to overcome differences engendered from cultural prejudices. Korea was surprised by how

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<sup>35</sup>Yukie, 103.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Soo-Yeon Lee, *Han-Ryu Dramas and Desire of Asian Woman* (Seoul: Communication Books, 2008), ix.



the HR phenomenon occurred. Korean drama producers had no idea of the effect of HR dramas. A Korean axiom says, “You get wet by drizzle in the end.” Even a drizzle can make one’s clothes soaking wet if it drizzles for a long time. HR started at the level of a drizzle, but soon it turned into a flood with uncontrollable speed and volume (particularly the Korean dramas). Thus, it is now called the “HR phenomenon” or “HR wave.”

Though it is a little late (because it turned out to be difficult to catch up with the speed of HR), Korean scholars and the Korean press are attempting to manage the HR phenomenon more systematically.<sup>39</sup> They are trying to discern: (1) in which direction the HR should go forward, (2) how to expand this HR phenomenon, which came about unexpectedly, and (3) how to regenerate the positive effects and images of HR in a productive manner.<sup>40</sup> It is expected that the Korean government and broadcasting companies will find solutions to these questions in consultation with scholars.

### **Present State of the Korean Immigrant Church**

#### **A Positive Potential: Large Reservoir for future Missional Resources**

The idea for this dissertation project originated from the HR phenomenon witnessed in Korean churches in the United States. Pastors of Korean churches in the United States have noticed and directly felt the influence of the HR phenomenon on their congregants. In particular, popular Korean dramas strongly dominate their congregants’ cultural consciousness and quality of life.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, Korean immigrant churches in the United States form another venue where the HR phenomenon thrives. To understand the influence of HR on Korean immigrant churches, one must first look at the current status of Korean immigrant churches.

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<sup>39</sup>Cho, v.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>See page 4 of the “Introduction” part (chapter 1) in order to understand this phenomenon.

As stated in the previous chapter, it is estimated that over four thousand Korean churches currently exist in the United States.<sup>42</sup> With an estimated population of approximately two million Koreans residing in the United States,<sup>43</sup> one can then calculate that one of these churches exists per five hundred Korean people. Observing this fact from the macroscopic view of God's kingdom, this prevalence of churches is a tremendous feat that no immigrant ethnic group has achieved except these Korean immigrants. This observation causes one to ponder what future roles and functions Korean immigrant churches would play in expanding God's kingdom. The world is going through continuous globalization. Korean immigrant churches possess more advantages in global missional aspects than Korean churches in Korea, despite the fact that there are far more churches in Korea. This can be seen in two ways.

First, the Korean immigrants in these churches have experienced a new culture in a country that is not their homeland. Korean immigrants have become so-called "multi-cultural" people. It is estimated that there are one hundred and fifty thousand Korean American college students (including 1.5 generations and second generations), and about seventy thousand foreign students from Korea are studying in the United States.<sup>44</sup>

In 1900, 85.5 percent of Christians in the world had lived in Europe and North America, but in 2003 only 41.5 percent of Christians lived in Europe and North America.<sup>45</sup> The rest of the world's Christians were ethnic minorities, such as Latin Americans and Asians.<sup>46</sup> What this change indicates is that, out of all ethnic minorities, Koreans residing in United States are expected to make a larger contribution to world

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<sup>42</sup>Editorial, *The Korea Times*, January 18, 2011.

<sup>43</sup>Editorial, *The Oversea Korean Daily*, April 7, 2005..

<sup>44</sup>Sang-Chul Oh, *Theology of Immigration* (Seoul: Qumran Publishing Co., 2008), 34.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Recited from Wolfgang Hoover.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

Christianity. Many Korean Americans, particularly second generation ones, have already taken up a mainstream role in many areas of evangelical work.

If one presupposes that Christian mission work is necessarily related to the intermingling of cultures, then Korean immigrants already possess a great advantage for doing missionary work because they have multi-cultural experience in their situation as immigrants.<sup>47</sup> One obvious advantage is that they do not need to take a separate pre-mission training course, as other missionary candidates in Korea do, to prepare for foreign mission work. Because of this unique advantage, they can be classified as “semi” missionaries.

Second, Korean immigrant Christians are bilingual, speaking both Korean and English. People can now communicate in English in practically any part of the world. English is widely known as the international common language.<sup>48</sup> A good example of this international familiarity with English is the “English-craze” syndrome found in Asian countries, including Korea. In Korea, a nation-wide effort to learn English has reached an almost frantic level.<sup>49</sup> However, Korean American immigrants have enjoyed the benefit of speaking English in their everyday life. Utilizing this linguistic strength, Korean immigrant churches can take a leading role in the mission work in foreign countries.

With more than one hundred years of immigration history, it is true that some negative aspects are also found in Korean immigrant churches. Nevertheless, Korean

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<sup>47</sup> See J. Nelson Jennings, *God the Real Super Power: Rethinking Our Role in Missions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Co., 2007), 139-40. Jennings sees “an ever-greater acceleration in immigration movements” of recent decades as an ever-greater opportunity of evangelism.

<sup>48</sup> As of 2000, the population that uses English as their mother language is 375 million. And approximately one billion people are using English. Cf. “English,” n.d., <http://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/english>.

<sup>49</sup> “Gireugi (Wild goose) Dad” is a representative example of this syndrome in Korea. This new terminology originated from early 2000. It means a lonely “home-alone-father” who sent his children with his wife to foreign countries (mostly English speaking countries like US) and victimizes himself to make his children study abroad in their early age. Cf. <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/gireugidad>. Cf. also So-Young Choi, “Society that clings to English,” n.d., <http://www.idomin.com/news/article>.

immigrant churches still remain positive agents of Christianity in America, and they function well in the area of foreign mission work. The first generation Korean Americans established the roots of these Korean immigrant churches. Wherever they went, they founded churches and produced a number of pastors and church leaders. They dedicated themselves to growth of these churches by contributing their finances and energy. The second generation is now harvesting the fruits of their parents' endeavors. If this fruit can be used for mission work, it will be a great blessing for them. At any rate, Korean churches have already been blessed with a benefit for global evangelical mission work - their multi-cultural and bilingual experience.

#### A Negative Limitation: Absence of Culture

According to the findings of Karen Chai, second generation Korean Americans tend to stop attending church after becoming independent from their parents by going to college, even though they went to church with their parents when they were young.<sup>50</sup> Though many reasons for that may exist, one of the main reasons is believed to be the limited living surroundings of Korean immigrants. Most first generation Korean Americans make a living by either owning or working in small businesses.<sup>51</sup> Though many first generation Korean immigrants worked as professionals such as medical doctors, nurses, college professors, and government officials prior to coming to America, it is very difficult for them to find similar positions in America.<sup>52</sup> Due to this limitation, it

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<sup>50</sup>Karen J. Chai, "Beyond 'Strictness' to 'Distinctiveness': Generational Transition in Korean Protestant Churches," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 157. For example, "a study of New York city Korean Americans found that only 5 percent of second-generation Korean Americans remain in the church after college." This is recited from an interview with Dr. Stephen Linton, research associate at the Centre for Korean Research, Columbia University, New York, January 3, 1997.

<sup>51</sup>Oh, 67. According to a survey conducted in LA in 1986, 53 percent of Korean men and 36 percent of Korean women engaged in small business.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

is hard for them to assimilate into the American mainstream. Consequently, they devote their efforts into establishing and maintaining small businesses, almost at the level of workaholics.

Many of these small business workers attempt to find a place to discharge their mental energy, which has been often suppressed by their restricted living boundaries. Church, therefore, became the place they desire to go. At church, they release the wrath and hidden energy that they suppress in their daily lives, either positively or negatively. Their children usually grow up watching their parents lead these double-standard lives. When they are young, the children do not have any choice except to follow their parents to church. However, after becoming independent from their parents, they no longer have a convincing reason to go to church.

In fact, Korean immigrant churches have not kept their position as a place to enrich the Christian faith of their members. Many scholars agree that Korean immigrant churches have consistently maintained their role in the Korean immigrant community not only as a religious institution but also as a social institution.<sup>53</sup> These churches strongly exhibit characteristics of ethnic-focused churches as social institutions rather than religious ones. Particularly, since the majority of active members are first generation immigrants who do not easily let go of traditional Korean culture, it is likely that these churches will continue to function as a cultural ghetto for some time.

Survey results on how quickly different ethnic minority groups become assimilated into American culture reveal that in the order of fastest to slowest: (1) Japanese, (2) Philippino, (3) Chinese, (4) African, (5) Korean, and finally (6)

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<sup>53</sup>Chai, 157.

Vietnamese.<sup>54</sup> This means that Korean Americans in the United States adhere to their native and self-centered culture more strongly than most other ethnic groups. It can be confidently stated that Korean immigrant churches in particular cultivate such tendencies among Korean Americans, and that these tendencies bear fruit in the form of isolation from mainstream America.

However, a problem arises at this point. Though “their” own culture exists in their own sphere, “our” culture, which is mixed harmoniously with “their” and “our” cultures together, has been continuously lacking. There are so many examples exhibiting this phenomenon. One good example is an abnormal pattern of church culture that Korean immigrant churches follow. Even though these churches are in the United States, they tend to imitate Korean churches in Korea in every aspect. Their church culture is a “copy-culture” that imitates Korean churches. The irony is that the Korean church culture in Korea, which Korean immigrant churches in America attempt to mimic, is mostly imported, interpreted, and copied from American churches in the United States. Korean churches in Korea distinctively prefer a “made-in-the-USA” feel. If a church culture is made in the USA, and it has proven successful in America, then Korean churches in Korea import it directly and apply it to their churches without deep theological examination.<sup>55</sup> Of course, this is not a good practice, but it is the reality of Korean churches.

Therefore, the process of transforming Korean church culture to Korean immigrant church culture occurs in the following order: “American churches produce a

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<sup>54</sup> Oh, 141.

<sup>55</sup> Yong-Sub Chung criticizes that this practice originates from “spiritual flunkeyism” of Korean churches, which is their excessive preference toward the “made-in-USA.” See, Yong-Sub Chung, *In Between Preaching and Instigation* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2006), 132-5.

church culture – Korean churches in Korea copy what American churches produced (mostly through translation of books and learning from seminars) – Korean churches in the US copy what Korean churches in Korea have (The “Made-In-USA” yet experimented in Korea).”<sup>56</sup> This process necessarily takes a long period of time and requires of a lot of energy from those involved. It is also complicated, transferring practices first from America to Korea and then from Korea back to America.

A unique phenomenon takes place during this process. Though Korean immigrant churches in the United States are in close proximity to the “American church trends,” they deliberately yield the opportunity to catch up with American church trends to Korean churches in Korea. Korean immigrant churches do not even attempt to learn the merits of American church trends directly from American churches. This shows that Korean immigrant churches have functioned relatively well in providing spiritual consolation to the individual members, but they intentionally or unintentionally gave up their duty to create Christian culture in the holistic sense. They have made an effort to keep the culture of their motherland, but they are not successful in creating a new culture in a broader sense. The longer these first generation immigrants attend church, the more conservative and traditional they become. They do not have much interest in pioneering and developing a new culture. Unwillingly, Korean immigrant churches have become major contributors in making the Korean immigrant community a cultural ghetto in America.

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<sup>56</sup>An obvious example of this is “song books (particularly contemporary songs)” being used popularly in Korean immigrant churches. A popular song book, “Voice of Clear Water” is its representative example. Almost 80 percentage of 720 songs were made in English. They were imported from the Western worlds and sooner or later they were translated into Korean. They enjoy popularity in Korean churches in Korea with Korean version for a while and then they were exported to Korean churches in the US. This is a general route that church culture and information circulate between Korean churches in Korea and American churches and between Korean churches in Korea and Korean churches in America. Cf. Byung-Koo Hwang, ed., *Voice of Clear Water* (Seoul: Joy Mission Publishers, 2003).

Nancy Percy warned against indulging in a Christian worldview that is tightly connected with a dualistic idea.<sup>57</sup> She explained,

As a result, our lives are often fractured and fragmented, with our faith firmly locked into the private realm of church and family, where it rarely has a chance to inform our life and work in the public realm. The aura of worship dissipates after Sunday, and we unconsciously absorb secular attitudes the rest of the week. We inhabit two separate “worlds,” navigating a sharp divide between our religious life and ordinary life.

Her statement points out the Christian struggle with applying intrinsic Christian values to one’s jobs, movies, arts, secular laws, and social justice. This phenomenon comes from the dualistic ideas and habits of modern Christians and is easily found in the lifestyle of the Korean immigrant-Christians in the United States.<sup>58</sup>

In relation to this habit, Oh points out the insular tendency of Korean immigrant churches, noting, “They failed in seeing the relationship among people even though they have been eager for the relationship between God and themselves.”<sup>59</sup> He strongly suggests that, as an alternative for overcoming this limitation, at least the second generation Korean Americans must be able to get involved in the American mainstream through cultural activities.<sup>60</sup> For example, their cultural assimilation should be displayed more effectively through the use of their talents in such areas as art and movies.

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<sup>57</sup>Nancy Percy, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 35.

<sup>58</sup> See Michael S. Horton, *Beyond Culture Wars* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), 29-30. Horton points out the dualistic ideas prevailed in the conservatives (like Korean American churches) by saying, “...where the only contribution we make is opposition to morally objectionable art...Those who do not care about the culture are not often taken seriously in wars over who owns it.”

<sup>59</sup> Oh, 77.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 563.



Joon-Shik Choi satirically defines Korean people as the people who are “second to none in playing.”<sup>61</sup> This expression implies instinctive possession of a rich and high-level cultural DNA within the mentality of Korean people. Definite and tangible evidence of this distinctiveness is the HR phenomenon, originating from this cultural DNA. A very similar phenomenon is also happening in Korean immigrant churches in the United States. This implies that Korean immigrants have the same potential to influence other cultural groups as Koreans do with respect to the HR phenomenon. Nevertheless, Korean immigrant churches do not know how to apply their potential talents to church revival and world mission due to their dualistic habits and the cultural ghetto-phenomenon. Further, the “silent exodus” of the second generation continuously takes place in the Korean immigrant churches due to the under-utilization of such talent.<sup>62</sup> Korean immigrant churches have maintained their position as consumers of the HR culture. They have not taken on the role of cultural creators who produce more high-level Christian culture modeled after the HR culture.

### **Postmodernism and Han-Ryu Dramas**

The HR phenomenon, which originated from the HR drama, exhibits an abundance of postmodern elements. The ultimate goal of this section is to identify the postmodern elements in HR. During this process, the following questions will be posed: “In what aspects does the HR phenomenon coincide with postmodern elements?” and furthermore, “What elements of postmodernism would contribute to effectively helping

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<sup>61</sup>Joon-shik Choi, *Is There Are Culture in Koreans?* (Seoul: Four Seasons, 1997), 269-77. In this section, Choi says that “playing” is one of the remarkable ethnic factors of Korean people. They like “playing” together with singing, telling stories, and drinking.

<sup>62</sup>Yong-Hoon Kim, “Let Us Build Up Our Future, Korean Immigrant Church,” Lecture. Conf. on 37<sup>th</sup> NKPC General Assembly Meeting. Boston. July 3, 2008.

the ministry of Korean immigrant churches that are seized by the HR phenomenon?” In other words, the goal of this section is to identify postmodern elements from HR dramas.

To achieve this goal, the relationship between the gospel and the postmodernism should be explained. Because the current research is intended to benefit Korean immigrant churches and pastors, one must first consider the gospel that is the foundation of all churches. The following questions must be asked: “Do the gospel and the postmodernism clash with each other? Are they in a reconcilable relationship? If they clash with each other, in what area do they do so? And if they can be reconciled to each other, in what sense do they reconcile? What elements of postmodernism would contribute to the gospel on the apologetic and missional level?” Thus, the two faces of postmodernism in terms of the evangelism of the gospel will be treated as the “negative aspect” and the “positive aspect.” Then the researcher will move on to the next issue of postmodern elements in HR dramas.

## Gospel and Postmodernism

### *A Brief Understanding of Postmodernism*

With the coming of the twenty-first century, the word “postmodernism” became very popular. This word accurately represents the current atmosphere of human society. Nevertheless, the definition of the postmodernism is hard to grasp clearly because of its broadness and complexity. Marshal W. Fishwick points out that there are “as many definitions as there are advocates (of postmodernism).”<sup>63</sup> This is very similar to an experience at a buffet restaurant. Though one eats many different kinds of food at the

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<sup>63</sup> Marshall W. Fishwick, *Popular Culture: Cavespace to Cyberspace* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 1999), 129. The fact that no one can answer clearly about the origin of the word, “postmodernism” supports the validity of Fishwick’s saying. In relation to this, see the introduction part of “Postmodernism” authored by Kuk-Won Shin. Cf. Shin, “Postmodernism,” 14-18.

restaurant, it is later hard to remember the types of food eaten at the restaurant. Though postmodern efforts to rearrange everything in the world under the motto of diversity is understandable, it is hard to erase the feeling of confusion as more attempts are made to clarify the definition of postmodernism.

As a common ground to encompass various definitions of postmodernism, Fishwick suggests “we must move beyond modernity.”<sup>64</sup> During the modern period, many scientific advances were made, based on “cold rationalism” from the days of Descartes.<sup>65</sup> However, during this process, people ended up feeling mentally tired. Scientific advancement accomplished through human reasoning has imposed anxiety and emptiness, rather than bringing peace.<sup>66</sup> Humanity’s desire to escape from this anxiety has pushed them to produce many kinds of “post” (or “out of”) modern mental and cultural devices. Postmodernism is a result of such attempts.

Therefore, the researcher will not pursue the origin of postmodernism here because that is outside the scope of this study. Instead, only one general postmodern idea about which postmodern scholars agree will be discussed here: “The absolute or the absolute being does not (or cannot) exist in this world.”<sup>67</sup> This idea has been absorbed by the people of this age and by the culture and society created by them. In general, the people “turned away from meaning that is fixed and universal and turned toward meaning

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Literally, “post” means “post/after.” Rather, it means “from/out of.” Thus, postmodernism is a strong gesture to get out of the modernism which has started as originating from Enlightenment and its modern outcomes. David Wells explained well this point. Cf. David Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 62-7.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> David Wells, *Courage to Be Protestant* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 105.

<sup>67</sup> See Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 15-8.

that is private and subjective.”<sup>68</sup> Due to this atmosphere, “objectivity and universality,” and “authority and tradition,” are easily ignored in all fields.

Two compatible words represent this postmodern atmosphere: “pluralism and relativism.” First, pluralism is a “social phenomenon that marginality enters into centrality by demolishing existing traditional ranks.”<sup>69</sup> Since postmodernism originated from a strong human desire to escape from the worldview that unifies the culture and society based on rationality, the postmodernists then attempt to deconstruct all existing frames in all realms of their society.<sup>70</sup> Postmodernists think that all norms and values come from the dogma of those who produced them.

Indeed, one area that is vulnerable to postmodernism is religion, particularly “revealed religions” like Christianity, which emphasize objective truth. Christianity depends on scripture to prove its objective truth. As a result, so called, “religious pluralism” appeared. According to a survey, sixty-six percent of Americans believe “there is no such a thing as absolute truth,” and fifty-three percent of those who call themselves evangelical Christians do not believe in an absolute being.<sup>71</sup> Even though they believe in the authority of the Bible and claim Jesus Christ as their savior, at the same time, they do not believe in the existence of an absolute being.<sup>72</sup> What causes them to hold this ironic belief? It came from the postmodern view that there is no absolute being. Instead, postmodernists believe that everything is right and that all is truth.

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<sup>68</sup> Wells, *Courage to Be Protestant*, 107.

<sup>69</sup> Shin, 236.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Veith, Jr., 16.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 70 percent of Americans claim to accept the high view of Scripture. 88 percent of evangelical Christians confess that “The Bible is the written word of God and totally accurate in all its teaches.” Nevertheless, they answered in a conflicting way.

The second feature of the postmodernism is relativism. Simply speaking, postmodernism is an attitude that the only truth is that “there is no truth.”<sup>73</sup> Because of the postmodern view that absolute truth does not exist, postmodernists also think that there are no absolute morals. They naturally assume that, since no absolute truth exists, any form of absolute moral values cannot form due to the lack of absolute truth. Postmodernists thus believe that moral values are relative.<sup>74</sup> Moral values, for them, are considered to be what is “constructed by cultures, not ordained by God.”<sup>75</sup> Because postmodernists not only deny the existence of common values and standards, but also ignore them, postmodernists tend to treat “relativity” itself as the absolute and norm.<sup>76</sup>

Due to the absence of common values with which a postmodern society is identified, and against which decisions are tested, it is very difficult to govern the whole society. Even if such a governing structure were established, the difficulty of adherence would arise because members of the society would tend not to approve the validity of the device. Therefore, relativism would go hand in hand with “pragmatism.” Relativism encourages practicality of knowledge. For example, the arts that relativism pursues will turn into commercial and advertising arts centering on emotion, carnal desire, and human greed.<sup>77</sup> This characteristic of postmodernism forms a strong consumer culture. The shadow of a sophisticated capitalism, such as “improvisation, obsolescence, quick

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<sup>73</sup>Alister McGrath, *A Passion for Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1996), 188.

<sup>74</sup>Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 41. See also David Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 145. Wells indicates that the coming of “a dangerous moral vacuum” stems from “the breakdown of meaning in the modern world, following the bankruptcy of the Enlightenment experiment.” Variety and evolution of meaning in postmodern world gives us various conflicts. Its strong evidence, as Wells says, is the “moral vacuum.”

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Shin, 238.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 239.

turnaround of fashions and ideas, lack of stability, constant innovation, constant revision, repackaging, new looks,” invades a number of postmodern consumers.<sup>78</sup>

The postmodern belief that absolute truth does not exist gave birth to a strong relativism. Now, relativism is widely prevalent in the consciousness of postmodernists. It dominates the academic world, popular culture, and religions. Shin says, “What remains is ‘opinion’ only when the absolute truth is denied.”<sup>79</sup> Under postmodernism, where every opinion is considered to be good or right, what happens when two opinions contradict each other? This becomes a dilemma. How does one compromise between two different opinions? Should the contradiction be ignored, or is the contradiction itself meaningful? Of course, simple answers to these questions can be formulated easily. However, cultural and social implications stemming from such a multi-opinion-atmosphere may not be that simple.

With these limitations of postmodernism in mind, the researcher will now move on to the next topic: “How does the gospel view the postmodernism?” and “What are negative and positive factors of postmodernism with respect to the gospel and evangelism?” These issues will be explored below.

#### *A Negative Aspect: Risk of Belittling the “Text”*

The gospel itself possesses the characteristics of proclamation. Francis Schaeffer says, “Truth,” therefore, “demands confrontation.”<sup>80</sup> We can observe this through Jesus’ words and attitude during his ministry and through the acts of the Apostles who are

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<sup>78</sup>Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 77.

<sup>79</sup>Shin, 239.

<sup>80</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, “The Great Evangelical Disaster,” vol. 4 of *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1985), 320.

spiritual descendants of Jesus.<sup>81</sup> However, this traditional characteristic of the gospel has been rapidly weakened by postmodernism since the end of the twentieth century.<sup>82</sup> The main reason for this downward spiral is the influence of the “pluralism” and “relativism” that stem from postmodernism.

A major pluralistic and relativistic argument that postmodernism emphasizes is, as mentioned earlier, “The truth is that there is no truth.”<sup>83</sup> Postmodernists hold an “opinion” that explains a feature of the truth instead of holding “truth itself” or the “uniqueness” of the truth. Therefore, there could be as many truths as there are opinions on the truth. Because of this atmosphere, the gospel’s characteristic of proclamation is neglected because the absoluteness and divine revelation of Christianity are regarded by them only as another opinion. As McGrath points out, for postmodernists, “The reason that Christianity is truth is not because it is truth, but because someone believes it as truth.”<sup>84</sup> Christianity is not truth to them because of the normative characteristic involved in (or that can be involved in) Christianity. Christianity as a norm bothers them. The possibility that Christianity is the truth exists for them because someone believes it is a normative truth.

Consequently, it can be stated that those who hold the gospel to be true have no choice but to hold a negative view on postmodernism. That’s because postmodernists tend to ignore or weaken the normative value of the gospel. Indeed, this atmosphere may

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<sup>81</sup> Matt. 4:17; 10-11-15; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 4:18-19; Acts 3:6, 12-26; 13:16-41; 17:16-31.

<sup>82</sup> This is not what is discovered only in the postmodern world. After the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and modernism, this phenomenon has developed progressively. However, the progressive developments were in full bloom when postmodernism arrived. cf. Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers*, 62-7.

<sup>83</sup> McGrath, 188.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

cause the weakening or denial of revelation and textual characteristics of the gospel.

David Wells points out this danger:

...absolute truth and morality are fast receding in society because their grounding in God as objective, as outside of our self, as our transcendent point of reference, is disappearing. There is nothing outside the individual that stands over against the individual, that remains as the measure for the individual's actions, the standard for what is right and wrong, or as the test of what is true and what is not.<sup>85</sup>

As Wells stated, because each self becomes the standard and the measure of values, it becomes customary in postmodernism to ignore the “objective and supernatural” being and the absolute revelation specified by the being. Therefore, the postmodern age is the period that possesses the danger of neglect and potential loss of the textual characteristics of life.

Paul's evangelism and sermon in Athens clearly show a similar situation as this.<sup>86</sup>

The Athenians were the “postmodern” people of their time. They regarded Paul as a “babbler” ).<sup>87</sup> They asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”<sup>88</sup> “You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.”<sup>89</sup> “All Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.”<sup>90</sup> These evaluations of the Athenians by Luke, the author of the Acts, show how much they resembled present-day postmodernists.

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<sup>85</sup> Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 61.

<sup>86</sup> Acts 17:16-34.

<sup>87</sup> See *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, a commentary of the Acts that John Stott wrote to learn the original meaning of the “babbler.” When observing the various interpretations about its original meaning, it is obvious that the people in Athens treated Paul as a pagan wordy boaster. Cf. John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1990), 282. See Acts 17:18.

<sup>88</sup> Acts 17:19.

<sup>89</sup> Acts 17:20.

<sup>90</sup> Acts 17:21.



Paul, however, proclaimed the gospel to these postmodern people. Some scholars regard Paul's speech given at Areopagus as a "pleading" for himself, but one should rather regard the speech as "preaching."<sup>91</sup> The main theme of this sermon was to emphasize the importance of worshiping God as creator, and the methods for proper worship of this creator God.<sup>92</sup> The climactic part of his preaching which exhibits this theme is from verse twenty-four to verse thirty-one. Paul proclaimed Jesus and his resurrection in the synagogue, at the open market place, and at the Areopagus, where he was taken after being caught by them.<sup>93</sup> He argued and proclaimed with confidence the creatorship of God.<sup>94</sup> Here is the point where the biblical and evangelical text of Paul and the postmodern context of the Athenians collide with each other.

Jerram Barrs asserts that Paul did not fail during his evangelistic work in Athens.<sup>95</sup> Regardless of the audience's cold reaction, the gospel proceeded triumphantly. An obvious fact, nevertheless, is that in Athens, the absolute "textual character" of the Bible and the gospel was thoroughly weakened and ignored by the Athenians' plural "contextual character." This is also evident in their attitude toward Paul's proclamation of religious and philosophical opinions. This point provides a logical ground that the Bible looks at postmodernism with suspicion. The absoluteness and textual character of the gospel can be weakened and neglected by postmodernists due to the plural and relative atmosphere surrounding them. At least in this respect, the Bible is not compatible with postmodernism.

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid. See also Jerram Baars, *The Heart of Evangelism* (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 255.

<sup>92</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26, ed. David S. Dockery (Broadman Press, 1992), 370.

<sup>93</sup>Acts 17:18.

<sup>94</sup>Horton, 273.

<sup>95</sup>Baars, 251-3.

*A Positive Aspect: Attitude Respecting a "Context"*

There is also an aspect of postmodernism which seems compatible with the Bible. Ironically, this positive view stems from the negative aspect of postmodernism. In other words, its weakness is in fact its strength. Postmodernists' exposure to their relative and plural thinking habits can bring a positive effect to Christian evangelism. For example, in the case of Athens, Athenians were very "religious" and "philosophical" people, as they were civilized, educated, and intelligent. Paul approached and preached to them religiously and philosophically.<sup>96</sup> In relation to this, Jerram Barrs says, "Paul on this occasion was speaking to more thoughtful pagans who were educated in the philosophy of their time."<sup>97</sup> Paul's greatness as an evangelist and preacher is shown by his evangelistic approach. He was an excellent communicator, conveying God's message to his contemporaries in their language, using their ways with the consideration for the contemporary culture.<sup>98</sup>

John Stott praises Paul's approach, "He did not merely throw up his hands in despair, or weep helplessly, or curse and swear at the Athenians. No, he shared with them the good news of Jesus. He sought by the proclamation of the gospel to prevail on them to turn from their idols to the living God and so to give to him and to his Son the glory due to their name."<sup>99</sup> Toward those who preferred thinking, accepting, and arguing about new things, he dialogued, argued, and persuaded. Accordingly, he delivered the gospel by taking advantage of their framework.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Acts 17:18, 22.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts*, 282.

<sup>100</sup> McGrath's advice in relation to this point is somewhat helpful: "A wooden repetition of yesterday's ideas (in terms of conveying the message of the gospel) may alienate today's people from the gospel – not because the gospel is alienating, but because a particular presentation of the gospel is seen as out of touch,

Thus, the weakness of the postmodernism can be used by evangelists to their advantage. This does not mean that their weakness itself is strength. Their weakness can rather become a merit for Christian evangelists. In that sense, biblical scholars may see the postmodern atmosphere with a positive view. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 is a good passage to illustrate this point. Also, through this passage, Paul himself would be regarded as the best missionary in the postmodern atmosphere. He states, “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews... To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”<sup>101</sup>

#### Postmodern Elements in Han-Ryu Dramas

Postmodernism characterized by pluralism and relativism goes beyond impacting the human thought process. These characteristics influence the creation of certain cultural fashions and lifestyles, which reach beyond how people think. Percy says, “Ideas do not remain in the realm of the abstract; they also influence the concrete ways of people construct their society and its institutions.”<sup>102</sup>

The HR drama, which is the main theme of this dissertation, exhibits a good deal of postmodern characteristics. This section, therefore, will explore what postmodern characteristics exist in HR dramas, and which postmodern elements contained in the HR dramas made HR dramas popular in a short time and influenced consumers’ lifestyles. In particular, the answers to these questions will be helpful in understanding the context as a

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out of date and out of place. Advance involves adaption – but adaptation need not involve change.” See Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1995), 114.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Baars, 184-5.

<sup>102</sup> Percy, 323.

positive aspect of postmodernism, which was discussed in the previous section on the HR phenomenon.

It is beyond the scope of this research to consider all dramas produced in past ten years. Drama productions are directly related to the profit of broadcasting companies. Thus, broadcasting companies are very conscious of the viewers' ratings. The viewers' ratings indicate the popularity of dramas, and therefore strongly influence the drama production by broadcasting companies. For this reason, HR dramas with higher viewers' ratings naturally were the main contributors to the HR phenomenon. The dramas cited below, therefore, enjoyed tremendous popularity overseas as well as on the mainland. Those dramas will be introduced partially the postmodern elements are related with HR dramas.

### *Storytelling and TV*

Before exploring the postmodern elements in HR dramas, it is necessary to consider the two foremost elements of postmodern popular culture. The two elements are the importance of "story" and the realistic power of television as a place to share those stories. The reason that HR dramas enjoy popularity is that these two elements, which are cultural codes of postmodern society, were well combined. These two elements are really important in understanding the relationship between HR dramas and postmodern popular culture.

First, one must consider the realm of "story." Storytelling is an instinctive characteristic of human beings. Quentin Schultze asserts, "To be human is to be a storyteller," because God made us that way.<sup>103</sup> His statement concisely expresses the

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<sup>103</sup> Quentin J. Schultze, *Redeeming Television: How TV Changes Christians – How Christians Can Change TV* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1992), 60.

importance of storytelling for human beings. If this is true, it may be said that an age during which this human instinct is well reflected is the current age of postmodernism. Thus, the postmodern age is the age of story and the age of expansion of stories. Its representative evidence is the loss and distrust of meta-narrative and the people's preference of private and local stories instead of the meta-narrative.<sup>104</sup> A meta-narrative is like a "unified myth as a basis of general society and its culture," but in postmodern society, an "objective system of thought" such as a meta-narrative is also considered a "narrative/story."<sup>105</sup> Therefore, fictional stories occupy the minds of people today. Storytelling is a huge icon capturing the people of this age and their mindset.

Accordingly, this age also enjoys a great benefit in the sense that it has various vehicles to contribute to a process of expanding stories. Among those vehicles, a brilliant development of electronic media has taken an active role in delivering the benefit to people. Now, people enjoy miscellaneous stories about other people very easily whenever and wherever they like, not only through television and movies but also through other electronic media that is being rapidly developed, for example, internet download systems and smart-phones, which are called a "TV in palm."<sup>106</sup> The age of literacy is over, and written words are being replaced with electronic images.<sup>107</sup> It seems that the postmodern

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<sup>104</sup>Shin, 186-7. See also, Stanley J. Grentz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 44-6.

<sup>105</sup>Shin, 187. See also Veith, Jr., 49.

<sup>106</sup> In relation to this, David Wells criticizes the serious effect of today's video culture by saying, "Television is a populist medium that not only circumvents all elites, cultural, intellectual, and social, but also renders the print culture increasingly irrelevant. In the West to this point, print has preserved society's past and values; for better or for worse, values today are being most effectively transmitted within the video culture. The cultural mantle has passed from the users of words to the makers of images." David Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 202. As he says, an outstanding cultural phenomenon of today that differentiates it from past days is the storm of "images." Some of numerical statistics can make us understand its phenomenon. Cf. <http://productivewriters.com/2011/02/16/book-e-book-data-united-states-2010/>, <http://idpf.org/about-us/industry-statics>.

<sup>107</sup>Veith, Jr., 121.

age has its own tact in conveying many stories to many people through as many forms of media as possible.

The power of television is still strong among the many forms of media in the postmodern age. Veith, Jr. explains the power of television in the postmodern age by saying, “Television is the real world of postmodern culture.”<sup>108</sup> Even though there is some criticism of the harmfulness of television, Schultze asserts that there is no need to view television that way. He expresses his positive opinion on the importance of story in daily life and the contribution of television to the expansion of story by saying, “Every story is not just a diversion from the world, but also a door to another world. Stories are part of the language of the culture, and the tube is a popular voice.”<sup>109</sup> Therefore, he also asks Christians to “enjoy and celebrate storytelling, even on television.”<sup>110</sup>

Television drama is a major genre to deliver many kinds of human stories very effectively. As Schultze expresses, television drama is the performance of stories.<sup>111</sup> Hye-Shil Choi describes television drama as “image-storytelling.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, combining these two definitions, one can reach a new conclusion: “The performance of stories became a narrative throughout electronic image. Thus, television is the only medium through which we can meet the narratives in the closest distance and by the easiest way.”

The influence of television among many forms of electronic media, therefore, is without a peer in conveying the influence of postmodern culture to the public. Movies are less general than television dramas because viewers must travel physically to the theaters, and they are required to pay a fee. On the contrary, television is more familiar and

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Schultze, 59.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 60.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>112</sup> Choe, 29.

convenient. Stanley Grentz, comparing the power and efficiency of television in postmodern society with that of movies, says, “Filmmaking technology may have provided the foundation for postmodern pop culture, but television proved more efficient vehicle for disseminating the postmodern ethos throughout society.”<sup>113</sup>

The occurrence of the HR phenomenon, which is based on the HR drama, is a good example of the strong influence of television on postmodern culture. The fact that the HR wave has spread not only in Korean communities but also on a worldwide level is evidence of this. The HR phenomenon illustrates that postmodern people are enthusiastic about stories. It is also undeniable that HR dramas have been at the center of this postmodern phenomenon. Koreans who like storytelling not only enjoyed the stories for themselves, but also have consistently exported them to foreign people who also like to experience stories through visual media. Therefore, television has contributed significantly to expansion of the HR phenomenon.

### *Centered on Emotion and Feeling*

In the postmodern world, emotion is much more important than intelligence. The age of modernism treated objective thinking based upon intelligence as the most important device in the thought process, but postmodernists trust individual emotion far more than intellectual judgment. According to Wells, this is because “The life of the mind now is denigrated and distrusted.”<sup>114</sup> In the postmodern world, individual feeling and emotion are even more attractive factors in life than intellectual judgment. For that

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<sup>113</sup> Grentz, 33.

<sup>114</sup> Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 107.

reason, Shin calls the new generation of the postmodernists the “emotional generation.”<sup>115</sup>

HR drama is mainly characterized by emotion. HR drama is a cultural genre with a strong emotional aspect. From that respect, it can be said that the HR drama is a strong cultural phenomenon of postmodernism. The following two characteristics of the HR drama explain this point in more detail.

#### *Melodramas Focused on Women*

The fact that the popular Korean dramas are mostly melodramas centered on women indicates that the HR dramas are mainly dependent on emotion and feeling.<sup>116</sup> Soo-Yeon Lee published a book that contains many valuable investigations and studies conducted for several years, *Han-Ryu Drama and Desire of Asian Woman*. She obtained good data by interviewing women in four Asian countries, including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan, all of which were hubs of the HR phenomenon. From these interviews, she selected fifteen popular dramas in those countries.<sup>117</sup> She also found that, among those fifteen dramas, most of them are melodramas.<sup>118</sup>

As a combination of two separate words, “melo” (meaning “music” in Greek) and “drama,” melodrama describes a drama that has a strong emotional rise.<sup>119</sup> This type of drama began in the form of plays in the eighteenth century, and it became very popular in

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<sup>115</sup>Shin, 119.

<sup>116</sup> It is well known that postmodernism centers more on woman than on man. Since this point is not directly connected with the direction of this dissertation, this is not dealt with here in detail. If you want to learn more about the “centrality of woman” of postmodernism based on feminism, see Nancy and Lida J. Nicholson, *Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism* (Routledge, Chaa& Hall Inc., 1990), 17-41.

<sup>117</sup>Soo-Yeon Lee, 14.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 36.



the nineteenth century.<sup>120</sup> In modern days, due to the rapid development of visual electronic media, dramas played within a limited space (for example, in theaters) in the past are now coming into people's living rooms.

A representative characteristic of melodrama is the stimulation of the viewers' emotions. Peter Brook describes this characteristic of melodrama in classic plays as "absorption into a strong emotionality."<sup>121</sup> The absorption into emotion stimulates the viewers' eyes to tears. The more the melodrama brings out tears from the viewers, the more popular the dramas become. For that reason, female viewers who are vulnerable to tear become the main audience for Korean dramas. Because the main viewers are women, the contents of Korean dramas are organized from a female perspective. According to Lee's investigation, thirteen dramas out of the selected fifteen have actresses as the main character, and their stories were also focused on the main actress.<sup>122</sup>

Even a big-hit historical drama, *Dae Jang Keum* is not an exception to this tendency. The fact that a woman is the main character in that drama, where the backdrop is the Lee Dynasty, a period during which there was much discrimination against women, differentiates this drama from other historical dramas. However, what is even more significant is that its story deals with the issue of whether social success in a woman can be parallel with her love.<sup>123</sup> This suggests that HR dramas are mostly female-centric melodramas.

There is one additional common characteristic in the HR dramas. The fact that Korean dramas are mainly melodramas does not always mean that their stories must

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Recited.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 11, 104.

revolve around the love or emotion between a man and a woman. They are of course melodramas, but at the same time, most of them include a certain sense of values, and those values tend to reflect important morals. The morals that HR dramas convey are not individualistic. Rather, they pursue a high-level and holistic “order” that concerns the whole society.<sup>124</sup> This order necessarily requires the main role’s sacrifice in dramas. Lee says, “In melodramas, stimulation of viewer’s tear happens usually in the situations that love must be sacrificed for the sake of morals, not for their love itself.”<sup>125</sup> For example, a leading actor (a leading actress) sacrifices himself (herself) because he (she) loves her (him). Parents in drama are willing to die for the love of their children. These sacrifices are not forced onto the characters by others. They are usually voluntary sacrifices.

This is like DNA that permeates into the blood of the oriental people, especially that of Koreans.<sup>126</sup> Thus, Korean dramas maximize their “melo”-character by putting such an instinctive element in the actors and the actresses and including it in the organization of the stories. Due to sympathy toward these characters, Korean melodramas are getting more popular in oriental countries.

### *Fantasy-Characters*

The second feature of melodramas is the “fantasy”-character found in the HR stories. Fantasy is a literary genre that depicts a fictional world realistically.<sup>127</sup> In other words, fantasy is when a description of a fictional world powerfully stirs up people’s

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Richard E. Nisbet, *Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why* (New York: Free Press, 2003), chapter 2. His book and theory will be cited more in later part.

<sup>127</sup> Originally, “fantasy” or “fantastic literature” originate from “two forms of in antiquity: (1) fantasies of travel beyond the known world; (b) stories of the supernatural.” Its representative tale to encompass both realms is *Odyssey*. Broadly speaking, “fantasy” is a literary genre about unreal world by depicting it as what it happens in real world. Cf. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, eds. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 587.

minds. Postmodernists seek a fictional and imaginative world rather than the real world. In postmodernism, even truth is categorized as fiction.<sup>128</sup> Truth is an illusion for postmodern people, and everything is just a fiction for them.<sup>129</sup> If it is true that Korean dramas comparatively have a strong fictional and “fantasy” character, the popularity of the HR drama itself is evidence of the postmodern tendency to like fantasy.

One of the Chinese viewers who responded to Lee’s survey explained, “I am watching Korean dramas because of something beautiful or ideal. Such a thing is enjoyable, but doesn’t exist in the real world...Korean drama satisfies woman’s imagination. There are a lot of Cinderella-stories in Korean dramas!”<sup>130</sup> The viewers already know that drama is just something to enjoy. They also know it is just a fiction that never happens in their real world. However, they like and enjoy it. And they are deeply indulged in this fictional world.

*Winter Sonata*, which deals with sublime love between a young man and woman, is the forefront drama in this respect. The love between a man and a woman in this drama is truly pure. Perfect sacrifice and absolute dedication to each other are depicted remarkably in the drama. Thus, fans regard the purity of their love in the drama as something not fabricated or manipulated.<sup>131</sup> These fans became enthusiastic about the drama since any barriers, secular discriminations, difference of social status, illness, or lost memory cannot be an obstacle to their love. This kind of love cannot be found in the real world; the drama depicted an idealistic fantasy in describing what pure love is.

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<sup>128</sup>Veith, Jr., 49.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>130</sup>Soo-Yeon Lee, 52.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 53.

The fantasy-character is not limited to love between man and woman. This fantasy-element is easily found elsewhere in Korean dramas. The HR fans consider the actors and actresses in dramas to be the most ideal beings in identifying themselves and others. For example, the most important figures for the female fans are the male leading characters, rather than the female leading characters.<sup>132</sup> They think of the male leading character as partners of their lives. For instance, they fantasize that a male leading character could be their husband, and a person whom they would want to date. They are looking for an ideal male-partner from the leading characters in dramas.

In addition, HR dramas give the viewers a strong motivation to hope that the societal systems, happenings, relationships, and people in their lives resemble those of the dramas. This includes having an ideal home, family relationships, boss, friendships, and morals. The academic world calls this “emotional realism.”<sup>133</sup> This paradoxical title stems from the fact that the dramas stimulate strong emotional impulses for viewers to hope that the stories in the dramas can happen in their lives, even though these stories are unrealistic. In other words, this is a fullness of “emotional realism.”<sup>134</sup>

### *Relation and Sympathy*

Postmodern society avoids the idea that one is dominant over others, even if one holds absolute power. As discussed earlier, this idea came from the phenomenon of postmodernism that rejects religious power, that is, the existence of the absolute being.<sup>135</sup> However, this is only a prelude. Postmodernists deny absolute values and absolute beings

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>135</sup>Veith, Jr., 16-7. Cf. also Wells, *Courage to Be Protestant*, 71.

in all areas. By doing so, they have assurance and confidence that they are able to act with freedom without a specific truth or an absolute standard.<sup>136</sup>

In spite of that supposed freedom, postmodernists eventually feel anxiety and vanity. The outcome resulting from establishing an internal, subjective, self-centered worldview instead of choosing an external and objective authority is anxiety and vanity.<sup>137</sup> What they need now is relationship. The selves that are subordinated to postmodernism, therefore, hope to form special relationships to relieve their anxiety and vanity and also strongly feel a necessity of community that enables them to maintain relationships. Shin says that postmodern people need warmth, trust, emotion, and feeling-centered community because postmodern society is a narrative-centered society that distrusts meta-narrative, and instead, trusts a fictional narrative.<sup>138</sup> For this reason, the community that they desire must not be “suppressive.”<sup>139</sup>

An irony of postmodern society is found here. Postmodernists turn away from one pillar of their belief system. At the same time, they are looking for another pillar to remove the anxiety and vanity that stemmed from the first pillar. For the most part, the new pillar that they are looking for is a community filled with relationship and sympathy, regardless of philosophical validity.

HR dramas seized this point, and another theme found in HR dramas is a community-character that produces relationship and sympathy. This can be explained two ways. First, they emphasize on moral values. Apparently, moral value is a very decisive element to evoke relationship and sympathy in a Korean drama. Simply speaking, it is a

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<sup>136</sup>Veith, Jr., 56-7.

<sup>137</sup>Wells, *Courage to Be Protestant*, 61, 67, 107, 108.

<sup>138</sup>Shin, 159.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

realm of commonsense – what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong. Everybody gets angry against injustice, and everyone is also happy when the actor or actress triumphantly fights for justice. This appeals to the universal human instinct.

The stories of the HR dramas utilize this element very effectively. This aspect of the HR dramas was mentioned earlier when explaining the strong melo-character as HR's favorite character. The main logic at that time was that even the stories of melodramas are developed on the basis of morals. The logic here, however, is that not only melodramas but also all genres of the HR dramas make an effort to represent some moral values. Historical dramas, melodramas, comedies, sit-coms, successful stories of company, and even action dramas are as a whole characterized by moral values.

In fact, the fifteen representative dramas that Lee selected are common on this point. For example, *Autumn Tale*, whose story is about “pure love” between a half brother and sister, and *Winter Sonata*, which depicted an impossible love that began with a memory blackout but changed into a possible love, all want to say what “pure and true love” is.<sup>140</sup> *Dae Jang Keum*, dealing with a successful story of an ancient Lee Dynasty woman who overcomes the limitations of social status and gender, emphasizes “success by a positive attitude and effort.”<sup>141</sup> *Stairway to Heaven*, depicting how to escape out of unjust hardship that came from an entangled family relationship, demonstrates “disclosure of truth and conversion of evil.”<sup>142</sup> In order to demonstrate moral values, most of the dramas set up a sharp contrast between good and evil. A good leading character keeps his or her “be-good” from the beginning to the end of drama, even to a level that ordinary people would not understand. An evil character who tortures the good,

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<sup>140</sup> Soo-Yeon Lee, 114-6.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

as a counterpart to the good character, is consistently vicious to the end. The villain is a continuous torturer of the good, and the good character is a chronic victim tormented by the villain. The ending is usually concluded with disclosure of truth and triumph of the good.

One of the major backbones of the oriental philosophy is “encouraging good and punishing evil.” HR dramas mostly follow this value. At the ends of the dramas (mostly by dramatic reversal), the leading characters with pure and good personalities finally taste the compensation that comes from the old classic principles of “encouraging good and punishing evil” and keeping a “positive attitude in life” - invincible principles that have permeated through both ancient and modern times in the oriental countries.<sup>143</sup> Likewise, amoral order inherently existing among oriental people has been the “ultimate compass of all narratives,” of which the HR dramas have dreamed.<sup>144</sup>

The family-centered plot is another main feature of HR dramas, which use a family relationship-centered design for their stories. Thus, the individual love between men and women in HR dramas mostly starts and ends within a setting of complicated family relationships, which generally become an obstacle to fulfilling their love. Good family relationships are ruined temporarily by the attack of an evil power, but the tentative structure is finally overcome by the effort of the good leading character and others.

For example, *Dae Jang Keum* begins with a happy family. Major tension and tragedy, however, start as soon as the father of the young Jang Keum is murdered for political reasons. Jang Keum’s departure from her mother creates a severe hardship for

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

her. However, her yearning for a happy family always enables her to sacrifice for her success. The harder her life is, the stronger her love for her family grows. This intensity becomes a driving force to help her overcome all pain and disgrace. Likewise, her family is both “an origin of tension” and “a source of happiness.”<sup>145</sup> Memories of departure from her family and the death of her parents provide a paradoxical device to bring ultimate happiness by corroborating the value of “cohesion of family,” rather than throwing them into a tragic pit.<sup>146</sup>

Richard Nisbet, a cultural psychologist of the University of Michigan, says that western thinking originates from viewing all things as “private” and “individual,” but that oriental people, contrarily, view all things as “collective” and “all.”<sup>147</sup> Thus, a common tendency that considers an individual human to be a “part” of a larger society, rather than an individual permeates the mentality of most of the oriental people, including Koreans. If this theory is correct, it seems to be natural consequence of this tendency that Koreans produced HR dramas that have commonly pursued a “relationship based design” (particularly family relationships) in their stories. The sorrow of the collective is my sorrow, and the happiness of the collective is my happiness. Because my success directly means the success of the collective, if the collective stands well throughout my individual sacrifice, everything is also fulfilled for the individual. Therefore, it can be said that this point also contributes to the popularity of HR dramas in oriental countries.

To accomplish this plot effectively in HR dramas, the beginning, the main part, and the ending of dramas are often set in somewhat unreasonable situations. For instance,

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid.

<sup>147</sup>Nisbet, 76-7. He says, “East Asians live in an independent world in which the self is part of a larger whole; Westerners live in a world in which the self is a unitary free agent...”



there are secrets of birth, reversed birth, parents who do not know to whom they gave birth until the child become an adult, intentional persecution by those who know the family, competitive relationships between family members, traffic accidents and long term comas which often appear for a sudden change of plot, and easy leaking of important secrets in unexpected situations. Even though the absurdity of these situations are quite obvious, they are still enjoyed and considered fun. Though everyone knows that such situations are not typical, the interest level rather increases based on the far-fetched nature of the situations presented. HR dramas are made to take advantage of this interest.

In conclusion, the common characteristics discovered in popular HR dramas generally coincide with general characteristics of postmodern culture. Thoughts of the age give birth to the culture of the age. Postmodernism produces postmodern culture. HR drama is part of this culture. The reason why HR dramas have gained a rapid popularity is that the scenario writers and producers interpreted well the mindset of postmodern people. The outcome and product of this are the HR dramas.

### **Postmodern Pastor**

In his famous book, *Between Two Worlds*, John Stott says, “A true sermon bridges the gulf between the biblical and the modern worlds.”<sup>148</sup> Whereas the biblical world is the world of the ancient documents dealing with the ages and the places that existed several thousand years ago, the modern world is the world of a new generation, who should interpret those ancient documents. Therefore, there exists a gap in time, language, thought, and lifestyle between the two worlds. Stott calls this gap “the deep rift,” and he says that preachers have a responsibility to fill up the rift.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 10.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 138.

In order to fulfill this responsibility, preachers should first concentrate on the biblical world as if they are the first readers of scripture. In other words, they need to sincerely study the biblical world prior to going the next step. Next, they should engage in regularly reading the Bible and deeply studying related commentaries, as well as broader book reading.<sup>150</sup> Expressing the process of this study with more academic terminology, one can call it “exegesis” or “exposition.”<sup>151</sup>

Preachers, however, must not stop here. Because the main task of preachers, as Stott emphasizes, is to connect a gap between the biblical world and the present world, their final goal must be “conveying” what they examine to their present audience.<sup>152</sup> Thus, their “study of the biblical contents” must be done for the purpose of “conveying.” In other words, biblical studies, for all preachers, might be meaningless without a premise that it must be prepared by them for a sermon as a conveying act.

This study ultimately concentrates more on the latter (sermon as a conveying act) than on the former (sermon as a process of biblical study). The researcher focuses on this because Korean pastors should preach to those who are being influenced by the HR phenomenon through HR dramas. Because the pastors of the Korean immigrant church must carefully consider their audience’s situation, they should not only be diligent in examining the biblical world, but they must also make an effort to understand the reality that immigrant churches are deeply soaked in the HR phenomenon as a part of

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<sup>150</sup> Cf. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), chapter 9, particularly 171-83. The entire contents of chapter 9, “The Preparation of the Preacher,” deals with this issue.

<sup>151</sup> A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 55.

<sup>152</sup> See also *Ibid.*, 55-6.

postmodern culture. By doing so, they can convey the biblical world to their present audience.

How, then, can they become good deliverers in this age? The people of this age, as previously discussed, prefer story to meta-narrative, emotion to knowledge, fiction (fantasy) to fact, and sympathy to judgment. In order to minimize their essential anxiety and vanity, postmodern people are eager to be consoled through relation-based collectives such a family. If so, how can one be a good preacher in this situation? These issues will now be examined.

#### Postmodern Preacher: “A Good Story-teller”

The best way to be a good preacher in this situation is to be a good story-teller. As Schultze expresses, “Most effective communicators are savvy story-teller.”<sup>153</sup> In fact, this concept can be equally applied to all ages, as well as to the postmodern age that considers story to be important. Undeniably, story is a major part of human life, regardless of a specific time period.<sup>154</sup> So how does one become a good preacher/story-teller in postmodern times? Basically, two qualification criteria must be met: (1) arranging the “contents” of the story to be delivered, and (2) understanding beforehand the target audience for the story.

First, one must take care to arrange the content to be delivered. This means not only the accuracy of the contents but also the story’s shape. The former issue, as discussed earlier, can be resolved easily if a well-done examination and exegesis of the biblical contents were conducted. However, the “shape” issue is about how to wrap the elements of the story and get them out to the public. This means that, to be a good

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<sup>153</sup>Schultze, 38.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

preacher/story-teller in postmodern times, the contents of the final manuscript of the sermon must be shaped to be harmonious with this age.

For example, in his book *Christ Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Bryan Chapell emphasizes the importance of “retelling” the story of the Bible as a way of shaping. He notes, “Retelling the story of what is happening in a passage is another way of explaining its meaning.”<sup>155</sup> What is necessary at this moment is a “healthy imagination (not too imaginative or not too exuberant).”<sup>156</sup> One popular method for this is inserting illustrations. The preacher’s own story can transform into audience’s story through illustrations. So preachers are encouraged to use more metaphors and stories instead of merely explaining the norms of truth.<sup>157</sup>

For fulfilling this purpose, Kevin Miller asserts that sermons must be visible and touchable, rather than simply heard.<sup>158</sup> As an effective way to accomplish this, he introduces so-called “3D story-telling,” which includes “details,” “dialogue,” and “denouement.”<sup>159</sup> Particularly, the “denouement,” which is a dramatic ending, suits postmodern people who are familiar with story-telling. If they have already ascertained the conclusion of the sermon from the title in bulletin or by the middle part of the sermon, their expectations of the sermon will drop rapidly because audiences do not like obvious plots in stories. A preacher as a good story-teller should make the audience pay attention to the sermon while being curious of what will happen next.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 122.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Kevin A. Miller, “3-D Storytelling,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 483.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 364.

The shaping process is more important than any other process in the creation of a good sermon. All preachers of the postmodern age must sincerely consider the importance of story-shaping, since they are surrounded by various cultural systems. Above all, because their audiences like stories, the biblical contents in their sermon manuscripts should be adjusted to the level of ordinary stories. “Narrative preaching,” which has been popularly discussed since the last century, is the area that deals with these matters.<sup>161</sup> In other words, those endeavors mentioned above to be a preacher as a good story-teller come from how the sermon manuscripts of the present preachers must be formatted with this age, that is, how they realize the importance of shaping the final contents of their manuscripts.

The second issue involved in being a good storyteller/preacher is even more important. This issue includes understanding the target people to whom the “contents” of the message will be delivered. An important presupposition that has been mentioned continuously from the beginning is that audiences of this age are deeply involved in a postmodern atmosphere. They are more familiar with the relative than the absolute, with feeling than logic, with ordinary story than meta-narrative, and with fun than seriousness. Accordingly, it means that one must first understand their situation in order to convey the contents of the sermon effectively.<sup>162</sup>

Jerram Barrs indicates that the Christian terminology being used in modern churches differs from that of secular world, saying: “More and more people are biblically

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<sup>161</sup> Cf. Chapell, 202. Chapell approves the merit of narrative sermon “since it was often Jesus’ manner of teaching.” If you want to know a brief introduction about narrative sermon and its methodology, see also Robinson, 491-5.

<sup>162</sup> John Stott, “A Definition of Biblical Preaching,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 25.

illiterate.”<sup>163</sup> He adds, “The words that we hear every Sunday in most of our churches and that we use in our prayers are no longer part of the everyday language of our society.”<sup>164</sup> According to him, the “loss of a common language” in the Christian world resulted in the building of another wall, creating a large gap between the gospel and the world.<sup>165</sup> These indications teach the importance of how to deliver God’s message particularly when delivering the message to non-Christians: “not by our language, but by their language.” Postmodern preachers should recognize this importance at all times. Since the slogan of postmodern society is “variety,” one must consider various languages and cultures. Thus, churches should not lose interest in the rapidly-changing modes of language and culture. The more uninterested they are, the farther they will be from postmodern people.

The person who would bridge these two worlds is a pastor as a preacher. The act of preaching is first of all an act of language that relates people with the word of God.<sup>166</sup> Preaching is a linguistic event that creates a new thing by combining something from ancient times with the cultural contents of modern time. Nevertheless, if a sermon is filled with language which is not understandable to ordinary people, it will fail to change the lives of those in the audience, resulting in the “peddling the word of God.”<sup>167</sup> Robertson McQuilkin asserts, “How I feel is more important than what we think. We do a grave disservice to this generation if we don’t speak to the heart and stimulate feelings, godly feelings.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>163</sup>Baars, 139.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup>Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 15-6.

<sup>167</sup> Crawford Loritts, “Preaching that Raises Our Sights,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 36. See 2 Cor. 2:17.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 174. Robertson McQuilkin, “Connecting with Postmodernism.”

Therefore, in order to avoid merely peddling the words of God, and to accomplish the ultimate goal of evangelism and mission, good postmodern preachers will make an effort to be good story-tellers. To achieve that goal, they will also develop the talent needed to “retell” biblical contents in their people’s language by understanding the cultural and psychological state of the modern audience to whom the message will be delivered. This should also be the agenda of Korean pastors in immigrant churches who preach to immigrant listeners who are surrounded by many stories of drama.

#### Postmodern Counselor: “A Spiritual Leadership of Relation and Rapport”

McQuilkin summarizes the characteristics of the postmodern audience by saying, “Relationships are paramount. They want to be connected, as they say. Community trumps our old modernistic individualism. That’s enough, but it goes deeper.”<sup>169</sup> The researcher already explored the fact that postmodern people are relation-based. Postmodern people consider feeling and rapport to be important factors in their lives, and they want to formulate new relationships to soothe anxiety and vanity. Therefore, postmodern Christian counselors should keep this in mind. That is to say, they should minister as leaders of relationship and rapport, and at the same time as counselors of relationship and rapport.

Preaching is a public act, but counseling and visitation are private acts. Preaching is a linguistic act that proclaims unilaterally, but counseling and visitation are reciprocal linguistic acts during which the counselor and the counselee interact with each other. Counseling and visitation, thus, are more relational than preaching. For that reason, the counseling-act is more postmodern than the sermon-act. Therefore, a postmodern counselor has to pay attention to this aspect of postmodern society. People of this age

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<sup>169</sup>Ibid., 175.

avoid one-sided instruction and bookish styles. Instead, they prefer stories, from which they feel intimacy and image.<sup>170</sup> Thus, they prefer a “sympathetic/accommodating” type of leadership to an “instructing” type of leadership, and are more familiar with relational counseling than instructional counseling.

Eugene Petersen explains that a good pastor/counselor must be like this: “As a counselor, the pastor is secularized away from being a friend in Christ into functioning as a substitute for God, which is, in effect, an act of idolatry.”<sup>171</sup> If he thinks of himself as a proxy (substitute) for God when he does visitation and counseling, he shall be more talkative, and the lot of words will become more instructive. On the contrary, if he becomes a friend with them in Lord, relationship building and a sympathetic approach will be much easier. Thus, pastors and counselors of this age should be interested more in listening than in talking, more in following than in leading, more in letting others understand than in understanding beforehand, and more in being sympathetic than in being judgmental.

In that sense, it is necessary for a wise postmodern counselor to understand the postmodern cultural code. Postmodern people have a tendency to keep their own unique cultural code in areas such as sports, hobbies, films, music, food and other favorite things. They also try to use these things as a means to express themselves. Postmodern counselors need to understand these areas first and develop the skills to utilize them. As an example, it is good thing for preachers to be familiar with contemporary popular culture.<sup>172</sup> By being sympathetic with the cultural code and sharing it with the people to

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Eugene Petersen, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 91.

<sup>172</sup> Kevin Miller, “Illustrating from Pop Culture” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 509.



whom they minister, a pastor can draw closer to the people. Counseling and visitation are best done on an individual basis.

From the perspective of Korean churches, the HR dramas that Korean audiences enjoy can be a great tool for building relationships and rapport. The impression of the actors and actresses captured in these dramas, the contents of the stories, the backgrounds and props, and the anticipation of the final ending of the story all form the common ground for a counselor and counselee. If pastors approach their church members this way, with the intention to use such common ground to reach their audiences, they might be already qualified to be postmodern counselors.

#### Birth of a New Defender

Preaching and pastoral ministry are inevitably apologetic because they involve defending and sharing the Christian faith. This is even more true in the postmodern age. Albert Mohler, Jr. says, “The task of preaching must be understood as an apologetic calling.”<sup>173</sup> Even though postmodern people crave stories, evangelical sermons, as Craig Loscalzo says, must not merely be “telling stories for stories’ sake.”<sup>174</sup> Instead, if postmodern preachers draw “on image-rich narratives” and utilize them well, they can capture their audiences’ minds very effectively.<sup>175</sup> Postmodern preachers, therefore, should reaffirm that the classic principle in preaching, defending the Christian faith, cannot be yielded. In addition to this, they should also know that the method for applying this principle can be changeable. The contents of the bowl must not be changed, but the bowl containing the contents can be changed more freely.

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<sup>173</sup> R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2008), 123.

<sup>174</sup> Craig Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press), 22.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

In that sense, postmodern preachers and counselors need to change themselves into postmodern defenders of Christian faith. Even though they assume the need to reach a new postmodern society, they should never forget that their main task is to present, explain, and defend “an authentic picture of the Christian faith.”<sup>176</sup> They should also remind themselves that a new social atmosphere of postmodernism is not an uncomfortable opponent, but rather a good opportunity to convey the gospel more effectively while defending the faith. According to Loscalzo, the postmodern age is regarded as a “renaissance” of the gospel: “...perhaps it’s time for Christian apologetics to flourish again.”<sup>177</sup>

To be a good defender of Christianity in this age, as mentioned earlier, pastors need to be “good story-tellers” and to do their best to be “leaders of relation and rapport.” This will allow them to explain and defend the Christian faith to their audiences when they preach and to their counselees when they counsel. This work is not yet finished with preaching and counseling. If preachers’ responsibility is to help their audience and counselees to be changed through their sermons and counseling, then they should deliver the gospel of Christ effectively by changing themselves as good postmodern preachers (good story-tellers) and as good counselors (leaders of relation and rapport). Due to this, the birth of a new defender is anticipated. Borrowing Stott’s expression, the new defender of the gospel in the twenty-first century is the person who can transplant the “biblical world” of two thousand years ago into the “present world” of two thousand years later.<sup>178</sup> Preaching and counseling are classic tools needed for this transplanting.

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>178</sup>Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 154-61.

However, the tools are always changing. People in tenth century used shovels, but present people use bulldozers. Years ago, people wrote books with quill pens, but now people type into computers. Philosophy, theology, and church were once everything that enlightened people's recognition of their culture, but the world is now complicated and surrounded by an uncountable number of thoughts. The apologetic preacher and counselor should be aware of this fact: "Contents are unchangeable, but tools are evolving repeatedly." Stott explains this well by emphasizing that the "bridging" itself is unchangeable, but the methods needed for bridging have been flexibly changed according to the change of time and place.<sup>179</sup> When postmodern preachers and counselors recognize this fact, they become good postmodern defenders .

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is expected that better Korean postmodern pastors will appear in the future. They will be also called postmodern preachers, postmodern counselors, and postmodern defenders. In order to accomplish this goal, more efforts and preparation are needed. Not only do pastors need to engage in more sincere study of the contents of scripture, but they also need a better understanding of their target, which is a postmodern audience. Of course, postmodernism itself is enormous, and its cultural codes are very complex. Thankfully, however, a good cultural code to decipher the current postmodern atmosphere is already growing among Korean pastors. They do not need to look hard for it – it has already come to them in the form of HR dramas. The HR drama syndrome exhibits a postmodern cultural atmosphere, and the members of Korean immigrant churches who indulge in the HR dramas are its age agents. Therefore, a pre-

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<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 155.

understanding of their new cultural code will be greatly helpful for Korean pastors who wish to be effective postmodern pastors.

The goal of the current research is to investigate the feasibility of utilizing the HR phenomenon in Korean immigrant church ministry. The researcher will gather more *specific materials related to this feasibility* in the following chapters. The goal of this is to see what ways are feasible and how these ways can be pursued through interviews with the selected Korean immigrant pastors, and through analysis of the results from the interviews.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to understand how Korean pastors in northern California relate to Korean dramas in their ministry. A qualitative study best fit this type of study. In this chapter, the methodology required for the qualitative study will be discussed, including design of the study, the interview design, and the limitations of the study.

#### Design of the Study

The research design of this study followed a qualitative approach. In her book, *Qualitative Case Studies In Education*, Sharan B. Merriam explains the significance of the quantitative survey. She says, “Survey research describes ‘what is,’ that is, how variables are distributed across a population or phenomenon.”<sup>180</sup> However, since a quantitative survey can present the results of a study only in numerical form, qualitative research can be used as an effective alternative. The flexibility of qualitative research enables the researcher to overcome the numerical limitation that is inherent in a quantitative study.<sup>181</sup> According to Merriam, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their words, and what meaning they attribute to their experience.”<sup>182</sup>

The merits of qualitative research can be classified into four categories: (1) focus on meaning and understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, (2) use of the

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<sup>180</sup> Merriam, 5.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, (3) an inductive process rather than a deductive one, building concepts, hypothesis, or theories after gathering data, and (4) rich description, using words and pictures rather than numbers.<sup>183</sup>

These four characteristics were applied to the research process during this study. First, the researcher focused on finding out how Korean pastors understand and interpret the HR phenomena in their pastoral situations. Second, the researcher took part in collecting and analyzing data during the progression of the research. Third, this research utilized inductive reasoning to analyze the data collected through questionnaires. In this regard, the researcher made an effort not to fall prey to subjective assumptions. And fourth, documentation of all participant responses to the questionnaires helped the researcher to understand the phenomenon being studied.

### **Interview Design**

Seven pastors of Korean immigrant churches participated in the interviews. Of the seven, four pastors minister in the Sacramento area, and the other three minister in the San Francisco Bay area. They respectively belong to the Sacramento Korean Church Association and the Bay Area Korean Church Association. Of the seven, five pastors have a Presbyterian background (PCA: 1 pastor, PCUSA: 1 pastor, other Presbyterian denominations: 3 pastors), one pastor has a Methodist background, and the last one belongs to the Church of the Nazarene. They all have conservative and evangelical theological views. This similarity of theological position helped to simplify the less relevant variables in analyzing the data for this study.

One pastor ministers at a church with more than four hundred congregation members, two pastors minister to between one and two hundred members, and the rest

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid., 14-16.

minister at churches with less than one hundred members. They are all senior pastors of their respective churches, and are also heads of their households, being married with children. This criterion has the same purpose as the criterion of having conservative and evangelical theological views. The routine pastoral tasks of Korean senior pastors are very similar. Senior pastors preach regularly. They often visit the homes and businesses of their congregants. Having these factors in common was helpful for analyzing data efficiently.

Since all of the study-participants fall into the age group of forty to fifty years old, they are all part of the same generation, and therefore have similar cultural experiences. Two out of seven came to America when they were young – one as a child and one as an adolescent - and consequently, they are more Americanized than the other five, who came to the United States approximately ten years ago. The researcher cannot anticipate at this point how this generational difference (not a difference of age but of “American-ness”) will affect the results of the interviews – whether the more Americanized group is interested in the HR dramas or not, and, if so, to what extent.

The first language of all the interviewed pastors is Korean, and their congregation members are Korean immigrants whose first language is also Korean. This also includes the two pastors who came to America while they were young. They feel more comfortable speaking Korean than English, and they feel more comfortable with the Korean culture than the American culture. Finally, all the participants are at the center of the immigrant ministry field. In other words, they live through the limitations and pains of immigrant ministry in their homes and churches. At the same time, they devote themselves to their ministries, dreaming of future success for them. Before the interviews

took place, a letter was delivered to each interviewee. This letter included the purpose of the interview, a participant consent form, and a questionnaire.

### **Proposed Interview Guide**

The following questions were used as a guide during the interview process.

[RQ 1] “To what extent are the Korean pastors in Northern California interested in Korean dramas?”

1. Briefly describe your current pastoral situations.
2. Would you tell me about your past/recent experience of watching Korean dramas?
3. To what extent do you watch Korean dramas? If you currently watch them, or if you plan to watch them in the future:
  - (1) What genre mainly do you like to watch (historical, love story, comedy, or action)?
  - (2) When do you (are you going to) watch them (with your family, when you are alone, when stressed, or just for fun)?
4. Do you remember any Korean dramas which have deeply impressed you? If yes, please describe them.
5. What is your general opinion about Korean dramas?

[RQ 2] “How do Korean pastors in northern California relate to the Korean dramas in their ministries?” Specifically, how do they relate to the dramas (1) in their pastoral visits and counseling, and (2) in their sermons?

1. Tell me about your experiences with relating, in your pastoral counseling and visitation situations, to the Korean dramas you have watched.



2. Tell me about your experiences with relating, in your sermons, to the Korean dramas you have watched.
3. What are the positive effects of Korean dramas have you seen or realized in your ministry? What negative effects of Korean dramas have you seen in your ministry?
4. Tell me about how your congregation members think of Korean dramas.

### **Proposed Design Tools**

For the primary data collection, the researcher adopted a “semi-structured” interview method. The semi-structured interview format utilizes “open-ended questions.”<sup>184</sup> On the merits of the semi-structured interview, Merriam says that in this type of interview, “...either all the questions are more flexibly worded, or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions.”<sup>185</sup> This method was useful for collecting diverse opinions and detecting patterns among the responses of the participants.

Approximately forty-five minutes was allocated to each interview. Korean is the main language that was spoken during the interviews, and each interview was recorded. After the interviews were completed, the interviewed materials were transcribed word for word in Korean for data analysis. Analysis and discussion occurred in Korean also. English was used only for the written dissertation findings and for translating direct quotations.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Due to constraints on time and resources, the current qualitative research was limited to the interviews with seven pastors. The results of this research will probably not speak for the entire population of Korean pastors in the United States. It could be that

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<sup>184</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid., 90.

some pastors may not have any interest at all in Korean dramas, unlike their congregation members. In that case, interviews with the seven pastors may not provide enough data to reach a convincing conclusion for such situations. However, the outcome of the current research will provide a basis for further research on the effects of the HR in Korean immigrant churches. Further research would render more complete results and conclusions.

The geographical area considered in the current research is also limited. Northern California only represents one edge of the Korean immigrant communities in the United States. This geographical limitation is an example of the inability of the current project to represent the mainstream voice of the Korean immigrant communities. If an opportunity arises in the future, the author would like to carry out further research similar to the current project, but in mainstream communities such as Los Angeles and New York.

Furthermore, the results of the current research are derived from the personal experiences and values of the seven interviewees. People's views may vary significantly. Due to this limited sample size, the current research will primarily provide a view of this particular group of interviewees, who all have similar backgrounds and experiences.

The current research looked at the HR phenomenon, centering on Korean dramas. But the HR includes more than dramas. Starting with the dramas, the HR has broadened into other areas such as popular songs, groups of young singers (so-called idols), and associated foods and fashion. The dramas are now just a small portion of the HR. Therefore, trying to understand the HR through the study of dramas, which is just one genre of the HR, would result in limited understanding of the cultural phenomenon.

### Researcher Position

The functional role of the researcher in this study was to collect and analyze data. It was not the place of the researcher to suggest a direction or to assume a conclusion.<sup>186</sup> The researcher made an effort not to interject his preconceptions in the interviewees. However, it is obvious that the researcher stands at the center of this topic. He also has subjective viewpoints on the topic. He is already a pastor of a Korean immigrant church and is also affected by the HR phenomenon. His personal life is influenced by the HR, and he is in a position to realize the extent of the HR's influence. Therefore, there exists a possibility that the views of the researcher may affect the outcome of the research.

From that point of view, the researcher of the current project is an “insider-outsider.”<sup>187</sup> The position of the insider implies that there is difficulty in being able to analyze the data objectively because the researcher is very familiar with the topic of this research. Consequently, the current researcher possesses an advantage in being able to approach the interviewees more intimately, without pressure, and more deeply. On the other hand, the position of the outsider relates to the researcher's intent to maintain an objective attitude during the research, in spite of being an insider. The researcher hopes that his use of a good combination of “insider” and “outsider” brought about the best results.

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<sup>186</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Charles DeWitt, “Evangelizing Postmodern Spaniards,” (D. Min. Dissertation/Ministry Project Proposal, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2010), 17.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to understand how Korean pastors in northern California relate to Korean dramas in their ministry. Three research questions guided the study. The research questions were: (1) “To what extent are Korean pastors in northern California interested in Korean dramas?” (2) “How do Korean pastors in northern California relate to the Korean dramas in their ministries of visiting and counseling congregants?” and (3) “How do Korean pastors in northern California relate to the Korean dramas in their sermons?” This chapter will introduce the interview participants and their insights concerning the study.

In chapter three, a brief summary of the interview participants was presented. That section described how many interviewees participated, who they are, their personal and pastoral backgrounds, and what language was used during the interview phase. This introductory section of the present chapter will introduce the paths and categories that were used for analyzing the results of the interviews, and it will give more detailed information on the interviewee individuals.

First, a systematic method will be adopted in order to analyze the results of the interviews. This involves categorizing and rearranging the interview contents under several major themes. The interview results are classified into the following categories: (1) the extent of interviewee’s awareness of HR dramas, (2) the reasons for their interest,

(3) the interviewees' pastoral application, and (4) an overall evaluation of the interviewees on HR dramas. These four categories also cover all interview questions, which are subordinated under three research questions.

The first category, "the extent of awareness," is intended to measure the level of the interviewee's recognition of the HR dramas by asking questions such as when they became familiar with Korean dramas, when they began to watch Korean dramas, how often they have been watching the dramas, and how they have perceived the popularity of the dramas among their congregants. The second category, "the reasons for their interests," provides a process to collect and analyze the data related to what their favorite genres are and what factors of the dramas stimulated their interests in watching. These two categories relate mainly to RQ 1, which asked "To what extent are the Korean pastors in northern California interested in Korean dramas?" The third category examines the trends of their pastoral application of the Korean dramas they have watched in the past and are watching currently. Question 1, 2, and 4 in RQ 2, which asked "How do Korean pastors in northern California relate to the Korean dramas in their ministries?" will cover this area. In the fourth section, "the overall evaluation," the researcher will look into what opinions the participants have, what elements are negative or positive to them, and what their general evaluations on the HR dramas are. This relates to question 3 ("What are the positive effects of Korean dramas...negative effects of Korean dramas...?") of RQ 2.

Unified initials, "KP (Korean pastor) 1" thorough "KP 7" by the chronological order of the interviews conducted will be used in this chapter and in the following chapter. In addition to the brief introduction of the interviewees in the previous chapter,

more detailed information about each KP as below will be helpful in understanding the results of the interviews more effectively.

KP 1 is in his mid-forties. He has served a church in Sacramento, California (Church of Nazarene) for sixteen years. His congregation has about forty members.

KP 2 is in his late forties. He has served a United Methodist church in Sacramento, California for eleven years. His congregation has about two hundred members.

KP 3 is in his mid-fifties. He has served a church in Pleasant Hill (one of the cities near East Bay and the greater San Francisco area) for fifteen years in the Korean Presbyterian Church in United States. His congregation has about 150 members. He was the oldest among all participants.

KP 4 is in his early fifties. He has served a church in San Ramon (a suburban city near East Bay and the greater San Francisco area) for three years in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America(PCUSA.)His church has about four hundred members. Previously, he served a Korean Presbyterian church in Buffalo, New York for twenty years. He immigrated when he was a young man, and he is part of the group that is usually called the “1.5 generation.” He is bilingual, but Korean is his main language.

KP 5 is in his early forties. He has served a church in Pleasanton (a suburban city in East Bay) as a senior pastor for two years in the Christian Reformed Church. His congregation has about a hundred members. Before accepting the call to this church, he served another Korean church as associate pastor for four years. He was the youngest among all participants.

KP 6 is in his mid-forties. He has served a church in Sacramento, California in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) as a Korean-speaking minister for six years. His church has about forty members. Before this church, he served another PCA Korean church in the Sacramento area as an associate EM (English speaking ministry) pastor for eleven years. He immigrated to the United States when he was a young man, much like KP 4. He is bilingual, and could be considered part of the 1.5 generation, albeit a more second generation-sided-1.5 generation member.

KP 7 is in his mid-fifties. He has served a church in Sacramento in the Korean Presbyterian Church (KPC) for five and a half years. His church has about four hundred members. He has been in the United States for eight and a half years.

### **Extent of Awareness**

#### **Individually**

First, this chapter will examine the interests of KPs on HR drama at an individual level. Summarizing it briefly, with the exception of only one pastor, all of the KPs interviewed have been consistently interested in Korean dramas. The interviews also revealed that the most remarkable element of Korean drama to draw their attention is “fun.” “Fun” is an explicit common factor for all of the KPs who watch the dramas. Simply put, “Korean dramas are very amusing.” In relation to this, KPs responded with similar yet various responses. KP1 explained, “Entertaining levels of Korean dramas are much more upgraded than past when I was in Korea. For example, photographing and filming technology. It’s very impressive!” KP2 added, “I like mini-series. I am mainly watching the dramas that already obtained good reviews by Korean newspaper and internet.”

KP3 took his viewership to a higher level, even encouraging his congregants to watch them. He said, “In general, I have a good impression of Korean dramas. I am even recommending to watch what I watched to my congregants. I don’t remember since when I start to watch exactly... but I have been watching them consistently.” KP4 reflected, “I don’t have much experience with Korea because I am 1.5 generation, but I have consistent interest in that (Korean dramas). I don’t watch them often, but I have a lot of interest in that.” KP6 added, “The reason why I watch them is, number one, it’s fun, number two, it’s because I can learn lots of things from them.”

Thus, two common themes were found from the responses. First, the interviewed pastors were very positive toward Korean dramas. Second, they like to watch the dramas because they are fun to watch. Ironically, the only pastor who showed comparative disinterest in HR dramas is KP5, an immigrant who came to the United States more recently than any of the other interviewees. Comparing his situation with that of other KPs, he is definitely a more “Korean-centered-mindset” person. Nevertheless, he is less interested in HR dramas than the others.

The history of watching Korean dramas varies from one KP to another. However, the group members can clearly be divided into two types. Half of them have consistently watched the HR dramas for about one or two years. The other half have recognized and watched the HR dramas for about ten years. KP1, KP2, and KP7 belong to the former type and KP 3, KP 4, and KP 6 belong to the latter. Even though the two parties are different from each other in how long they have been watching HR dramas, they are not different from each other in the sense that both groups are currently very active in watching Korean dramas.



In this matter, KP5 is an exception. He is inconsistent in watching the HR dramas.

He says:

When I was in Korea, I didn't watch drama because I was very busy. After then, after I came to the US, however, I remember that I watched only three dramas from the beginning to the end of the drama. Of course those three already gained popularity in Korea, and they had good reviews from the viewers. That's the reason why I finished watching them completely.

The researcher cannot, however, conclude from this discovery that the "more recent immigrants" like him have less interest in Korean dramas than the "old timers" do. It is hard to come up with a generalization that more recent immigrants are less interested in watching HR dramas, due only to a single response from KP5. Rather, this variation is more likely attributed to his personal character. Thus, setting aside the response of KP5, a conclusion can be drawn that the KPs generally have active and consistent interest in HR dramas.

Another important point is that two 1.5 generation KPs (KPs 4 and 6) show more interest in Korean dramas than other first generation KPs do. The reason for this seems very clear. Because they left Korea a long time ago during their teenager years, they do not possess a clear recollection of life in Korea. Korean dramas, became a main cultural agent for them to connect with their motherland. Korean dramas have awakened their nostalgia for their motherland. Regarding this aspect, KP 6 says, "For me, without Korean drama, there would not have been any channels to understand Korean history and culture!" For two 1.5 generation KPs, HR dramas have become a window and a textbook to understand the history and culture of their motherland. KP 4 also says in relation to this, "I like Korean dramas because they reflect on Korean's mentality!" KP 4 also sees Korean drama as a major tool that enables him to establish his Korean identity.

Patterns of watching Korean dramas appear to be different from one interviewee to another. Two patterns emerged: watching the dramas alone and watching the dramas with one's wife and/or other family members. KP 2, KP 5, and KP 6 belong to the former pattern, and KP 1, KP 4, and KP 7 belong to the latter. Only KP 3 watches in both patterns. Indeed, he is such a frequent viewer of Korean drama that he watches them regularly every day. Except KP 5, all KPs watch dramas on Sunday or Monday evenings because they feel more relaxed during those hours.

Due to his limited interest in HR drama, KP 5 has rather unique watching habits. For example, he says that he had a special pattern of watching the dramas for "three day and nights consecutively" during his vacation. On those occasions, the dramas he selected to watch are the ones most favorably reviewed both in Korea and globally. The major reason why he is fond of that kind of pattern is that he thinks he is "busy," and he has a tendency to concentrate heavily whenever he does something.

A perfect coincidence among all seven KPs was discovered in the category of choosing their favorite genre. All seven pastors have the same opinion on the question, "What genre do you mainly like to watch – historical, love story, comedy, or action?" (the third question of RQ 1.) All of them responded with the historical dramas as their favorite genre. The second and third favorites of each KP are different from one another, but their first priority selection is unanimously historical drama. The reason why they prefer the historical drama will be dealt with more specifically in the next section.

On the contrary, the interviewed pastors generally do not like the dramas that have more feminine characteristics, such as "melodramas" and "sit-coms." The main reason for this is that those dramas easily follow the secular trend that the ordinary

popular Korean melodramas typically exhibit. These dramas are dominated by many teary parts that intentionally squeeze the viewers' emotions, as well as more sordid elements such as extramarital love affairs. It is natural for conservative pastors like the interviewees to dislike such liberal and secular themes.

Consequently, one trend that is observed here is polarization of the KPs' viewing tastes. Preference for historical dramas stands on one side, and dislike of the melodramas (the ones that are immoral) and sit-coms stands on the other side. In between these two extremes, preferential choices to other genres vary from one KP to another. KP 1 reveals, "Historical dramas occupy about sixty or seventy percentage of my favorites. The other thirty or forty is comedy. I don't like serious ones. Serious themes get me a headache!" KP2 adds, "I like actions and mysteries rather than melodramas. What I recently watched is *Goddess of Athens, Iris*..."<sup>188</sup> KP 3 notes, "I like action dramas as well as historical ones." Finally, KP 7 said, "I have watched the dramas that were talks of the town. In that case, it doesn't matter what genre is." This polarization of viewing taste provides a clue in analyzing the reasons for their interest (to be treated in the next section) and in discussing the main topic of this study (also to be treated in the next chapter).

In conclusion, all seven KPs as a whole well perceived recognition of the recent popular Korean dramas as well as famous past HR dramas. The result shows that most of the KPs have already watched and currently watch popular HR dramas. It is also found that they became aware of the HR dramas through channels such as their spouses, family members, congregants, and other media and entertainment resources even before they

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<sup>188</sup>*Goddess of Athen* and *Iris* are one of the recent popular dramas. Both of them are thoroughgoing "action" dramas.

started watching Korean dramas. In other words, all seven KP-interviewees not only have strong interests in HR dramas, but they also have actively watched the dramas.

#### Throughout Congregation

The goal of this section is to measure the level of the KPs' perceptions of the popularity of Korean dramas experienced by their congregations. The resources in this section come from the KPs' responses to the interview question, "Tell me about how your congregation members think of Korean dramas," which is the fourth question of RQ 2. The results of the interviews are summarized briefly as following. First, their congregants are "very" familiar with Korean dramas, and they watch the dramas much more than the KPs. Second, the KPs' awareness of deeper involvement of their congregants with Korean dramas prompts the KPs to be concerned about the viewing habits of the congregants at the level of pastoral ministry.

KP 1 explained,

Sometimes, when I visited a store operated by one of my congregants, I found that he was watching a Korean drama in the store. TV is usually turned on always. He is watching a drama in his store. Many of them have English subtitle. Then, even some American customers who come to the store show their interest in the drama on TV. Then it naturally becomes a contact point that enables him to jump over to the next dialogue with customers. In that sense, Korean dramas have even positive effects.

Not all of the pastors had such a positive outlook. KP 2 reflected, "I think my congregants are sort of addicted to Korean dramas. No matter how much they are tired after work, they must watch them before going to bed. It is a 'must' and not an option. Without it, they can't fall asleep!" KP 4 added, "For [his congregants] drama is almost part of their life. Young people are watching relatively less, but to old generation, it's almost a sort of addiction."

Others also commented on the overwhelming popularity among their congregants.

KP 6 recalled,

While I was listening to their conversation sometimes, their main topics were about dramas. Even English speaking members enjoy watching it. Even though they are not able to understand it fully, they like watching it. They do not wait...to get what is with subtitle takes long time, so they don't wait. Though they understand only 50 percentages of the contents, they want to watch much newer and newer ones! They download it right away!

KP 7 added, "I think there is no one in my congregation who does not watch Korean dramas. When I visit their home, I see a bundle of the video tapes at the side of the TV stand." These comments demonstrate that the KPs are fully aware of their congregants' involvement with Korean dramas. From the interview results, it is obvious that the congregational members are more deeply absorbed in watching Korean dramas than the KPs. They spend more time watching the dramas, almost as a daily routine.

Second, all KPs have subjective opinions on their congregants' absorption in Korean dramas. On the positive side, KP 1 commented, "They (church members) are addicted but I can understand them." KP 2 reflected, "Watching drama is the best way to soothe their tired and lonesome lifestyle of the immigrant life," and KP 7 added, "They usually tend to watch it when they feel lonely. Rather, dramas help them to escape out of their cultural ghetto...it's good in this case." However, the KPs have a unified voice in criticizing the addictive behaviors of the congregants in connection to their viewing habits. This is because the KPs know that all addictive behaviors are practically harmful to maintaining a devotional Christian life. In other words, this criticism is genuinely based upon pastoral reasons.

Thus, we can reach a conclusion from these responses that on the matter of HR dramas, KPs are followers, while their congregants are leaders in keeping up with the HR

phenomenon. The church members of the interviewees lead their pastors, and the laity is always ahead of the ministers in recognizing Korean dramas and utilizing them as part of their life.

### **Reasons of Interest**

#### **Educational Reason**

As mentioned in the previous section, all seven of the interviewed KPs prefer the historical HR dramas. Besides this coincidence, another remarkable agreement among the KPs was found. They have the same reason for favoring historical dramas – because these types of dramas are basically educational. In general, they all pointed out the educational value of learning something about Korea from watching historical dramas. However, the word, “educational” is defined somewhat differently from one KP to another. KP 1’s explanation in relation to the meaning of “educational” is the most general one. He noted, “The reason why I like historical dramas is that they help me to understand Korean history and culture.” KP 3 and KP 4 also have similar explanations.

Another educational value pointed out by some KPs is that they can learn good leadership skills from historical dramas. The heroes depicted in the historical dramas exemplify what good leadership is in a historical moment. For example, KP 2 says, “A drama that still hits my memory is *Lee Soon-Shin*. I could visualize an excellent role model for national leadership, particularly at a time of hardship.” Lee Soon-Shin, the legendary general in the Lee Dynasty, is an actual historical figure who saved ancient Korea during a war against Japan. KP 6 recommends *JooMong*, which depicts a national hero during the Kokooryeo Age, and KP 7 was deeply moved by a story of *King Se Jong*,

which also took place during Lee Dynasty. These KPs praised these dramas for their educational value of demonstrating strong leadership.

Other unique reasons were found from other interviewees. KP 4 said that he could get valuable information on the contemporary palace food from the drama, *Dae Jang Keum*. As previously mentioned in chapters one and two, *Dae Jang Keum*, which enjoyed global popularity, is the story of an ancient woman who successfully became a palace chef and medical doctor in the king's palace during the Lee Dynasty. Included in this drama are recipes and information on the ancient palace foods of the Lee Dynasty. KP 5 recommended *Huh Joon* as the best drama. This story was about a famous medical doctor in the Lee Dynasty, and KP 5 preferred it because of his own curiosity about oriental medicine and the contemporary medical information contained in the drama.

KP 6, a 1.5 generation pastor, is the most zealous fan of historical dramas. He watches not only ancient historical dramas such as *JooMong*, *King Se Jong*, *Huh Joon* and *Dae Jang Keum*, but also even more modern ones dealing with the Korean War in the 1950's and the Korean resistance groups against Japan during Japanese colonial times from 1910 to 1945. He seems to believe that all Korean historical dramas are unconditionally didactic and educational.

All interviewees commented that other genres of Korean dramas (not just the historical ones) also provide educational values. KP 3 learns story-telling techniques from TV dramas. He says, "People don't like this style, 'John Calvin says...Martin Luther says...' However, their faces are changed brightly when I mention TV drama during my sermon..." KP 4 also said that all Korean dramas are very helpful in understanding the

mentality of the Korean people. According to him, Korean dramas accurately depict contemporary mental attitudes of Korean people living in Korea.

KP 7 is a prime beneficiary who enjoys a variety of educational resources from Korean dramas. He derives educational value not only from historical dramas but also from other genres. He shared,

I watched *Mom Has Had It!* very interestingly. It was a good chance for me to reconsider mother's role and position in a Korean family. *Eyes of Dawn* was really good too. I could feel the pain and suffering of Korean women during the Japanese colonial period from that drama. *Hourglass* made me look back at the political agony of modern Korea.

This answer evidences that KP 7 has a special taste for watching Korean dramas mainly from the educational angle.

Finally, another unique reason for watching Korean dramas must be pointed out here. KP 2 occasionally watches Korean dramas with his children because some of the Korean dramas help his children to learn the Korean language. After watching *Boys Before Flowers*, which is a love story between high school students, his teenage children had more interest in Korea and said that they wanted to move to Korea and get a job there at some time in the future. This is another educational benefit for KP 2.

In summary, Korean dramas as a whole provide various educational value to the most of KPs. What is obvious in connection with KPs' reasons for their interest in Korean drama is that they have become fans of the HR dramas because they find them to be educational in many respects.

#### For National Pride

The interview results indicate that Korean dramas as a whole stimulated patriotism in most of the KPs. In fact, there are not many opportunities and channels for



them to maintain their patriotism because they are immigrants in the United States who left Korea a long time ago. KP 6, who has the oldest immigration history among the seven participants, is second to none in this matter. He responded with excitement:

When I am watching Korean dramas, I feel something arousing from the bottom of my heart. I think it's my national pride. I am very proud that a small country like Korea has such a great cultural influence globally through dramas. It's wonderful thing to see the global recognition of Koreans growing because of HR dramas! Anyway, HR dramas are the agents of global recognition of Korean culture.

Likewise, KP5 also commented that, for restoring his Korean identity as a Korean American immigrant, Korean dramas function as a necessary and absolute channel of communication.

KP 1 also expressed his pride in the role of the Korean dramas, saying, "Korean dramas have been very helpful in keeping my Korean identity...They made me have a national pride...Their influence is very powerful in introducing Korea!" Indeed, Korean dramas are not just a part of entertainment. Rather, they represent a sort of spirit, a cultural power, and a huge stream of an age. They act as a cultural icon to awaken people of Korean culture on a global scale.

### **Pastoral Application and Evaluation**

#### **At Visitation and Counseling**

The interviews revealed that none of the seven KPs use Korean dramas frequently in their pastoral ministries, such as counseling and home or business visitation. There is no exception to this trend. However, they agree that Korean dramas provide a convenient way of starting a conversation before advancing to the next dialogue. They utilize Korean dramas as an icebreaker for starting conversation, and they also use them as common ground to build relationships with the counselees.

KP 4 has a positive view on the possibility of applying HR dramas in his ministry. Although he has not had an opportunity to directly use what he has seen in the dramas he has watched, he is interested in attempting to do so sooner or later. In relation to this, he shared his experience: “At visitation situations, usually they hide their interests in Korean dramas...in spite of their intense interests...but if I mention them, they start talking a lot about the dramas immediately more than me.” He strongly emphasizes the possibility of utilizing the dramas in pastoral ministries such as a visitation and counseling.

#### In the Pulpit

All seven pastors are more prone to relate to dramas they watched in their sermons than during counseling or visitation in people’s homes or businesses. Nevertheless, the extent of these references to the dramas is much less than the researcher expected. Though most of them do not actively and frequently use dramas as illustration material in their sermon, they do, however, use them occasionally.

The level of their utilization varies greatly from one KP to another. The first group, which includes KP 2, KP 4, and KP 7, use dramas in sermon at most about five times per year, even though they enjoy watching them. Each of them has different reasons for that occasional use. KP 2’s reason is more private than the others. As a proclaiming agent of God’s words, he finds himself moving in a wrong direction when he utilizes Korean dramas in his sermons. Recently, he noticed that he quoted more of what was on visual media than the words of God. Before struggling with this, he quite often utilized visual materials in his sermons. He regrets that now, so he is making an effort to moderate the use of visual effects from Korean dramas in his sermons. KP 7 said that his main reason for using dramas in sermons is to draw the attention of the audience. He

commented, “It is very effective.” Though not often, he sometimes uses Korean dramas for didactic reasons. For example, he has used historical heroes from dramas in order to explain traditional moral values like, “encouraging good and punishing evil.”

The second group, which includes KP 1, KP 5, and KP 6, almost never cites dramas in sermons. KP 6 explained that he enjoys watching dramas very much, but that he hesitates to use them in his sermons. These pastors gave pastoral reasons for this omission. They revealed that they are afraid the congregants may think of them as lazy pastors who indulge in watching dramas, rather than as preachers who are diligent in preparing sermons, if they mention drama stories during their preaching. On the contrary, KP 5 gave a more *intrinsic* reason than that of KP 1 and KP 6. He does not trust the contents and materials of Korean dramas enough to use them as illustrating materials for his sermon. Therefore, he does not think of Korean drama as good material for illustrations.

The third category both “enjoys watching the dramas” and “utilizes them effectively in sermons.” Only KP 3 belongs to this category. He is very open not only to Korean dramas but also to other secular cultural materials. He expresses his ideas in relation to this, noting:

In order for me to form sympathy with my congregants, I am very enthusiastic in using our ordinary life stories, and that includes not only drama stories, but also sports, golf, and my family story. Of course, I must be cautious in doing this. I should not do it often. But, in the end, pastors are the same as ordinary people, my flocks. We don’t need to be veiled with a curtain of mystery.

Comparing his comment with those of other pastors, he is definitely more open to both watching dramas and applying them in his sermons. Unlike him, all other pastors are

classified either “enjoy watching, yet hesitate to use as illustrations in ministry” or “does not enjoy watching, not willing to illustrations in ministry.”

In conclusion, most of the interviewees, with the only exception being KP 3, do not tend to use the stories and the characters from Korean dramas they watch as illustration material in their sermons. Various reasons exist for this unwillingness. However, it is hoped that the findings of the current research will help suggest more desirable ways to utilize HR drama for pastoral purposes. This issue will be explored in the next chapter.

### Overall Evaluation

Among the interview questions under RQ 2, one question asked all interviewees to express their overall evaluation on Korean dramas in connection with their ministry. The researcher queried, “What are the positive effects of Korean dramas have you seen or realized in your ministry? What negative effects of Korean dramas have you seen in your ministry?” Responding to this question, the participants all pointed out both negative and positive effects.

First, the researcher will detail the negative effects of Korean dramas that were pointed out by the interviewees. All KPs agree on one characteristic of Korean dramas that brings out negative reactions from them. This particular aspect is the “extra-marital themes” that are depicted in the dramas. Extra-marital affairs are often portrayed as normal in the society in which the dramas take place, contrary to reality. All seven KPs have antipathy against dramas that deal with extra-marital issues, double dates, divorce, and preposterous story developments based on complicated family connections and frequent secrets of birth. The pastors see the behaviors as immoral, and consequently they

do not recommend such dramas to their congregants. As mentioned earlier, they prefer historical dramas because they are educational. Since they believe that only moral behaviors have educational value, historical dramas with moral values are considered to have the highest educational value. Thus, love stories, particularly extra-marital melodramas, are not welcomed by these pastors who have in general a conservative mindset.

Regardless of pastoral reasons, most of KPs (except KP 1) do not like to watch light comedies, emotional love stories between young men and women, and sit-coms. The primary reason for this is because they do not find them to be educational. Even KP 6, who is relatively young, does not find those genres attractive. He says, “It’s so boring. I don’t understand why it’s funny. I am not sure if I don’t understand the Korean culture...anyway, it’s not funny to me! I don’t know...I think it’s because I lived in America too long.”

However, as the interviews have shown, all of the KPs agree that “everything” about Korean drama, except the immoral melodramas, has a positive effect. The preference or non-preference for sit-coms, comedies, and melodramas is strictly based on individual taste and not on pastoral reasons. They understand well that their congregants, particularly female congregants, are big fans of the more female-focused dramas, even though they themselves do not like those shows. In conclusion, other than immoral dramas, all KPs have a positive view on Korean dramas at the pastoral level.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the interviews can be summarized into “common views” and “different views” among the KPs. The first common view is that most of KPs are as a

whole well aware of the HR dramas (extent of recognition). Second, all of the KPs enjoy watching HR dramas because they are valuable educational resources, and they can help people to find their identity as a Korean American in the United States (reason of interest). Third, most of the KPs do not use HR dramas as illustrating materials in personal counseling or visitations, but they sometimes use them in their sermons (pastoral application). Finally, all KPs in general have a positive view toward the HR dramas at the level of pastoral ministry (overall evaluation).

However, the interviewees did not agree on all aspects of the topic of study. There were four main differences. First, the KPs' patterns and habits of watching Korean dramas are different from each other (extent of recognition). Second, they like to watch the HR dramas not only for "educational reasons" and "national pride," but also for a variety of reasons such as fun, learning story-telling techniques, curiosity, and reading a cultural trend (reason of interest). Third, there are various reasons why they hesitate and are temperate in utilizing HR dramas in their pastoral settings, visitations, and sermons (pastoral application). Finally, some negative effects are pointed out in the evaluations of the participants, who spoke about elements of the dramas being "something immoral" and "addictive" (overall evaluation). These findings will be discussed more deeply in chapter five, where the researcher will discuss issues related to the purpose of the study on the basis of these findings.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand how Korean pastors in northern California relate Korean dramas to their ministry. Two main research questions posed to the interview-participants were: “To what extent are Korean pastors in northern California interested in Korean dramas?” and “How do Korean pastors in northern California relate to Korean dramas in their ministries – ‘in visiting/counseling congregations’ and ‘in their sermons?’” The results of the responses to the research questions were discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

Summarizing the interview results briefly, the responses can be divided into two categories –“common responses” and “different responses.” The first common response among the participants was that most of the KPs are as a whole well aware of HR dramas, which demonstrates the extent of their recognition of the topic. Second, when asked about why they were interested in HR dramas, all KPs revealed that they enjoy watching the HR dramas because of the dramas’ educational value, as well as a means of establishing their identity as a Korean American in the United States. When asked about whether/how they might apply the material from these dramas in their pastoral ministries, most of the KP-interviewees said that they do not utilize the HR dramas frequently as illustrating materials in the settings of personal counseling or visitation. However, they do use the HR dramas relatively more often in their sermons. Finally, as an overall

evaluation of the value of the genre, all of the KPs have a generally positive views toward the HR dramas.

There were four responses that were different among the participants. First, the interviews showed that the history and the habit of watching the HR dramas are different from one KP to another. Second, the KPs are watching the HR dramas not only for “educational reasons” and “national pride,” but also for other reasons such as fun, learning story-telling techniques, curiosity for information, and finding a current cultural trend. Third, there are various reasons why the KPs hesitate to utilize the HR dramas in their pastoral settings, visitations, and sermons. Finally, some negative views toward the HR dramas exist based on the KPs’ impression of the immorality depicted in the dramas, and their evaluation of the addictive nature of watching the dramas.

In this chapter, we will discuss the interview results to find more desirable ways to overcome the limitations detected from the interviews. To find the best method for further discussion, we will look back at the significance of the study section set forth in chapter one. In that section, three values of this study are stated: the opportunity for the awareness of the status of the pastoral “field,” which is the church, the opportunity for the awareness of the congregants, and an opportunity for the awareness of pastor himself and his ministry.<sup>189</sup> Along with these three presupposed values of the current study, we also explored three related areas in chapter two’s literature review: the present state of Korean immigrant churches, HR drama and postmodernism, and the postmodern pastor. Therefore, a similar structure is maintained in the further discussion of the interview findings. The three categories for further discussions are the following: a Korean pastor as a postmodern individual with HR drama, a Korean church as a postmodern group with

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<sup>189</sup> See chapter 1, page 6.



HR drama, and a Korean church ministry as a postmodern pastoral ministry with HR drama. These three categories will cover the three major realms that must be explored in this study – Korean pastors (leaders), Korean churches (members and field), and the ministry (work).

HR dramas stand at the center of these three realms. To all KP individuals, the HR dramas act as a window through which they can see, diagnose, and experience how those three realms have been evolving in postmodern culture. The results of the interviews also provide valuable resources from which the levels of the current state of all three realms are measured. Another important presupposition to be mentioned before entering the main part of the discussion is that we do need to deal with all matters related to the main theme of this study. All results from the interviews are included in the findings of chapter four, and the summary of the interview results is stated at the beginning of this chapter. Thus, in what follows in this chapter, we will deal with several selected agendas and main problematic issues that need further discussion.

In order to fulfill this goal, each section will be discussed in the following order: discussion first and recommendations second. Each section may have several problematic issues which were discovered from the findings. As sub-themes of each section, only the problematic issues will be discussed. Each sub-theme will also follow the discussion-recommendation format. If one issue were suggested in the “discussion” part, a possible remedy for the issue will follow in the “recommendations” part. For the most part, the recommendations will come from the writer’s subjective opinion and other literature.

## A Korean Pastor as a Postmodern Individual with HR Drama

### Dualistic Habit

#### *Discussion*

According to the *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, dualism is “A theory in interpretation which explains a given situation or domain in terms of two opposing factors or principles...twofold classifications which admit of no intermediate degrees.”<sup>190</sup> Redefining this definition more simply, dualism is the idea is that two worlds or two worldviews coexist in “a self.” Dualism means not only the coexistence of the two worlds in an individual, but also the formation of a self from those two worlds, organizing one’s thinking, establishing one’s values, and formatting one’s acts consistently. Differentiating and merging the two worlds in one’s ordinary life happen both intentionally and unintentionally. Whether intentional or unintentional, individuals are frequently influenced by the dualistic ideas that exist in the self.

This dualism was observed during the interviews, and the researcher believes that it forms the basis of the KPs’ thinking processes. This dualism is specifically applied to the HR phenomenon through their unconscious separation between their “enjoyment” of the HR dramas and their “utilization” of them. As noted earlier, most of the KPs tend to hesitate to cite and utilize the stories, characters, and speeches from the dramas they watch as illustration material for their sermons. With the exception of only KP3, the most that any of the KPs use drama materials in their sermons is five times a year. Comparing this with the frequency with which they watch the dramas, it is quite noticeable that there is a huge difference between the two. On a personal level, they enjoy the dramas very

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<sup>190</sup>Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Carl F. Henry, eds. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1960), 174.

much, but they utilize them much less in pastoral situations. Their private realm and their pastoral realm are separated from each other depending on their situation.

However, this apparent discrepancy does not fully explain the real nature of the dualism that exists among them. The real explanation for this is embedded in its reason, that is to say, in the answers to the question of why they are reluctant to mention the dramas in their public ministerial field. The interview results suggest that some of the KPs are very conscious of how their congregation members would see them as a pastor if they repeatedly mentioned HR dramas. As a pastor of a church, the KPs have a certain apprehension in their mind toward the congregation members. This apprehension comes from an inherent feeling that the congregants would consider him to be lazy pastors who waste their time watching TV dramas instead of preparing sermons and praying if they often mentioned the HR dramas in pastoral situations like visitations and sermons. KP 1 and KP 6 are representative examples of this. Even KP 3, who highly recommends the drama-watching, believes this to be true. This apprehension results in a double mind – “a strong favor toward the HR dramas” versus “an exclusive attitude toward the HR dramas” – that simultaneously penetrates the mentality of the KPs. The former stems from individual preferences, and the latter comes from their pastoral concerns.

This characteristic of the KPs is related to a sort of dualistic tendency. This dualistic tendency is embedded in their sub-consciousness. In an individual setting, they enjoy drama-watching very much. However, when they stand in front of their congregation, they do not want to expose themselves to others as being addicted to elements of popular culture. That is because the concept of “popular culture” is generally understood by the congregants to stand for “secularism.”

Though this dualistic tendency seems to be the result of their intentional choices on the surface, it is a result of an unconscious decision that the KPs make. They watch the HR dramas at home, simply and unconsciously being “who they are.” Even when they enjoy popular culture as individuals, an unconscious connection to the context of their pastorship is made. This unconscious attitude as an individual and at the same time as a pastor is deeply rooted in the center of their sub-consciousness.

Similar evidence is also detected in selecting their favorite genre of HR drama. Why do they all like the historical dramas? According to the interview results, it is because the historical dramas are educational, and also because the historical dramas provide them with national pride as Koreans. This finding indicates that Korean pastors unconsciously have two beings in their mindset – the “individual self” and the “pastoral self.” Speaking more accurately, it is the individual self unconsciously presupposing a pastoral self. One self is a being who they are in one world, and the other self is a being who they are in another world.

Nancy Percy stresses that the responsibility of evangelical Christians is to overcome the chronic dualistic lifestyle that widely prevails over their ordinary lives. She notes:

We must never forget, however, that the same dualism permeated the Protestant denominations nearly as thoroughly as it did Catholicism... We see the effects today when Christians assume they can attend church and Bible study on the weekends and then, during the week, simply accept whatever concepts and theories are current in their professional field.<sup>191</sup>

A key emphasis of this book is that, after the Enlightenment, a dualistic attitude which sharply divides everything in this world into two parts, “(private) value” and “(public)

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<sup>191</sup>Percy, 94.

fact,” has been widely prevalent.<sup>192</sup> This distinction came from western thought as influenced by Platonic dualism.<sup>193</sup> In addition to this, however, another dualistic idea may possibly affect the KPs’ attitudes toward the HR dramas. This idea is oriental dualism. The western understanding of the dualistic pattern is “private value” versus “public value.” In this case, each individual can be a host of all judgments occurring between the two realms.<sup>194</sup> However, oriental dualism is much different. Oriental dualism has been described as utilizing a thought structure of “individual versus group.”<sup>195</sup>

Unlike a western individual, an individual in an oriental society must always stand in a society organized by people, and by doing so, he also must be tested among “all.”<sup>196</sup> “All” here means a society, not an individual. The individual in this case is not a person who is judged as an individual himself, but is regarded just as “one” individual among “all.” Nisbat explains this point in connection with the languages that the two worlds use, saying:<sup>197</sup>

East Asian languages are highly “contextual”... Western languages force a preoccupation with focal objects as opposed to context. English is a “subject-prominent” language... For Westerners, it is the self who does the acting; for Easterners, action is something that is undertaken in concert with others or that is the consequence of the self-operating in a field of forces...

Thus, oriental people consider others (all) first rather than a self (individual). This idea works very effectively with oriental dualism. Individuals choose their action by considering society’s value first. They are ready to sacrifice themselves for the goal of accomplishing a common value. The common value in that case is mainly a moralistic

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid. See chapter 3 and 11.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 74-5.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Nisbat, 56-72.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. Especially see chapter 3. Nisbat explains well the difference between the western and oriental world by employing the terminologies, “independency vs. interdependency.”

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 157-8.

value, which is recognized and accepted by all. They are more relational than westerners, emphasizing individualistic value. In this society, the individual is somewhat belittled and sometimes even ignored.

Thus, the individual habits of the KPs are affected by this oriental dualism. When they met with a public situation in which to mention the dramas they watched, they would inevitably consider the people's common opinion first. The common opinion would dictate, "We want to see that my pastor is more pious than us! He must not be secular, he should be a holier person than me, and he must not be a person who is frantic about popular culture!" The KPs are aware of this common opinion, so they act according to the people's expectations.

### *Recommendations*

Of course this is not a "right/wrong" issue.<sup>198</sup> However, what is obvious in relation to the main topic of this study is that dualistic idea and habits, whether they come from the western world or the oriental world, are not ultimately healthy for these KP individuals. While they are entangled with this complicated dualism, they may lose their real identities, and they can act without a healthy subjectivity. They may live their lives with two selves in two worlds. By doing so, they may have two faces.

KPs are individuals who need to enjoy popular culture for themselves. Prior to being pastors, they need to be natural people. Prior to being postmodern pastor, they must be postmodern Christians. And prior to watching dramas with common pastoral presuppositions, they had better watch them without any prejudice. At least their liberation from the bondage of their social title happens whenever they truly enjoy the dramas.

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<sup>198</sup>Ibid., 228-9.

The impression received from the KPs during the interviews is that they readily have an ability to manage themselves in relation to drama-watching habits and to discern between what is moral and immoral. Schultz criticizes the sarcastic criticisms on television of the contemporary critics, such as Malcom Muggeridge, Virginia Stem Owens, Jacques Ellul, Jerry Mander, and Neil Postman.<sup>199</sup> Even though the critics warn about the harms of television, Schultze stresses that Christians, particularly Christian leaders, have a responsibility to redeem television. Let us pay attention to his emphasis again in terms of this issue:<sup>200</sup>

My thesis is that television can be “redeemed” when producers and viewers alike hold the medium up to standards of spiritual, moral and artistic integrity... In short, believers must seize the medium for the breadth of its cultural potential, not just for its apparent power to propagandize... Television is worth redeeming. It is, after all, a gift from God discovered by human beings.

In conclusion, the dualistic idea subconsciously embedded in the KPs’ minds does not help them to be postmodern Christians. Too many contextual thoughts in their minds would rather lead them to unhealthy confusion. When watching the HR dramas, the KPs must return to themselves, and find themselves!

### **A Korean Immigrant Church as a Postmodern Group with HR Drama**

#### **“Addiction” Issue**

#### *Discussion*

In chapter two, we discussed the existence of some limitations in Korean immigrant churches in the United States. We called it a “cultural ghetto phenomenon” as a single phrase. Due to this limitation, the Korean churches in the United States look like a solitary island floating in the middle of the sea. They are practically a multi-cultural

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<sup>199</sup>Schultze, 23-4.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid., 13-5.

society, but this “multi” character often becomes a weakness for them because they are easily stuck among the three “in-between-cultures.” These three areas of tension are between the “western” and the “oriental” cultures, between the “first (old) generation” and the “second (young) generation,” and between the “immigrants using (comfortable with) Korean language” and the “immigrants using (comfortable with) English.” The first one is the tension that usually happens in the setting of a broader realm, like other multi-cultural immigrant ethnic groups, as well as in the Korean American community. The second and third areas, however, are mixed together, so these two tensions cannot be separated. Generational issues sometimes stem from the linguistic barrier, but the linguistic difference is not the only cause of the tension. Sometimes these issues overlap, and other times they are separate.

Korean churches have been a center where those tensions meet and mix together. Therefore, various limitations have been easily exposed in Korean churches. One of the most detectable limitations, as discussed in chapter two, is that Korean immigrant churches have been often victimized as a center of the cultural ghetto. Lonely immigrants who live in the United States without specific cultures to enjoy naturally gather at Korean churches to obtain something cultural. However, they cannot find what they seek in the churches, either. The churches do not and cannot fully provide what they are seeking. In the midst of that situation, the HR wave came to them suddenly through HR dramas. At this moment, the HR dramas have decisively contributed to soothing their feelings of cultural inferiority. In some senses, Korean dramas seem to be an alternative method for them to overcome the cultural ghetto-phenomenon.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> More recently, “K-Pop” (Korean pops) has become more popular globally than Korean dramas. To see the new wave, cf. Editorial, *The Korea Times*, October 12, 2012.



However, in the eyes of the interviewees, the extent of their congregants' commitment to the HR dramas is too excessive. Most of the KPs, though they are positive toward the Korean dramas, are concerned that their congregants seem to have an addiction to drama-watching. With the exception of KP 5, all of the KPs hold the same opinion that their congregational members are addicted to Korean dramas.

Representatively, KP 2 worries,

It (drama watching) is helpless when looking at the level of pastoral ministry. Sometimes, I am very curious about how much they have interest in Christian spirituality and their spiritual improvement. I know there are many good things in dramas, but lots of immoral things in there too, so ultimately, it seems to be *helpless biblically*. I know it's the best thing for Koreans to overcome the loneliness coming from their immigrant life. But it also gives difficulties to them in terms of maintaining their healthy spiritual life.

KP 3 also shares his concerns, "By watching dramas till late night on Saturday, they come late to church on Sunday. I am teaching not to do that...I am teaching them to be more cautious with watching so that the Sunday service may not be bothered." KP 4 more directly points it out by saying, "Dramas are a big part of their life...particularly to the old generation, it is almost an addiction."

In conclusion, Korean dramas are ultimately good for Korean community, including Korean churches, in a sense that they contribute to saturating the cultural thirst of the Korean immigrants coming from the absence and inferiority of their own culture. Nevertheless, if their watching of these dramas rises to the level of an addiction, Korean dramas, from the eyes of the KPs, could negatively influence the Korean community.

### *Recommendations*

As an alternative to letting this drama-watching become an addiction, practical training coursework (teaching classes or a guideline booklet) is definitely necessary.

Mentioning the issue through sermons is not enough. As we have seen in the previous section, avoiding mentioning it in sermons for a pastoral reason may not be an ultimate answer either. Everybody knows that the entire congregation is watching these television shows. The pastor knows that his congregants are watching, and the congregants know that their pastor also enjoys watching. Hiding this evident fact cannot be the right answer. Bringing the fact out to the public and dealing with it is a better way. For that reason, more practical solutions are needed. For example, practical watching guidelines and training coursework can be a good alternative that would help them to confront the limitations that they need without avoiding the issue.

However, in the conservative Korean immigrant churches, it is not easy to offer this kind of practical Bible study program. The congregants are more accustomed to traditional Bible study programs such as “How to read a Bible?” or “Who’s who of the Old Testament?” It could create an awkward situation for the time being if the title of a new course were named, “How to watch and enjoy Korean dramas as a Christian” or “Biblical ways of watching Korean dramas.” Nevertheless, the researcher contends that now is right time to start. If those exemplary titles of the new Bible study programs give the participants monotonous feeling, naming the title and preparing the contents of the coursework can be more flexibly suitable with a new format. Fresher and more attractive alternatives can be possibly made available in this area.

This issue, however, is more serious in another sense. Practically, the Korean church congregants do not tend to spend their time, energy, and money on self-study of the Bible. Many of the lay people of the Korean churches do not read the Bible regularly. In general, they may only read the Bible at the Sunday worship service. Sadly, bringing

the Bible to Sunday morning service and putting it back in the car trunk may be the extent of their self-devotional lives with the Bible. On the contrary, they are not able to go to bed without watching Korean dramas. They can live without spiritual food, but they cannot live out without this new cultural food.

Therefore, the first step to correct this undesirable reality should be a proper education – not a vague and abstract one, but a practical and applicable one. Addiction is addiction. Being addicted to something is not good. We must remember a Korean axiom, “Kwa-Yu-Bul-Keup,” which means, “Whatever is good is not good when it is too much!” The researcher agrees with the KPs that the extent of the HR drama-wave among the lay people in Korean immigrant churches is too excessive. Obviously, it is the time to do something!

#### “Fun and Interest” Issue

##### *Discussion*

Another point at which the KPs struggle with the addiction issue is their new discovery of the fact that many of the church programs, including the pastors’ sermons, have their own limitations. This is a sad discovery that church programs are very limited in their ability to evoke interest from congregants when compared with the “fun” elements that Korean dramas possess. KP 1 is aware that HR dramas do not make his job of preaching the scriptures any easier. He says, “Because they (audience) are easily emotionally touched from dramas, they are hardly moved from my plain sermons.” KP 2 confessed that, due to this burden, he once made an effort to find visual materials while preparing his sermon as an attempt to promote the audience’s fun. This case illustrates that the pastoral burden to make the sermon more interesting than the dramas can be

further developed to the level of stimulating a pastor to fill up his sermon manuscript with entertaining materials. This phenomenon has more to do with techniques than with the contents of the message. The more a pastor tries to compete with the dramas, the more he falls into the trap. Consequently, it is apparent that the thought that preaching must be more interesting than dramas becomes a burden for the KPs.

The discovery indicates the existence of a more serious problem at a deeper level. Broadly speaking, it is a new acknowledgement from the pastors that lay people lose interest in Christianity as time goes by due to the sudden invasion of the HR dramas. With this acknowledgement, the KPs would say, “My people never find Christianity interesting!” Of course, this kind of anxiety will get deeper, particularly when the KPs watch their audience doze off while listening to sermons. Attempts to make the sermons more interesting with visual materials, as KP 2 did, will only make the task of maintaining the congregation’s interest in the sermons harder and harder.

If the aforementioned were based on the pastor’s perspective, the fact that the pastor’s sermon is not interesting or even insightful could be a tangible problem for the audience. Whatever the cause is, and whatever the reason is, a prevalent perception that a pastor’s sermons make the audience drowsy can be an undeniable reality. If people come to church on Sunday without mental acuteness due to late drama watching the previous night, they will naturally compare the Sunday’s sermon of their pastor with the dramas they watched. They will also compare the boring sermon with the interesting and moving stories of the dramas. If this presupposition is expanded further, the congregants will soon compare Christianity with the secular culture, asking themselves, “Why isn’t there something interesting in Christianity?”

This practical struggle may reduce congregants to an undesirable state – the state where people are coming to church as cultural Christians, that is to say, as nominal Christians. This state is another dualistic habit that we have seen in the previous section – “A Korean Pastor as a Postmodern Individual with HR Dramas.” People come to church just for the outer form of Christianity, while they enjoy the true taste of life at home separately with the inner contents of the secular culture. Indeed, this is another kind of explicit dualism.

### *Recommendations*

Education to help the congregants avoid falling prey to this addiction is just a first step to get through the detected problems. Addiction is merely a symptom of the bigger real problems, which are tiresomeness toward the church, minimizing the abundance given by the gospel of Christianity, and finally departing from church. Thus, it can be said that the main task of Korean pastors in the future will be to protect their congregants from these kinds of dangers. For such protection, more active alternatives are needed. These alternatives will now be discussed.

First, the leaders of the Korean churches should focus on developing cultural ministries. The invasion of the HR dramas was a passive cultural encounter for the Korean people in the United States, and it has provided an exit for them to get out of the cultural ghetto phenomenon. This was like a temporary cold beverage for them to saturate their existing cultural thirst. This has happened passively for the past few years. However, it may have been a great gift that God gave to the Korean churches and people. The invasion of the HR dramas has created a new opportunity, and they must not wait for

another cultural agent like HR dramas to come to them. Instead, they must create and develop new cultural agents.

As Sang-Jin Oh says, in the future, Korean churches must focus on raising the next generation leadership to be “transformers” of American culture.<sup>202</sup> He asks the next generation leaders to “replace fear toward the American mainstream with ‘spirituality’ and ‘social ability.’” Antony W. Alumkal stresses that the next generation of Korean immigrant churches must be more interested in merging into the American mainstream. He points out the limitations that an ethnically focused religious group can have: “As long as Korean Americans remain marginalized by their status as racial minorities, it is probable that this tension between particularism and universalism will continue to have an impact on the churches of the second and subsequent Korean American generation.”<sup>203</sup> Thus, churches of racial minority like the Korean immigrant churches must always be careful not to separate from the secular American culture. Instead, they must have more interest in leading the secular American culture with a sound Christian viewpoint. It is better to be a herald than to be a follower.

In order to accomplish this goal, “HR dramas plus alpha” is needed. We have already referred to the development of practical Bible study programs as a less active alternative to help congregants deal with this addictive habit. The “plus alpha” will be a more active way of helping to solve this problem. For instance, developing deeper-leveled Bible study programs can be a good example of this. Surveying the stories of the dramas they watched, extracting biblical significance from the dramas, analyzing and

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<sup>202</sup> Oh, 596.

<sup>203</sup> Antony W. Alumkal, “Being Korean, Being Christian: Particularism and Universalism in a Second-Generation Congregation,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 190.

applying what can be discovered from the dramas, and sharing them with others within the context of Christian faith are good examples of the new study programs. To avoid a problem is never the best choice. To simply provide several practical Bible study programs is not the best option either. As a way of utilizing more active alternatives, developing higher level Bible study materials, organizing group programs to study the developed materials, and inviting lay-watchers of the dramas into the place where the newer and fresher themes are discussed must be a priority for Korean church leaders.

The researcher should point out that, among the research questions, there were no questions like, “Have you ever had any Bible study in depth which is related to the dramas you or the congregants watched?” Nevertheless, the researcher could not find any hint that this kind of Bible study was ever considered by KPs from their responses to the interview questions. As we found in chapter four, the KPs generally do not want to discuss the dramas they have watched, even in personal counseling and visitations. Producing deep-level Bible study materials and launching high-level, focused Bible study programs are not currently on the agenda in Korean immigrant churches.

In conclusion, Korean immigrant churches need to be more positive, more active, and more open to such Bible study programs. In the future, Korean pastors must be second to none in this work. It is often heard that the Korean churches in Korea, as well as some of the advanced American churches, already have a success story in this matter. By launching such Bible study programs, they are being good role models and heralds of this matter.<sup>204</sup> On the contrary, the Korean immigrant churches are still too conservative to do that.

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<sup>204</sup> Some of the leading Korean churches in Korea have been being a herald in this area. For example, the monthly magazine “Short Fence (NazenWooltari)” introduces every month what movies and dramas are

Thus, in some sense, this matter requires more courage. For example, the Korean pastors in the United States should be more diligent at studying and analyzing the contents of Korean dramas on the basis of the Christian faith. Korean pastors must be, so to speak, masters of the dramas and the popular culture. Why should they do this? Not for fun for themselves, but for the real fun of all Korean American Christians. Korean American Christians can arrive at the place of “real fun” only when we taste the real biblical significance of the popular culture. Pastors are the only ones who can do this on the frontline in Korean American churches.

### **A Korean Church Ministry as a Postmodern Pastoral Ministry with HR Drama**

This last section can be considered the most important among the three sections of this chapter. When looking back at the previous sections, we see that the main target of discussion in the first section was the pastor himself as a postmodern individual, and the second section was about Korean immigrant churches as a postmodern group. In both realms, the HR drama has become a window through which the KPs see those two realms. The reason why this third section, “Korean church ministry as a postmodern pastoral ministry,” is the most important is that this particular theme embraces the two former areas.<sup>205</sup> In fact, many of the debatable issues from the interviews are connected with the issues to be discussed in this section. For further discussion, the following three issues are selected by the researcher: partial preference for a specific genre, necessity for extended understanding, and necessity for more utilization.

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good for Christians, how Christians can analyze and evaluate the popular dramas from the Christian worldview, and how to share the ideas with others in Bible study group.

<sup>205</sup> See the progressive development of the three areas, “individual (pastor) – group (church) – ministry (of the former two parties).” Eventually, we know that the former two parties exist for the last area, “ministry.”



## Partial Preference of a Specific Genre

### *Discussion*

The most common yet noticeable result from the interviews is the partial preference of all KPs for the historical dramas. We already mentioned the reason for this preference - because they are educational. Regarding the diagnosis at an individual level, we already discussed this issue in the section entitled, "Dualistic Habit." It is not problematic for the KPs to enjoy watching historical dramas on an individual level. Absolutely, they have the freedom to do so. And also, because their reason for watching is a healthy one, there is no need to criticize their preference. However, regardless of personal preferences, there may be an unexpected tension here. This invisible tension separates the pastors from the congregants, particularly the female congregants. Even though we do not have any objective survey results regarding the watching preferences of female Korean congregants, the literature already demonstrated that the female audience's favorite genre is melodrama.<sup>206</sup> For example, *Winter Sonata* was the most globally popular big-hit drama.<sup>207</sup> Repeating Soo-Yeon Lee's survey once more here, it is true that the most popular dramas historically have generally been melodramas, where the main characters are actresses. For that reason, their main audience has been women. Consequently, both the fact that the main viewers of the HR dramas are women and the fact that their favorite genre is the melodrama demonstrate that this phenomenon is a universal principle.

It was revealed during the interviews that some of the wives of the KP-interviewees like to watch melodramas. For example, KP 6 is a big fan of historical

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<sup>206</sup> Thus, a new study is further needed in the future. The new study must be a deeper investigation that deals with the congregant's watching habits of Korean dramas.

<sup>207</sup> See chapter 2.

drama, but his wife is not. They have their own laptop computers, so they watch their own favorite shows separately –the husband the historical dramas and the wife the melodramas. Women make up a major part of any Korean church, and melodramas may be the favorite genre for the Korean women in these churches. On the contrary, the KP-interviewees dislike melodramas, comedies, and sit-coms because they are immoral, too light, and not educational from the perspective of the KP interviewees. Thus, a tension occurring between the two parties eventually leads to a sort of polarization, which comes from the different taste of each party.

### *Recommendations*

Historical drama tends to be male-oriented, muscular, political, very tense, and educational. With their preference for historical dramas, it is not easy for pastors, as men, to understand the feminine appeal of the melodramas. One of the discoveries of this study is that a popular genre of contemporary popular culture functions like a language to help people communicate with each other. In other words, it is like a channel, agent, or window to understanding the range and depth of contemporary culture. HR drama has played the same role in other ethnic communities, as well as in the Korean community. The fact that the KPs like the historical dramas signifies that the narrative style of the historical dramas is their language. Thus, the characteristics of the historical dramas that captured the KP's minds reveal their contemporary mindset.

Likewise, the feminine-style dramas like the melodramas also represent the thought of contemporary people, particularly contemporary women. Even though the men (KPs) and the women (congregants) live and worship together in the same place and in the same age, they have very different characteristics, which cannot be mixed together.

However, these male pastors have leading roles as men in the context of the church. If a pastor realizes the importance of this issue because of his inherent servant-leadership, then he must attempt to understand the thoughts of others. In such a case, he should try to watch feminine dramas, not only for his personal enjoyment, but also for general pastoral reasons.

Whatever a pastor's reason is, not watching the feminine-style dramas, pushing the female congregants not to watch them and expressing a negative attitude towards those dramas is never the best solution for the pastor. Broadly speaking, as seen in chapter two and in the first section of this chapter, good postmodern pastors need to be heralds of contemporary culture rather than being followers. As the first step to being this type of herald, all KPs should watch the historical dramas less frequently and try to become more familiar with the more feminine-style dramas. This endeavor is an immediate action that all KPs can do.

### Necessity of Extended Understanding

#### *Discussion*

In the previous section, it was stated that a popular genre of contemporary culture is like a common language that makes people gather at one place and communicate with each other. If this is true, HR drama is definitely a new language for postmodern people (Koreans, Asians, and others) gathering together in one place. HR dramas are a cultural agent and icon of this age.

Another critical issue found during the interviews is a shortage of any broad and deep cultural understanding among the KPs. The scope of this important cultural understanding does not include just the HR dramas; it has much wider implications. KPs,

as heralds of a healthy culture, should expend more effort on studying and analyzing the HR cultural phenomenon. They should acknowledge that the HR drama-syndrome has a large role in the HR cultural phenomenon. This dramatic genre is one (probably a major one) of the HR icons. In that sense, HR drama can be an obvious clue to understanding the entire HR cultural phenomenon more deeply.

In fact, both HR dramas and K-Pop (a common abbreviation of the words “Korean pop-song”) have been already popularized globally.<sup>208</sup> This demonstrates that the HR cultural syndrome occurs not only in the area of the HR dramas but also in other areas, including K-Pop. The glory that the HR dramas have enjoyed is gradually fading away, but the popularity of the HR phenomenon is being replaced by K-Pop. The K-Pop songs and young idol singers are becoming new rising HR stars.

### *Recommendations*

In the previous section, it was recommended that all KPs need to give up their preference for a particular genre in terms of their watching habits. As best as they can, they need to try to watch melodramas instead of watching only historical dramas. The reason why they should do so is not for themselves, but for their ministries. This would be an initial step they could take immediately in order for them to be cultural heralds in the Korean church community.

However, a newly rising issue in this section – the necessity for a deeper understanding of the HR cultural phenomenon on the part of the KPs – naturally encourages the KPs to study the HR syndrome more systematically. As this study

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<sup>208</sup> See Editorial, *The Korea Times*, January 25, 2012..In this special edited article, how a new HR phenomenon with K-Pop is being developed globally now. It introduces how the young Korean idol music groups, like Girls Age, Wonder Girls, and others, get enthusiastic popularity in Japan, France, South America and America.

evidences, it is true that the HR dramas have been major pillars in understanding the HR cultural phenomenon. However, the KPs must extend the realm of their interest beyond the area of the HR dramas. This need to understand the phenomenon arises because of the role that the Korean pastors play in the Korean community.

Including K-Pop, there are other “languages and windows” to help the KPs understand a fresher Korean global cultural phenomenon, including Korean movies, food, art, and music. Thankfully, there are also many systematic studies dealing with the HR cultural phenomenon. The academic books and articles related to the HR dramas which were introduced in chapter two are good examples. Frankly, even the writer was not aware of the existence of these good materials before starting this study. In order for this study to provide an opportunity to approach the existing playground of the HR syndrome, further studies on other HR phenomena must be conducted. Deeper and broader study will provide the KPs with an abundant experience with postmodern culture that only the HR cultural phenomenon can give. It will be a blessing not only for themselves, but also for their congregants. More extended studies in this area will be another way that the KPs can be better cultural heralds.

#### Necessity of More Utilization

##### *Discussion*

Before starting this last part, we need to pay attention to the developing pattern of this section (A Korean Church Ministry as a Postmodern Pastoral Ministry with HR Drama). The first thing that the KPs can do at the pastoral level is to avoid preference in drama watching. The researcher recommended that they intentionally watch more melodramas to understand their female congregants, rather than watching only historical

dramas. As a second recommendation, the researcher asserted that KPs, as postmodern pastors, should try to understand the HR culture in a broader context. The process of the logic development accomplished in this chapter is gradual, from passive to active. The first area is dealt with passively, but the second area is more active. The final remaining solution is even more positive and aggressive.

To lead the KPs toward a more aggressive way of tackling this issue, we must examine the real nature of the limitations found in the KPs. This provides new issues to be explored in this section. The main limitation is that the KPs do not utilize the HR dramas effectively in their ministries, particularly in their counseling and sermons. This is not because they cannot utilize the HR dramas. Rather, it is because they have chosen not to do so. As found throughout the interviews, this is because of the unique ministerial situation of the Korean immigrant churches, as mentioned during the discussion of the dualistic habit explored in the first section of this chapter. The pastors questioned, “How can such a secular culture (drama-culture) invade the holy ministerial field? It is blasphemy!” This idea already exists within the KPs themselves, and their flocks have an even stricter belief in the idea. For that reason, the KPs do not have a positive attitude toward the “utilization” of HR dramas in their ministries.

However, a new possibility to overcome this limitation was detected during the interviews. Many of the interviewees are open to the possibility. The best example of the more active utilization of HR dramas is KP 4. He said that he always had a positive experience every time he cited an HR drama during his sermons. He also mentioned that the audience easily demonstrated their sympathy with these sermons, especially when he

mentioned an interesting episode from Korean dramas. From his experience, he could naturally be open-minded toward the relevant application of HR dramas into his sermons.

This possibility of application of Korean dramas to sermons can lead to another conclusion. It is possible that the KPs do not (or cannot) often mention the HR dramas in their sermons, not merely because of passive and inherent reasons, so called, “dualistic thinking/habits,” but rather because they are weak in the technical aspects of such utilization. Though they want to utilize these materials, they do not know how to do so. Consequently, a common point discovered throughout this study in relation to this issue is that a point of contact between the HR dramas and these pastors’ ministries is already open, and they are open to it, too. The next issue then becomes the improvement of utilization techniques. This will be explored in the next section.

### *Recommendations*

According to Loscalzo, a postmodern pastor has to preach his sermons while remaining conscious of the viewpoint that, “The postmodern age is an image-rich age; therefore, postmodern preachers should draw on image-rich narratives and stories to present the gospel and make it clear.”<sup>209</sup> This seems to be an exhortation for preachers to utilize more image techniques in the pulpit. It seems to support using many kinds of techniques to stimulate visual effects, for example, frequently showing images on the screen during the sermon. This sounds like a drama-presentation instead of an oral sermon, along the lines of what the Saddleback Church and the Willow Creek Church are doing.<sup>210</sup> However, Loscalzo’s exhortation does not necessarily suggest such a thing.

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<sup>209</sup>Loscalzo, 22.

<sup>210</sup> It should be reminded that this claim, the emphasis of the image-rich preaching, does not mean more utilization of other devices instead of logo-centric sermons. Therefore, at this point, we must agree with Wells’s assertion, “Whatever merit there is in stressing that postmoderns place great premium on images,

His book consistently emphasizes that sermons should be conducted orally in the pulpit. Thus, it is evident that his expression means that a pastor's sermon must be felt visually by his audience, even though he preaches orally. A postmodern technique that must be employed by pastors to fulfill this goal is the use of narratives and stories.<sup>211</sup> As he explains, this is because a story can clarify the contents of the sermon. Good stories and good delivery of the stories can help postmodern audiences who are emotional and like stories to understand the contents of the sermon. In that sense, Loscalzo exhorts that the sermons of this age must be more "narrative" or "story-based" rather than "argumentative" in approach, and they should be more "inductive" rather than "deductive."<sup>212</sup>

How then can we relate this exhortation to the sermon of the KPs? First of all, the KPs must remember that their audiences are under the influence of the HR dramas. Their audiences are deeply saturated with the stories of the HR dramas and the fun provided by the dramas. However, the sermons they hear on Sundays appear dialectical, educational, dry, and sometimes even aggressive. Above all, their preacher seems to be angry. Loscalzo exhorts the pastors of this age to be skilled at story-telling as a way of being good postmodern pastors.

Therefore, the sermons of the KPs must possess dramatic elements. In other words, the KPs should try to utilize some elements of the HR dramas in preparing their sermon notes. A good example of this is maintaining an emotional tension from the

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on imagination, on relationships, on being part of a community, none of these things can substitute for the fact that the church has to *proclaim* the truth about Christ, that it cannot do so without using words, that words are the tools for expressing our thoughts, and that our thoughts must correspond to the reality of what God has done in Christ." See Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 203.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 39.



beginning to the end of the sermon in order not to lose the audience's interest. A continuing curiosity, like "Why was this title given today?" must be kept in the listeners' minds. What would be even better is a great reversal, which is an element of good drama, appearing at the end of the sermon. It is also better not to let the audience have a reaction during the sermon that "Oh, it's obvious! Today's story is too obvious!" If the KPs have not been interested in this, they need to take more interest by realizing the opportunities presented by the HR dramas. If the KPs utilize HR dramas only by citing funny illustrations, they will not be fully utilizing the abundant opportunities that the HR dramas present.

I found a good example of this recently. One of the pastors of a Korean immigrant church, Young-Bong Kim, has attempted to preach his weekly Sunday sermon by utilizing the whole contents of a famous Korean movie.<sup>213</sup> The name of the movie is *Mil-Yang*. This movie became famous when the main actress, Do-yeon Chun, was awarded the award for best actress in the Sixtieth Movie Festival of Cannes in 2007. The story of the movie deals with a religion, particularly Christianity. Young-Bong Kim preached four sermons in a series at his church, Washington Korean Church in Virginia, by connecting with the development of the story. By extracting from the movie some major Christian themes like faith, forgiveness, suffering, evangelism, and love, he consistently tried to relate those themes to the story of a popular movie.

In this age, being a good preacher is almost equivalent to being a good story-teller. Being a good story-teller requires a great deal of effort. It cannot be accomplished merely by talent. Learning story-telling techniques and having sincere interest in the necessary skills are required. A good story-teller must have sympathy with the emotions

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<sup>213</sup> See Young-Bong Kim, *God Who Hides* (Seoul: IVP, 2008).

and feelings of the current audience. In that sense, the HR dramas are a good device to help a pastor to feel such sympathy. It is like a blessed gift from God given to Korean pastors. The HR dramas are cultural gifts that have already been received well by both the Korean pastors and the lay-people. More than anything else, the most important positive lesson the KPs can learn from the HR dramas is how to develop the plot of a story and deliver it to the audience through story-telling. By developing these plots well, the KPs will be able to become good story-tellers as postmodern pastors.

### **Conclusion**

This study, as we have examined, was prompted by a strong wind, the so called “Han-Ryu,” which had started blowing at the beginning of 1990. Regardless of its positive or negative aspects, the reality is that this HR phenomenon hit Korean immigrants in United States hard through a cultural device called “Korean drama.” The HR invaded the life of Korean immigrants and influenced them more than we can imagine. Recognizing the significant influence of the HR wave on Korean immigrant congregants, this study was motivated by the goal of finding out how we can lead the Korean immigrant churches to the right path in the midst of such an influence.

However, this study is not a complete investigation of the effects of the HR phenomenon on Korean immigrant churches. This study was conducted by interviewing several pastors of Korean immigrant churches, all men who help and guide Korean immigrant congregants spiritually. However, the inputs from the Korean immigrants who are at the core of the HR’s influence are not collected in this study, as the scope of this study was limited to the interviews with the Korean pastors. Therefore, for further

investigation, the interview targets must be expanded to include Korean immigrant congregants.

There are three ways to extend the current study to investigate the HR phenomenon more comprehensively. First, a survey similar to the one performed in this study must be conducted by targeting general congregants. The main followers of the HR syndrome are Korean American Christians who attend more than four thousand Korean churches in the United States. Thus, a future study must examine how these people think about the Korean dramas, how they enjoy watching the dramas, and how they relate the *dramas to their spiritual lives*.

Second, a future study must provide more specific spiritual guidelines in dealing with the HR phenomenon in pastoral settings. The current study has identified a need to draw the HR phenomenon out of the current spot of implicit acceptance and treat its influence on churches as a more explicit agenda by stopping the dichotomization between the HR phenomenon and Christian life. It is necessary for future study to develop new qualitative bible study materials dealing with topics like how to overcome the negative aspects of the HR and how to strengthen the positive ones. To fulfill this goal, Korean pastors must be more knowledgeable about the HR phenomenon in relation to practical application of biblical teachings.

Third, the future study must include other areas of the HR phenomenon. As stated earlier, the HR phenomenon is now being expanded to other areas beyond the HR dramas. K-pop is a good example. The HR drama is the genre for the old immigrant generation, who are typically called “first generation,” and for the “one-point-five generation.” On the contrary, K-pop is a new genre favored by the next generation.

Through the influence of K-pop, the HR now invades this second generation. To understand the influence of the HR in Korean churches fully, the study of other areas of the HR phenomenon must also be conducted.

The current study may be nothing more than a seed from the point of comprehensively investigating the influence of the HR phenomenon on Korean immigrant churches in United States. However, this study provided valuable guidelines for future investigation. This study started out from a simple judgment that at least first generation Korean immigrant pastors must possess systematic knowledge of the HR phenomenon. The HR drama must not be considered merely as “something to enjoy,” but must become “something that helps our spirituality.” Without such an endeavor, we cannot protect Korean immigrant congregants from the ceaseless invasion of the new HR dramas and other HR genres. The Korean immigrant congregants themselves are not capable of utilizing the HR phenomenon for their spirituality. Pastors who possess spiritual discernment have to do this work. As the last statement of the current thesis, the researcher wants to cite the Apostle Paul’s words to the church of the Corinthians: “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ!”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:5; ESV

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