

# Transformation: from Poor to Blessed

## A Korean Case Study

### Introduction

A Korean case study offers a contemporary example in the world today of a nation that has gone from poor to blessed by going through spiritual, social and cultural transformation.

There are two parts to this Korean case study.

In Part I. Transformational Indicators Affirm South Korea are presented as a model of *Transformation: from Poor to Blessed* for the Twenty-First Century in contrast to North Korea.

In Part II the process of transformation of South Korea from poor to blessed.

### Part I. Transformational Indicators Affirm South Korea as a Model of Spiritual-Social Transformation for the Twenty-First Century in contrast to North Korea

Times have changed since the great Revival of Korea in Pyang Yang in 1907. Two major events dramatically changed Korea. Thirty-five years of severe Japanese occupation ended at the conclusion of World War II. However, despite promises of an independent and unified Korea in the 1943 Cairo Declaration, two separate governments were established in 1948; the communist north and the democratic south. Within two years, on June 25, 1950, the North invaded the South, resulting in the Korean War which finally came to a stalemate with an armistice in 1953. The prime motive for the Korean War was ideological with North Korea claiming an atheistic ideology of communism and South Korea an ideology which embraced religious freedom.

This background sets the national stage for the spiritual, social and cultural transformation of South Korea which can be compared and contrasted to North Korea which embraced a cultural system based on the presupposition that God does not exist. The dramatic contrast of the values and policies of both nations reflects their position on the fundamental assumption of the existence of God.

From a human perspective the human development index is one of the best measures of a country who is blessed in contrast to a country which is poor. The human development index kept by the United Nations strikingly makes the comparison between the blessing of South Korea today in contrast to the poverty of North Korea. The phrase “human development” is similar to “transformation development of the poor.”

In UN documentation, “Human Development takes into consideration per capita income, human resource development, and basic needs as a measure of human progress. It also assesses such factors as human freedom, dignity and human agency, that is, the role of people in development.”<sup>1</sup> The basic needs include things like access to education and access to health care.

South Korea ranks 27<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 193 countries with over 100,000 population. North Korea ranks 177<sup>th</sup>.

In the early 1950s, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in Asia with a GNP per person of about \$50 per person per year. From another source, Figure 1 shows the Per Capita GNI Progress since 1953 increasing 218 times from its 1955 level. Today South Korea has the third largest economy in Asia behind only Japan and China and has tenth largest economy in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Human Development Report ... by United Nations Development Programme. Accessed by author on May 28, 2006. <<http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en/pdf/HDR%20PR%20E1.pdf>>.

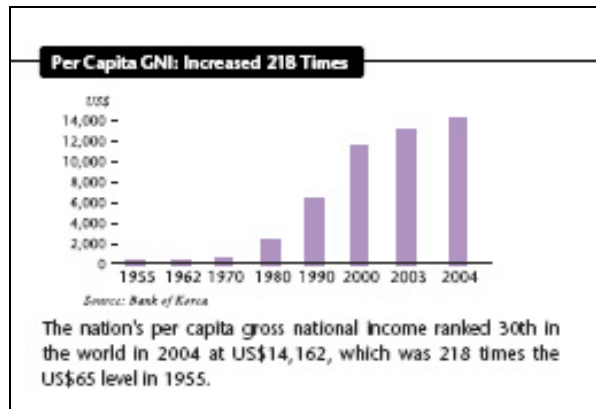


Figure 1: Per Capita GNI Progress since 1953<sup>2</sup>

This is in sharp contrast to the stagnation of North Korea's economy from its birth as a nation in 1953. South Korea's per capita GDP is now roughly 12 times that of North Korea.

Even more dramatic is the contrast between the religious freedom in North and South Korea. North Korea today ranks as the country with one of the least religious freedom. South Korea ranks as the country with the most amount of religious freedom along with others.<sup>3</sup>

South Korea has become one of the world's most technologically advanced and digitally-connected countries. It has the highest number of broadband Internet connections per capita in the world and is a global leader in computer

<sup>2</sup> Korea's achievements and Vision: A Statistical Analysis. Accessed May 28, 2006 by author. < [http://homepage.ktnet.com/newsletter/200508/web\\_05.html](http://homepage.ktnet.com/newsletter/200508/web_05.html) >

<sup>3</sup> Christian Solidarity International at [www.csi-int.org](http://www.csi-int.org)

games, digital displays, and mobile phones. Today, its standard of living is equal to that of many countries in Western Europe.

This remarkable economic and social development can be traced directly to the spiritual and cultural transformation of the nation. From the revival in 1907 the percent of Christians today in the country is the highest of any religious group with 27%.

A Transformational Indicator comparison of the countries of the world provides a composite view of the spiritual, humanitarian and behavioral indicators into one composite picture of spiritual, social transformation (see Appendix A). The results show North Korea ranked 190 out of 193 countries of the world with more than 100,000 total population and South Korea ranked at 30(see Appendix B). This is evidence that spiritual, social and cultural transformation have overwhelmingly come to South Korea compared to North Korea over the short fifty-four years of life of both nations.

Biblical values permeate government policy and have produced the engine that has driven transformational development of Korea as this paper seeks to demonstrate, particularly in regards to its economic development. This phenomenal development of South Korea is often called the "Miracle on the Han River" which is a primary subject of Part II of this presentation as it relates to the developmental phases of the transformation of Korea.

## Part II. The Process of Transformation from Poor to Blessed of South Korea

The overview of the phases of Korean transformational development begins with the Korean Revival of 1907 and sets the stage of revival again in 2007 for the fullness of God's intent that South Korea should not only be blessed but

be a blessing to the nations. Although the Korean Revival of 1907 took place in Pyang Yang, the capital of North Korea, the nation of North Korea was found on an atheistic ideology. This case study shows that the most important criteria for going from poverty to blessing is faith in the true and living God. The Bible says: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”

In approach the topic of transformation of Korea by means of phases there are limitations. The categorizations are imperfect and inadequate to describe all that is taking place in the spiritual-social transformation of Korea. They are linear in nature and give the impression of successive phases when sometimes they may be taking place at the same time. At other times they are repeated and most of the time they cannot be time-bound. Despite these limitations, the phases are helpful in suggesting trends and providing a framework for discussion.

The phases of the spiritual, social and cultural transformation of Korea include the following:

**Phase One: The Korean Revival of 1907**

**Phase Two: Realization of Crisis/Need/Deficit**

**Phase Three: Revelation from God to His servant**

**Phase Four: Repentance**

**Phase Five: Renewal**

**Phase Six: Reproduction and transformational leadership**

**Phase Seven: Realignment of all things to God’s way.**

**Phase Eight: Restoration, Transformation and Glocalization.**

The story of the spiritual-social-cultural transformation of South Korea begins with the Korean Revival of 1907. The transformation of Korea begins with spiritual transformation by God through His Spirit.

### **Phase One: The Korean Revival of 1907**

The renowned student of revivals considered The Korean Revival of 1907 to be a part of history’s greatest revival. According to J. Edward Orr, history’s greatest revival took place at the beginning of the twentieth century, including the Welsh Revival, the Azusa Street Revival, the Korean Pentecost, the Manchurian revival and the Mizo Outpouring.<sup>4</sup> The role of the 1907 Korean Revival in transforming the Korean church as well as culture and society has been stated by a historian in no uncertain terms.

Although it was one of the last nations in the Far East to hear the gospel, a series of revivals early in the twentieth century quickly transformed the Korean church into a powerful force for God, both in transforming Korean culture and society, and in reaching beyond its borders to other nations in Asia.<sup>5</sup>

One aspect of the work of Christian missions was a Bible study class system which included an annual coming together in the first two weeks in January for days kept sacred to prayer and the study of God’s Word. The class in January 1907 was preceded by months of fervent prayer by the missionaries for a blessing on the occasion. It was on the

<sup>4</sup> The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever by Elmer L. Towns & Douglas Porter. Accessed May 308, 2006 by author.

<[http://www.elmertowns.com/books/preview/10\\_great\\_revivals/10\\_Greatest\\_Revivals\\_Ever%5BETowns%5D.PDF](http://www.elmertowns.com/books/preview/10_great_revivals/10_Greatest_Revivals_Ever%5BETowns%5D.PDF)>

<sup>5</sup> Page 44, The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever.

<sup>6</sup> Revival in Korea, by Rev G. Lee. Accessed May 28, 2006 by author. <[www.btinternet.com/~s.j.mackay/foundations/smkorea.html](http://www.btinternet.com/~s.j.mackay/foundations/smkorea.html)>

Monday of the second week that these prayers were answered in an abundant way. Rev G. Lee describes what happened in the course of the meeting:

After prayer, confessions were called for and immediately the Spirit of God seemed to descend upon the audience. Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in a perfect agony of conviction.” Dr Blair gives his account: “Each felt as he entered that the room was full of God’s presence....God is not always in the whirlwind neither does He always speak in the still small voice. He came to us in Pyongyang that night with the sound of weeping. As prayer continued a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience.”

The next day says Blair, “begun a meeting the like of which I had never seen before, nor wish to see again unless in God’s sight it is absolutely necessary. Every sin a human being can commit was publicly confessed that night. Pale and trembling with emotion, in agony of mind and body, guilty souls standing in the white light of that judgment saw themselves as God saw them. Their sins rose up in all their vileness, till shame and grief and self-loathing took complete possession; pride was driven out and the face of man forgotten....

The class ended with the meeting on the Tuesday, but in the days following, the effects were felt throughout the city with similar manifestations in the schools and in the special classes for women. The same thing was repeated

in the churches in the country districts.<sup>6</sup>

This resulted in thousands of men and women going apart for weeks at a time during the period when the rice fields were fallow, to study the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit had fallen in an extraordinary way upon God’s people in Korea. This revival became the strong foundation of the cultural and social transformation that was to come over the next one hundred years in South Korea.

The Korean Pentecost was quickly recognized as a movement of God by Christian leaders around the world. The Edinburgh Conference of 1910 declared, “The Korean Revival . . . has been a genuine Pentecost, for Korean church membership quadrupled in a decade.” The Student Volunteer Movement cited six evidences of “the present day work of the Holy Spirit in Korea” the same year. These evidences included “(1) the unity and cooperation which prevailed among Christians, (2) the remarkable numerical growth of the churches, (3) the wonderful religious awakening of 1907 which affected 50,000 converts, (4) the noteworthy interest in the Word of God, (5) the dedication of national Christians to service, including generous giving, and (6) the wonderful prayer life of the Korean Church.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Phase Two: Realization of Crisis**

Desperate people seek God’s presence. For those living in Korea there was great sense of desperation during the years

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<sup>7</sup> Page 48-49, The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever.

of the Japanese occupation and then the Korean War both of which contributed to extreme poverty. From personal memory Dr. Bum Il Kim recounts the desperation under the Japanese. They would take the rice from the Korean farms. The Koreans were desperately hungry.

The Japanese sought to prevent the Koreans from believing in the Lord. They were made to worship the Japanese Emperor. They prevented the Koreans from speaking their language and changed their name into Japanese. The people cried before God in their need.<sup>8</sup>

### **Phase Three: Revelation from God to His servant**

One of God's choicest servants in the spiritual-social-cultural transformation of Korea was Elder Yong Ki Kim indicated that the primary revelation that came to him was from Mathew 6:33. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."<sup>9</sup>

Transform the individual and you will transform the nation was an early realization of Elder Yong Ki Kim. Transform the wasteland to fertile land to transform the nation came as a revelation and as he saw the effects of this transformation. He then received the vision of the ideal village. This led to the ideal village movement in the 1930's which led to the new village movement adopted by the government of Korea.

The vision he received for the transformation of the land was that it be done with dignity and joy. This constituted a whole new attitude that began to transform the rural community in Korea which in turn led to the transformation of leadership of

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<sup>8</sup> Meeting with Bum Il Kim and the author at the former's office at the Canaan Farmer's School on May 27, 2006. It was interpreted by Young Gil Lee.

<sup>9</sup> *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.) (Mt 6:33). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

<sup>10</sup> Page 103-118, *The Unique Canaan Farm of Korea* by Kim Yong Ki. The Great Publishing Co., 1984 Seoul, Korea.

different spheres of society in Korea which in turn led to the transformation of society through the emphasis on practicing the life of mutual cooperation.

It was as though one revelation led to another revelation. In visualising an ideal village, he saw the need to "revolution our living" as families.<sup>10</sup> He enacted seven principles for living as a family in the form of seven invitations: (1) Let's live a life of belief, (2) let's work perspiringly, (3) let's live a thrifty life, (4) let's be self-sufficient, (5) let's unite with cooperation and collaboration, (6) let's render services for other people.

When President Park Chung Hee visited the Canaan Farmer's school on March 9, 1962 he said: "This is the way by which the Korean people will live a good life and so I hope you follow the example of the living and the spirit of this family and practice it."<sup>11</sup>

### **Phase Four: Repentance**

Repentance involves turning from the old way of life to the new. The new was expressed by three words: work, service and sacrifice. Sacrifice was based on the love of God, service on the love of the neighbour and work, the love of the soil. The underlying theme was the love of God.

As transformation took place there was need for ongoing turning to the new way of thinking from the old. In the journey of transformation new initiatives often were accompanied by times of repentance. In the ideal and new villages movements there was a change of mind from laziness to diligence, from dependence to self-help and from lack of cooperation to collaboration.

### **Phase Five: Renewal**

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<sup>11</sup> Page 7, *The Unique Canaan Farm of Korea* by Kim Yong Ki. The Great Publishing Co., 1984 Seoul, Korea.

During 1960's there was renewal in high schools. People prayed every day. They studied the Bible and experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Central Methodist Church was one of the centers of renewals. It seemed like every church received the visitation of the Holy Spirit.

Renewal was expressed in the *Prayer Mountain Movement*. Various denominations established venues in the mountains where people could go to pray day and night. Christians often went there to fast and pray for periods of up to forty days. Christian leaders in South Korea claim that the political preservation and stability in South Korea, as well as church growth in the country, may be ascribed to the prayers offered at these venues in the mountains.

Another expression of renewal was the dawn prayer meetings. Although Pastor Sun-Ju Kil initiated prayer meetings at dawn before the Great Revival. Prayer meetings at dawn were established as a practice by almost every Korean church and became a source of ongoing renewal and spirituality.

### **Phase Six: Reproduction of leaders and transformational leadership for every sphere of society**

The transformation of Korea has been the result of formal, non-formal and informal training and education. One of the most effective was the Canaan Farmers School Movement. When Dr. Kwak Chong Won, President of Kun Kook University visited Korea she saw he was ..."reforming society by establishing schools for training a number of social leaders."<sup>12</sup> By 1978 over 110,000 had been trained at Canaan Farmers School. By 2006 the number grew to over

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<sup>12</sup> Page 86, *The Unique Canaan Farm of Korea*

600,000 people from all spheres of society. Bum Il Kim told us about the occasion a month previous when 111 members of parliament (almost one-half), came for an intensive week of training. The Canaan Farmers School has become an international movement.

A second intentional means of the multiplication of leadership has been through the Student Discipleship Movement. During 1970's para-church ministry played a leading role in discipleship and training others. A number of organizations had a major role in the ministry of training including Campus Crusade for Christ led by Kim Joon Gon, the Navigators, IVF, YWAM and others.

A third means for multiplying transformational leaders was the Biblical Worldview Movement in 1980's. It took the biblical worldview to the market place and applied faith at work. The emphasis during this period was on biblical worldview and its application in life and society. The Biblical Worldview Movement was fuelled by Hang Dong University, the Association for establishing Christian University, the Workplace Mission Fellowship, Kingdom-minded businesses, the major national newspaper, Kukmin Daily. Movements sprouted in different spheres of life and culture, i.e. politics and government, economy, family, education, media, art, etc.

From 1990's there emerged the resurgence of the Holy City Movement fuelled by the Holy Club Movement which resulted in "Worker's missions fellowship" in the various spheres and domains of society in the cities influencing increasingly the different sectors of life in the country of Korea.

### **Phase Seven: Realignment of all things to God's way.**

This is the operational phase in which a renewed Christian minority acts as salt and light wherever they are, repositioning their lives and the organizations they serve in all spheres of society to align with God's purpose of reconciling all things to Himself.

One of the areas of life that was realigned to God's way was rural Korea. It would begin with an intentional effort to recover the wasteland. One of the reclaimed lands was the Canaan Farm we visited on May 27th, where the main Farmer's School Grounds are today. At one place of the Canaan movement, the original name was Whang San Ri (the literal translation of these words was 'a desolate mountain village.' The present name of the village is Poong San Ri (a rich mountain village).<sup>13</sup> As Bum Il Kim led us to our quarters for the night at the Leadership Training Center building he said, "here you will find the best air and the best water in all of Korea." As we walked along he described how the Canaan Farmers School campus was designed. The higher part is where he would seek God in prayer in the early hours of the morning and again later in the day to teach the love of God. The central area is to teach the love of neighbours where the training takes place. The lower part is where the fields are cultivated to teach the love of soil. It was the original blueprint designed by his father, Kim Yong Ki.<sup>14</sup> During our breakfast at his home where more than two hundred species of wild flowers grew he answered why the love of the soil was important. Since man was taken from the dust of the earth there is a connection between the soil and the flesh of man. Furthermore, Christ came to the earth as the incarnate son of God so we should have a love for the soil. Bum Il Kim reminded us of the story of how the reclamation of the land spread throughout the nation through the life of his father.

Kim Yong Ki soon realized as he travelled throughout Korea that not only the place that was to become the Canaan Movement main training center desolated but every place he went seemed like was a desolate mountain. Not only was the

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<sup>13</sup> Page 9, *The Unique Canaan Farm of Korea*

<sup>14</sup> Page 100, *The Unique Canaan Far of Korea*

mountain desolate, but also the fields and the village were desolate. The quality of earth was acid, so that vegetables planted and trees in the mountains were not able to grow satisfactorily. With time and appropriate methodologies and cultivated values in the family not only did the Canaan Farm School Property being to develop but as others were trained there little by little Korea's "wasteland was transformed into a fertile land."<sup>15</sup>

The Canaan's Farmers Movement became a movement based on Christian integration of biblical truth and life in society. The ideal village movement emerged as a natural outflow of the transformation of land from wasteland to fertile land and the transformation of the family stewarding the land together. For Kim Yong Ki the ideal village was five people and 8.2 hectares. He began to live and then teach on the ideal village resulting in a movement that emerged in the 1930's. An ideal village was to manifest every aspect of the Kingdom of God.

What emerged out the ideal village movement and the Canaan Farmer's movement was the new village movement. During the 1960's, under President Park Chung Hee, South Korea achieved what has been called *the miracle on the Han River*. The country transformed its war-ravaged agricultural economy into an industrial giant. In the view of many the engine of this economic transformation was the new village movement which was adopted by the administration of President Park Chung Hee. It became a national movement by the 1970' and continued to expand in the 1990's. By the 1980's and 1990's, its automobile and electronics exports were known around the world.

God uses men as his agents of transformation for nations. Kim Yong Ki was one such person. Korean President Park

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<sup>15</sup> Page 94, *The Unique Canaan Far of Korea*

Chung Hee said of him: “This home and this farm, have carried out a revolution to advance our nation.”<sup>16</sup>

During the 1990’s there emerged the resurgence of the Holy City Movement fuelled by the Holy Club Movement. There also came forth the Workplace Missions Fellowship and Biblical Worldview Movement group in Chuncheon which resulted in biblical influence as salt and light in the various spheres and domains of society in the cities, influencing increasing the different sectors of life.

**Phase Eight: Restoration, Transformation and Glocalization.** Biblical transformation can be defined as the process of restoration to God’s intentions of all that was broken when man rebelled against God in the Fall.<sup>17</sup> God’s agenda is to restore all things to Himself (Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20). A transformed nation is a community whose people and institutions have been overrun by the Kingdom of God. South Korea still has not reached restoration. Transformation is in process as reflected in transformational indicators.

Glocalization associates globalization and localization. The global and the local may be regarded as two sides of the same coin. Local forces in South Korea are increasingly impacting global processes. The new village movement, the missions movement, the Canaan Farmers School Movement, the Holy City Movement and the Holy Club Movement are only some of movements from Korea seeking to bless the world outside of its borders.

### **Some Remaining Open Questions:**

There are some questions that are being raised for ongoing sustainable blessing in South Korea. First is the question of the bi-polarization of life in Korea. In recent times there has been a loss of balance in the social, political, religious and

<sup>16</sup> Page 7, *The Unique Canaan Farm of Korea*

<sup>17</sup> Bob Moffitt.

economic domains of society. The perception now is that the poor are getting poorer, the rich richer. The church is suffering from gospel wealth, in which bigger is not really turning out to be better and there is serious insensitivity and lack of engagement in the social needs of the day.

This leads to a second open question. What about alternative ideas. We are living in a post-modern world which has lost its center. Education has too much competition in his view. There is a need for alternative structures for education and even for the church.

A third open question is: should South Korea not decentralize for a better utilization of human resources? Is it not the time to transfer power to local from the federal level? All the companies headquarters in Korea in Seoul. The top twenty universities are in Seoul. Should there not be intentional move toward the grass-roots to improve the quality of our life and institutions. Should there not be structural transformation, not only cultural transformation?

### **Conclusion:**

This paper seeks to show how South Korea stands as a Twenty-First Century model of a nation that has gone through and still is going through spiritual, social and cultural transformation and have gone from poverty to blessing as a nation in contrast to North Korea, which left God out.

This Korean case study provides important lessons of transformation of a nation from poverty to blessing at this second national consultation Hope for the Poor in Indonesia in Surabaya.



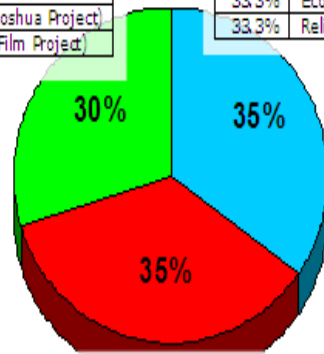
Appendix A  
 Transformational Indicators  
 Methodology and Sources of Information

**Spiritual Indicators**  
 (Overall weight 30%)

Weight	Indicator	Source
30%	% Evangelical	(Operation World)
15%	% Evangelical Growth Rate	(Operation World)
15%	% Christian Adherents	(Operation World)
20%	% Population living in Unreached / Least-Reached people group	(Joshua Project)
10%	% with Bible in heart language	(SIL / Joshua Project)
10%	% with Jesus Film in heart language	(Jesus Film Project)

**Behavioral Indicators**  
 (Overall weight 35%)

Weight	Indicator	Source
33.3%	Corruption Index	Transparency Ind
33.3%	Economic Freedom Index	Heritage Foundation
33.3%	Religious Persecution Index	Open Doors, CSI, ICC



**Humanitarian Indicators**  
 (Overall weight 35%)

Human Development Index (HDI)	
Weight	Indicator
33.3%	Life Expectancy Index
33.3%	Education Index
33.3%	GDP Index

Appendix B

North and South Korea Transformational Indicators  
Ranking out of the 193 Nations of over 100,000 people

