

# Daesoon Jinrihoe

A New Religion Emerging  
From Traditional East Asian Philosophy

Edited by  
The Daesoon Academy of Sciences

Daesoonjinrihoe Press

# Daesoon Jinrihoe

*A New Religion Emerging from Traditional East Asian Philosophy*

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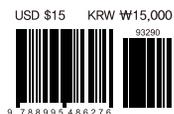
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# Preface

Daesoon thought is a comprehensive system of truth representing the Great Dao of ‘resolution of grievances into mutual beneficence’. It originated from the promulgation of never-before-revealed Truth by *Gucheon Sangje* (the Supreme Being of the Ninth Heaven) Kang Jeungsan, who descended to Korea 146 years ago. Thereafter, Doju Jo Jeongsan, who inherited the orthodox religious authority through a revelation from *Gucheon Sangje*, established the Daesoon Truth on a firm foundation through specific ways of spiritual cultivation. Lastly, Dojeon Park Wudang, who accepted the leadership bestowed upon him by the last words of Doju Jo, founded and advocated Daesoonjinrihoe, and spread *Sangje*’s Daesoon Truth widely. Daesoonjinrihoe, which has currently grown into a representative national religion in Korea, is shining the light of Daesoon truth over the whole world as well as the Korean nation through carrying out its three major works including charitable aid, social welfare, and education on a yearly basis.

A contemporary religion will prosper when its believers passionately participate in various social activities helping people in need while inspiring sound religious values in its believers. Likewise, the importance of academic research activity cannot be emphasized enough, in that it is a good way to inspire religious piety and ardor in believers, while contributing further to the development of universal truth.

Daesoon Academy of Sciences, which is an affiliated institute of Daejin University, publishes an academic journal twice a year, which amounts so far to 30 issues in total. Many scholars from various fields, such as Korean religion, philosophy and other humanities studies, have contributed to this journal. Their academic research activities coming from various perspectives have contributed to the better understanding of and propagation of Daesoon thought worldwide. However, these research activities and their presentations have mainly been published in Korean so foreign scholars have had little chance of learning about Daesoon Thought. Today, we have prepared this academic journal in English for

the first time especially for the scholars from English-speaking countries.

We would like to express our regrets to those who have been looking forward to this publication of their submitted papers for such a long time because it has been delayed due to various unfavorable circumstances. We hope this publication will be a good chance to arouse proper interest in Daesoon thought and promote subsequent research activities in this field from foreign scholars. Although there might be some errors in editing due to our lack of experience, your generous understanding would be much appreciated. Lastly, we would like to express our profound appreciations to all the authors. We hope the Grace of Sangje is with you always. Thank you.

June 30th, 2016

*Kim Wook*

Director of Daesoon Academy of Sciences

# Daesoon Sasang :

## A quintessential Korean philosophy

Don Baker

University of British Columbia

For almost 40 years, since 1971, I have been involved with Korea and studying events on the peninsula. As an historian, I have been particularly interested in watching changes in Korean culture that are of historical significance. Over the last four decades, Korea has undergone many such dramatic and significant changes. When I first went to Korea as a middle-school English teacher, Korea was a poor country living under authoritarian rule. Now South Korea ranks among the early 21st-century's economic powerhouses. It is also among the world's most democratic countries. In addition to such rapid economic and political change, South Korea has also experienced a rapid transformation of its religious culture. Among those changes is the rise of the new religion of Daesoonjinrihoe to prominence.

In the 1995 government census of religious affiliation, Daesoonjinrihoe for the first time moved out of the "other category" to merit a listing of its own. Even though the government only found a little over 62,000 people who said there were members of Daesoonjinrihoe (though Daesoonjinrihoe claims to have well over 6million members), that undercount still made Daesoonjinrihoe the 6th largest religious community in Korea, behind only Buddhists, Protestant Christians, Catholics, Confucians, and Won Buddhists. I am sure that Daesoonjinrihoe has grown even more since then. The growth is obvious not only in the many dojang (temple complexes) and hoegwan (single temples) which dot the peninsula but in the general hospitals and schools run by Daesoonjinrihoe. Pundang Jesaeng Hospital has been open

since 1998. Two more general hospitals, one in Dongducheon and another in Koseong, are under construction now. Moreover, Daesoonjinrihoe opened Daejin University north of Seoul in 1993 and is now constructing a branch campus in Chungbuk province farther south. The Daejin education foundation also operates 6 high schools. This is an impressive institutional presence for a religious organization less than half a century old. To create and sustain such an institutional presence, Daesoonjinrihoe must have a sizable membership. How has it managed to attract so many believers in such a relatively short period of time?

For a religion to attract adherents, it must at a minimum do three things:

- 1) It must identify a problem that its intended audience will agree is a serious problem.
- 2) It must offer an explanation of that problem which appears plausible to that intended audience and therefore has persuasive power.
- 3) It must offer a solution to that problem which is also plausible and therefore also has persuasive power.

Those three factors are not enough by themselves to give a religion persuasive power. A religion should also offer guidelines on how to be a better human being--in other words, it should offer a reasonable definition of morality as well as reasonable advice on how to live a moral life. Moreover, it should encourage its followers to follow those guidelines. In other words, it should appear to teach its members how to be better human beings.

A religion also must provide an object of worship for its followers, one that is perceived as a worthy object of worship. Whether or not that object of worship is an anthropomorphic deity or not (it can be the ground of ultimate reality or the object of ultimate concern) is not as important as whether or not the audience that religion wants to attract perceives the existence of that object of worship as plausible and as deserving of worship or utmost respect.

In order to offer plausible explanations of recognized problems, offer plausible solutions to those problems, offer reasonable ethical guidelines,

and propose a plausible and worthy object of worship, a religion has to use terminology that is both familiar to its audience and is also novel enough to distinguish it from other religions. Daesoon philosophy uses precisely such terminology. The vocabulary of Daesoon philosophy is both familiar to Koreans, and yet somehow new. That is because Daesoon philosophy, like most great philosophies and religions in East Asia, uses inclusive and multi-layered terminology for its most important concepts.

One distinctive feature of East Asian thought has been the preference for terminological breadth and inclusiveness. In the Western tradition, especially the modern Anglo-American tradition of analytical philosophy, the more important a term is, the more necessary it is to give that term a precise and therefore limited range of meaning. However, in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, the most important terms, such as Dao (K. do), li (K. i), Qi (K. ki), dharma, and mind, have a wide range of meaning, so wide that any single short translation of such terms into English will be misleading, since much of what they imply will have to be left out of the translation. The same is true of the terminology of Daesoon philosophy, much of which is borrowed from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism and then modified to express the new ideas Daesoon philosophy has introduced.

It is precisely this combination of the old with the new that gives Daesoon philosophy so much persuasive power. Daesoon philosophy keeps the old multi-layered ranges of meaning for its key terminology so that its audience can understand what it is saying, and that audience can feel comfortable with what is hearing. However, on top of the old meanings, Daesoon philosophy adds new meanings which allow it to offer new explanations of old problems as well as new solutions to those problem, setting Daesoon philosophy apart from Korea's older religious philosophies and allowing it to attract a sizable number of adherents.

Daesoon philosophy is able to do this, to use terminology that is both novel and familiar, because it embraces the two major strands in traditional Korean religiosity, the anthropocentric and the anthropomorphic. In traditional Korean

spiritual philosophy, particularly as seen in Buddhism and Confucianism, anthropomorphic theism is played down. Rather than focusing on how human beings should relate to supernatural personalities, those philosophies instead concentrate on how human beings through their own efforts can overcome the normal limitations of existence as a separate and distinct human individual. Buddhist philosophers teach us how to disengage ourselves from the attachments to things of this world, attachments that ensnare us in a world in which suffering is inevitable. Confucian philosophers, on the other hand, teach us how to better operate within this world by overcoming self-centeredness and instead thinking and acting as members of social and cosmic communities concerned more for the common good than for individual self-interest. Both philosophies, because they focus on what human beings can and should do in this world to improve themselves, can be described as anthropocentric (focused on the human realm).

Traditional popular religion takes a different tack. The folk religion of Korea's pre-modern villages and the Buddhism of the inhabitants of those villages can be described as anthropomorphic theism, focusing on interactions with supernatural personalities. Because the gods and spirits of popular religion can be worshipped and prayed to and are believed to respond to those prayers, they often appear as more powerful versions of human beings. That is why we are justified in labeling this form of spirituality as anthropomorphic, endowing super-natural entities with human characteristics.

Daesoon philosophy combines traditional anthropocentrism and traditional anthropomorphism to create a new form of spirituality, one that is focused not just on God or just on human beings but on both, recognizing the power of God but also recognizing the power of human beings to better themselves through their own efforts.

Let us now briefly survey some of the key components of Daesoon philosophy and show how they support the hypothesis that Daesoon philosophy is both old and new, and both anthropocentric and anthropomorphic as well.

**I.** First, let's look at what Daesoonjinrihoe publications call the Three Fundamental Attitudes.<sup>1</sup> Those Three Fundamental Attitudes can also be called the three primary virtues, since those three “fundamental attitudes” are Gyeong (reverence), Seong (sincerity), and Shin (faithfulness). Reverence, sincerity, and faithfulness have both inner and outward aspects. Internally, they represent states of mind, fundamental attitudes. Externally, they represent attitudes we exhibit in interactions with an Other. As attitudes appropriately exhibited in our interactions with another, they represent virtues.

Gyeong can either be a state of quiet mindfulness or it can be an attitude of respect, reverence, or, if the Other is God, worship. Seong can refer to either a state of honest reflection in which we are true to ourselves or it can refer to acting appropriately, without any concern for personal benefit. Shin can refer to a state of trustworthiness, of being faithful to what you are supposed to do, or it can refer to trust in some external person or practice, such as faith in the God of Daesoonjinrihoe and trust that the practices and rituals of Daesoonjinrihoe will accomplish what Daesoonjinrihoe says they will accomplish.

What needs to be noticed here is all three terms retain their traditional meanings. In traditional anthropocentric spirituality, those terms refer to virtues that govern interaction among human beings, and that is how they are used in Daesoon philosophy. They impart persuasive power to Daesoon philosophy because Koreans have for well more than one thousand years recognized the importance of these virtues. The teachings of Daesoonjinrihoe confirm what Koreans already know: human beings should cultivate reverence, sincerity, and faithfulness both internally and in their interactions with others. The main thing

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<sup>1</sup> Daesoon Jonghak Gyojae yeon'guhoe, ed. *Daesoon sasang ui ihae* [Understanding Daesoon Philosophy] (Pochun, Gyeonggi-do, Korea: Daejin University Press, 1998), pp.195-197. For a more in-depth look, see *Daesoon sasang nonchong* [a collection of academic studies of Daesoon philosophy], volumes 9, on Seong (2000), 10, on Gyeong (2000), and 11, on shin (2001), published by the Daesoon sasang haksulwon at Daejin University.

that makes them the Daesoon philosophy's use of those terms new is the addition of an external object of reverence and trust, Sangjenim (the name Daesoon Jinrihoe uses for the Supreme God). It would be a rare Korean who would challenge the importance of these three virtues. The additional step of adding a new object of reverence and trust is all that is necessary to move a Korea from traditional spirituality toward Daesoon philosophy.

**II.** Daesoon philosophy also talks of “Four Fundamental Principles, “which are officially translated as “Quieting the heart-mind”, “Quieting the body”, “Respecting the Divine”, and “Observing Ritual practice.”<sup>2</sup> However, translations alone are rarely able to convey the full meaning of a phrase, and those translations are no exception. Let me try instead to provide explanations rather than translations of those principles, even though even an explanation into English still cannot reflect the full significance of the Korean. As I understand them, they are more than just four fundamental principles. They are injunctions to, first, compose your mind, second, calm your body, third, maintain an attitude of reverence for God above, and fourth, cultivate a moral character through proper performance of ritual. Notice that the first character in each of these four two-character combinations is a verb, rather than a noun, to emphasize that these “four fundamental principles” refer to things we should do.<sup>3</sup>

None of these injunctions would sound strange to a typical Korean, even one who had never heard of Daesoon philosophy. What Daesoon philosophy adds to this is the explanation that “the Divine” in “Respecting the Divine”

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<sup>2</sup> For the English translations, see “An Introduction to Daesoonjinrihoe,” (2009), pp. 16-17. For Korean explanations, see *Daesoon sasang ui ihae*, pp.193-195; *Daesoon sasang nonchong*, vols 7 and 8 (1999).

<sup>3</sup> Here I am following the explanation of Lee Gyungwon, “Daesoon Jinrihoe ui Gyori chegye wa sasangjeok teukjing-e gwanhan yeon’gu” [A study of the distinctive characteristics of the philosophy and religious tenets of Daesoon Jinrihoe], *Daesoon sasang nonchong*, no.16 (2003), pp.138-140.

[literally, “respecting Heaven”] means the supreme god of the highest heaven, whom Daesoongjinrihoe believers call Sangjenim. Also somewhat novel is the way these terms are paired.

Pairing the two phrases “Anshim” [“Quieting the heart-mind] and “Anshin” [Quieting the body”] so closely puts more emphasis on them, and on the relationship between the mind and body, than has been common in the past. However, even if Koreans haven’t paired the specific terms “anshim” (compose your mind) and “ansin” (calm your body), they would have no trouble understanding what those terms mean when used so close together, since they would recognize the close connection between mind and body that is assumed in traditional Korean thought. (For example, one colloquial way to say “cultivate a moral character” in Korean is to say “momeul dakkta” – “polish the body.”) Nor would the injunctions to respect the Divine and cultivate oneself through ritual practice seem particularly unusual or novel, since one traditional way to compose the mind is to cultivate an attitude of mindfulness and reverence, and one way to cultivate such an attitude is to “sudo” (literally, “cultivate the Way”), engage in spiritual and/or moral training.

I thought about rephrasing anshim-anshin as “sound body, sound mind”, which is a common phrase in the West, but the Korean pairing assumes a connection between the body and the mind which makes them more intertwined than seen in the traditional Western mind-body split. Moreover, the Korean wording is much more active than the English saying “sound mind, sound mind.” The English phrases have adjectives modifying the nouns. The Korean has verbs that take the nouns as their objects. “An” in “anshim and “anshin” can be either an adjective in which case it means “calm, settled”, as a goal, or it can be a verb, in which case it means “to stabilize, to make calm, to compose.” When “an” is read as a verb, which in Daesoongjinrihoe is the more common reading for practitioners, these two phrases become active injunctions rather than passive descriptions. The idea this pairing of these terms imparts is that when your emotions are calm and your body is still, you can think clearly. Similarly, when your mind is clear and calm and is not disturbed by selfish thoughts, then your body will be calm and healthy as well.

Therefore you should quiet your mind and still your body. You can do so by cultivating an attitude of reverence for God, which can be cultivated through proper ritual performance.

It is important to remember that Daesoon philosophy shares with traditional Korean thought the notion that the mind controls the body, and that the body is the physical manifestation of the mind. Therefore the state of one affects the state of the other. This is not a new idea. It is a reflection of the traditional anthropocentric view that human beings are capable of self-improvement through their own physical and mental efforts. However, the linking of the two phrases “Ansin and Anshim” so closely, and the emphasis put on them, is new. Also new is the anthropomorphic theistic notion that the best way to compose the mind and calm the body is to cultivate a sense of reverence for the supernatural personality governing the universe, Sangjenim. Again, Daesoon philosophy manages to be both old and new, both traditional and original.

**III.** Next, let’s examine the four tenets of Daesoon philosophy, which I prefer to call the four goals, for that is what they are.<sup>4</sup> They are both goals and promises, since Daesoonjinrihoe promises that proper performance of its rituals will make these dreams of the future a reality. These four will become a reality after Gaebyeok (The Great Trans-formation) brings us from the current dismal state of affairs characterized by strife and injustice to a new era of harmony, peace, justice, and happiness. The language used to name this Great Transformation, Huch’eon kaebyeok, is again familiar language. It draws on the Book of Changes, especially the Revised Book of Changes, and as such reflects the traditional Korean acceptance of change as real and inevitable.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Daesoon sasang ui ihae, pp.176-193.

<sup>5</sup> For an English-language account of the Revised Book of Changes, see Jung Young Lee, “The Chongyok or Book of Correct Change: Its Background and Formation,” in Eui-young Yu and Earl H. Philips, ed., Traditional Thoughts and Practices in

Moreover, the four tenets, or four goals, are goals that Koreans have long longed for. In addition, with the articulation of these four tenets, Daesoon philosophy offers a diagnosis of what is wrong with the world today, a diagnosis expressed in language familiar to Koreans, along with a solution that is plausible and desirable within the traditional Korean world view.

Let me briefly look over those four goals:

**A. Eumyang hapdeok.**<sup>6</sup> This phrase, officially translated as “the creative conjunction of the virtues of Eum and Yang,” literally means “Yin and Yang combining forces.” Eum (the Korean pronunciation of “yin”) and yang are so deeply ingrained in traditional Korean thought that they appear on the flag of the Republic of Korea. That flag depicts these two fundamental forces in the universe as Koreans want them to be, intertwined and therefore complementary. However, Koreans are aware that there is conflict as well as cooperation in the world today. Eumyang hapdeok promises that the cooperation of eum and yang shown on the Korean flag will become the only way in which eum and yang interact.

**B. Sinin johwa.** This phrase, officially translated as “harmonious union of divine beings and human beings,” can be given a more active connotation with the translation “bringing gods and human together in harmonious cooperation.”<sup>7</sup> Traditionally, Koreans have not posited a large ontological gap between humans and gods. They have not seen them as totally different types of beings. The same is true of Daesoon philosophy. This goal of bringing gods and humans into harmonious cooperation therefore is reasonable within the traditional Korean worldview. Moreover, that is a desirable goal. Korean folk religion has long assumed that the problems we encounter in this world are caused by our failure

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Korea (Los Angeles: Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies, California State University, Los Angeles, 1983), pp.31-50.

<sup>6</sup> Daesoon sasang nonchong, vol.2 (1997)

<sup>7</sup> Daesoon sasang nonchong, vol.3 (1997)

to maintain harmonious relations with the spirits around us. Much traditional popular anthropomorphic religious practice has been an effort to restore harmonious relations between the spirit world and the human world. Daesoon philosophy promises that it can offer Koreans new techniques for reaching a goal they have long pursued. This promise, therefore, gives Daesoon philosophy persuasive power.

**C. Haewon sangsaeng.** Again, the official translation, “resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of all life”, can be complemented by a more active translation as “resolving grievances and righting wrongs, and creating a world of mutual aid and cooperation instead of constant struggle.”<sup>8</sup> The terminology Daesoon philosophy uses in this four-character phrase is somewhat novel, but the ideas it expresses are familiar enough that the average Korean has not trouble understanding what it means. “The resolution of grievances”, under different names, has long been a principle goal of much traditional religious activity, both in the shaman rituals of the folk religion and in many of the rituals of popular Buddhism. Even Confucianism had rituals to ease the pain of “hungry ghosts.”

As for *sangsaeng* (literally, “mutual creation”), this term is rooted in the traditional Korean belief that the universe is a universe of constant interaction, in which universal conflict (*sanggeuk*) creates an every-changing hierarchy. *Sangsaeng* is a promise of an end to such conflict, which would produce a peaceful and egalitarian society and universe. That promise of a radical transformation is expressed in language drawn from the earlier traditional view of the universe.

**D.** And finally there is the last tenet: **Dotong jin’gyeong.** The official translation is “Realization of the Do in the world. Another possible translation would be “The Way pervades all and therefore a true paradise is created on

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<sup>8</sup> Daesoon sasang nonchong, vol.4 (1998)

this earth.”<sup>9</sup> That is a promise of the sort of paradise Koreans have long longed for, a paradise on this earth for the living rather than in such other realm after death. The four-character term used to name this end result of Gaebyeok might be somewhat novel, but Koreans have no trouble understanding its general meaning, nor would the average Korean have any difficulty seeing such a paradise as both a desirable and ultimately a plausible goal. Once again, Daesoon philosophy is both traditional and creative, both old and new.

It is important to note here that all four of these goals can be achieved through human efforts (and therefore represent anthro-pocentric spirituality). However, Sangjenim descended to earth and assumed human form at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to teach human beings the ritual for the Reordering of the Universe, which they need to perform in order to achieve those goals. Therefore these four goals, especially in terms of what Daesoon philosophy says is necessary to achieve them, also represent an anthro-pomorphic theistic approach to religious concerns. (Human beings would not know what to do if God had not appeared among them in human form and told them what they needed to do.)

**IV.** Daesoon philosophy also gains persuasive power from its focus on the the ethical concerns that have been at the center of Korean religiosity for millennia. As I have argued elsewhere, Koreans have long searched for a way to overcome human moral frailty.<sup>10</sup> This has been a frustrating search, since Koreans have also tended to assume that human perfection is within reach through human efforts alone. Implicit in Daesoon philosophy is a unique solution to the perennial Korean problem of resolving this contradiction between belief in the innate perfectibility of all human beings and

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<sup>9</sup> Daesoon sasang nonchong, vol.5 (1998)

<sup>10</sup> See my “Danger Within: Guilt and Moral Frailty in Korean Religion” in Acta Koreana, Vol.4, July, 2001, pp.1-25.

recognition of human moral frailty. The Daesoon philosophy solution is to, first of all, blame that moral frailty on the specific time in the cosmic cycle in which we live. However, it also offers the comforting message that this particular cosmic era is coming to an end and we will escape the conditions that cause that moral frailty. This is not a passive message. Instead, Daesoon philosophy tells us that we can hasten the coming of the new era through participation in the rituals taught by Gang Jeungsan, whom Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches is the Supreme Deity above (Sangjenim) who descended to this earth to teach those rituals to humanity in order to help us escape the problems we face in the cosmic era we live in today.

As any organized religion must, Daesoon Jinrihoe not only offers hope that we can overcome moral weakness, it also provides specific guidelines for how to act morally. Those “commandments” share the traditional anthropocentric orientation of the Korean moral perspective, which places more emphasis on harmonious interaction within the human community than on an individual’s relationship with a supernatural personality.

The folk religion of Korea did not have an explicit moral code, other than the vague injunction to maintain harmonious relationships with spiritual beings. Buddhism and Confucianism, however, both provided specific instructions on how to live a moral life. The basic Buddhist precepts are as follows:

1. abstain from harming living beings
2. abstain from taking what has not been given to you
3. abstain from sexual misconduct
4. abstain from speaking that which you know is not true
5. abstain from intoxicating substances.<sup>11</sup>

Notice that nothing is said here about God or gods, not even about the need for human beings to worship or otherwise interact with supernatural beings. These Buddhist precepts are not commandments from a God above.

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.199.

Instead, they are guidelines, advising human beings how they should behave if they want to avoid becoming overly attaching to the transitory phenomena of this world and also how they should behave if they want to avoid harming those living beings that share this world of transitory phenomena with them.

Similarly, the five basic Confucian moral principles also lack any mention of interaction between human beings and supernatural personalities. Those five fundamental moral principles are

1. maintain affection between a father and his children
2. maintain righteousness between a ruler and those he rules
3. maintain a distinction of duties between a husband and his wife
4. maintain the proper hierarchy between an elder brother and a younger brother
5. maintain trust between friends.<sup>12</sup>

These Confucian precepts are somewhat different from the Buddhist precepts in that they focus on maintaining harmonious relations within the human community rather than on suggesting ways for human beings to avoid becoming entangled in the attractions of the material world. Nevertheless, like the Buddhist precepts, they are anthropocentric in that they focus entirely on the human realm. Neither Confucianism nor Buddhism has anything like the First Commandment in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, with its command to honor the one true God Above and refrain from interaction with any rival supernatural personalities.

Daesoon philosophy has five precepts of its own. They are

1. Do not deceive yourself. In other words, be faithful to your true self (which is virtuous by nature) and don't be led astray by short-sighted self-centered thoughts or emotions.
2. Practice virtuous speech. In other words, speak well of others and refrain from criticizing others. Let your words reflect a virtuous heart-mind.

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<sup>12</sup> Mencius 3A: IV, 8

3. Do not cause cheek. In other words, don't do anything to others that will cause them to hold a grudge against you.
4. Do not disregard grace shown to you. In other words, don't forget how you have benefited from what others have done, and continue to do, for you.
5. Promote the betterment of others. In other words, act so as to improve the lives of others.<sup>13</sup>

Like the precepts of Buddhism and Confucianism, these precepts are anthropomorphic in that they enjoin proper behavior within the human community rather than focusing on individual interaction with a supernatural personality. However, they gain an anthropomorphic flavor from the fact that they are seen as modeled on the way Sangjenim lived when He walked this earth as Gang Jeungsan. Moreover, Daesoon philosophy teaches that the best way to ensure that we act in accordance with these five precepts is to cultivate the virtues of reverence, sincerity, and faithfulness. And the best way to do that is maintain an attitude of reverence for Sangjenim, grounded in a sincere faith in his teachings.

## Conclusion

Daesoon philosophy gains its persuasive power by promising a means to reach a goal that has been at the heart of all traditional religious activity, implicitly if not explicitly, for the Korean people throughout their history. For centuries, Koreans have sought to live a harmonious existence, and have turned to religion to help them achieve that harmony. In the folk religion, both the household rituals of housewives (*kosa*) and the *kut* of shamans were designed to restore and nurture harmonious cooperation between human beings and invisible spiritual beings. Confucianism at its core was a philosophy promoting harmony within the human community, and that was

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<sup>13</sup> Jang, Byeong-gil, Daesoon Jonggyo Sasang [The philosophy of the Daesoon religion] (Seoul: Daesoon Jonggyo Sasang Yeon'guso, Daesoon Jinrihoe Publishing, 1989), pp.207-209.

the ultimate goal of its rituals, if we understand that ancestors are included within the human community. Even Buddhism can be seen as a search for harmony, whether the harmony between ourselves and ultimate reality which monks sought or harmony between our desires and the world around us that was the goal of popular Buddhism. Daesoon philosophy promises that the ritual introduced by Gang Jeungsan would achieve all three goals. The purpose of the Cheonji gongsa (Ritual for reordering of the universe) He instituted is to restore harmony between the spirit world and the human world, to restore harmony to the natural world, and to restore harmony within the human community. All of this is to be done by replacing the prevailing dog-eat-eat mode of operation (Sanggeuk) with cooperative interaction (Sangsaeng). The ethical precepts of Daesoon philosophy reinforce this goal of promoting harmony.

In this short paper, I have argued that Daesoon philosophy gains much of its persuasive power from the familiarity of many of its concepts and beliefs as well as by its combining of anthropomorphic and anthropocentric approaches, in addition to the familiarity of the goals it promises help achieving. In fact, it can be seen as not so much a new religion as it is a culmination of traditional Korean religion. It builds on terminology and ideas found in all of Korea's religious traditions. That is why I call it the quintessential Korean religion.

However, it is more than the sum of its parts. Daesoon philosophy is not Buddhist, it is not Confucian, it is not Daoist, it is not Cheondogyo, and it is not shamanistic. Instead, it is all of these---and more. It does not hide the fact that the roots of its teachings are found in earlier religious traditions. Unlike many Western religions which fear being labeled "syncretic" (for example, how many devout Christians will admit why December 25 was chosen as the date to celebrate the birthday of Jesus?), Daesoon philosophy proudly proclaims that the earlier religious traditions were the products of the same divine wisdom which gave birth to Daesoon philosophy and therefore contribute to its formation. It is precisely this openness to the past, as well as a willingness to embrace additional concepts, values, and practices that Daesoon philosophers say update and complete the religious teachings of the past, that

makes Daesoon philosophy such a powerful force in Korean religious culture today. It is both new and old, both familiar and novel, and therefore has appeal to those who recognize that the world around them has changed dramatically and who nonetheless do not want ignore the wisdom of their ancestors. That is why Daesoon philosophy underlies the fastest growing religious organization in Korea today, Daesoon Jinrihoe.

## **Kang Jeungsan :**

**Trials and Triumphs of a Visionary Pacifist/Nationalist, 1894-1909**

**Key Ray Chong**

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The purpose of this study is to examine the life of Kang Jeungsan and his teachings as revealed in the Supreme Scripture (Jeongyeong) which was recognized as the “official” Canon of Jeungsan in 1974 by the Daesoonjinrihoe (the Fellowship of the Daesoon Truth) aimed ultimately at saving all beings in the universe. The Daesoonjinrihoe, established in 1969, claims to have represented the letter and spirit of Founder Jeungsan’s teachings. The term Daesoon literally means “great itineration” which suggests it is the truth of all truths since it had examined all the truths by thorough and critical ways. After Jeungsan’s passing in 1909, Cho Jeongsan succeeded him as Master of the Truth (Doju) and carried out the former’s unfinished task until his own passing in 1958. Soon thereafter, the torch was passed on to a newly-risen leader, Park Wudang, who then assumed the position of Dojeon (Master of All Truth) and served as the supreme leader of the Daesoonjinrihoe until the end of his life in 1996 to fulfill the ultimate mission of his two predecessors. Under his four-decade long leadership, the Daesoonjinrihoe had made a phenomenal progress: for example, 2.5 million households were brought under its influence. Having made a dramatic increase in membership, Dojeon and his followers justifiably claim that the Daesoonjinrihoe was the only legitimate and rightful heir of Jeungsan and his causes.

In fact, there is no doubt that under the leadership of Dojeon the Daesoonjinrihoe became one of the largest and most influential groups of Jeungsan’s followers. When reorganized and renamed in 1969 during the tenure of Dojeon, the Daesoonjinrihoe succeeded in furthering the mission of Jeungsan

more than ever before. One such accomplishment is establishment of a full-fledged institution of higher learning, Daejin University, which is known as one of the three universities owned and operated by the indigenous religious organizations in South Korea.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the ups and downs of the Jeungsan movement in the past, the Daesoonjinrihoe finally has managed to emerge as a formidable new religious organization in South Korea. After the passing of Jeungsan in 1909, his incipient organization soon fragmented itself into many small splinter groups, largely because of the increasing Japanese control in Korea and partly because of the lack of leadership among his followers. Having gone through these trying periods, so many splinter groups appeared and disappeared, so much so that, as one observer said, there is no way of knowing exactly how many splinter groups there have been. One study says 60 groups with 10.2 million followers and the other suggests different figures: 2.4, 4.8, or 7.2 millions. Each and every group claims to be the only legitimate followers of Jeungsan and his teachings.<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Before discussing the subject in some detail, it is necessary for us to have some knowledge of the backgrounds of Jeungsan, particularly his ideological

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<sup>1</sup> Gang Dongu, *Hanguk geundae jeonggyo wa minjokjui*(Korea's Recent Religions and Nationalism), Seoul: Jimmundang, 1992, p.129. According to this study, many other indigenous Korean religions are listed: the following are some important ones: Suncheondo(Following Heavenly Way), Jeungsanbopjonggyo (Sectarian Religious Law of Jeungsanism), Bocheongyo(Religion of the Whole World), Mirukbulgyo(Maitreya Buddhism), Mugukdaedogyo(Religion of Infinite Great Way); see also Jeong Daejin, *Daesoonsasang ronchong*(Studies of Jeungsanism or Circulating Great Truth), Pocheon, Gyeonggi province: Doseochulpan Ilsim, 2004, p. iii(its preface). Two other universities are Wonkwang University and Sunmoon University, run by the Order of Won Buddhism and Rev. Moon's Unification Church, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> No Gilmyeong, *Hanguk sinheungjonggyo yeongu*(Studies on Korea's New Religions), Seoul: Gyeongsewon, 1996.

or religious relations with those of his contemporaries, with whom he had associated, and from whom he had learned during his lifetime. The reason for this approach stems from the fact that nothing can be created out of nothing in the process of a creation, that is, our assumption is that there are always the cause and effect as far as the process of a creation is concerned. Today, it is generally believed that there are three major indigenous religions which had shared many things in common in terms of their roots and environment: they are Cheondogyo (Teachings of the Heavenly Way)—formerly known as Donghak (Eastern Learning) until 1905—Jeungsanism (or Daesoan Truth), and Wonbulgyo (Won Buddhism). In our study, however, we have excluded other new indigenous religions because those three are more closely related to one another than any other one. One may argue against this sort of exclusion because it hinges very much on how do we define or determine new native religions in Korea. Despite this moot point, in the course of this study we have decided to focus on the three indigenous religions to which we will refer from time to time when we deal with Jeungsan's life and legacy.

At this point we must mention briefly that all three indigenous religions had inherited traditions of all well-established religions in Korea—Confucianism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism, plus Daoism and Shamanism—and subsequently all six traditional religions were integrated by themselves and helped create the three new indigenous ones—Cheondo-gyo, Jeungsanism, and Wonbulgyo. In a way these new native religions were considered the beginning of a budding Korean nationalist movement in response to and/or as a result of foreign influence and encroachment. In other words, the three new native religions, which appeared on the scenes in tandem with the budding Korean nationalist movement, made their debut in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Korea.

Putting all these vexing questions aside for a while, let us now address some other problems regarding Jeungsanism. One problem is an acute shortage of materials on Jeungsanism in English. As a consequence, most people in the world are totally ignorant of, if not indifferent to, Jeungsanism. Why does this happen in the age of globalization? Since it was so new and yet so nationalistic

in its doctrinal orientation, as one might suspect, Jeung-sanism could naturally attract only a tiny fraction of the patriotic Korean nationalists. Contrary to our expectations, however, Jeungsan surprisingly stresses some redeeming universal values as found in all world religions when it comes to his own religious doctrine. So, one may find Jeungsanism very much contradictory because he contains two basic values in his doctrine: one is indigenous or nationalistic and the other is international or universal. What makes us more perplexing and difficult to study new religions—such as Jeungsanism—is that constantly they appeared, disappeared, and reappeared, integrating and synthesizing them into one form after another in the course of time, so much so that one can hardly keep up with the histories of their development. So in this study Kang Jeungsan, the founder of Jeung-sanism, will be examined first in terms of his life and legacy as part of the Korean pacifist/nationalist movement which had opposed or resisted the foreign influence or domination in East Asia.

### **Jeungsan's Time and Milieu**

To get to the bottom of issues regarding new indigenous religions, we must delve into their relationships with the traditional religions in Korea: Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Shamanism, and Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism). All were imported initially from abroad: both east and west. In stark contrast, however, the three new religions in Korea—Cheondogyo (Teachings of the Heavenly Way), Jeungsanism (Teachings of Kang Jeungsan), and Wonbulgyo (Teachings of Won Buddhism)-- were born and developed in the form of a mixture of all existing traditional religions in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the course of time, both new indigenous religions and old imported foreign religions were integrated and synthesized into something very different and unique in nature. In short, all Korean religions, both new and old, came to share with one another in terms of each other's doctrine and practice.

One such religion came into existence first in the form of Donghak (Eastern Learning) which had made the debut in 1863 under the auspices of

Choe Jewu or Suwun. But the government suppressed Suwun because he was suspected of having been involved with the so-called Seohak (Western Learning or Christianity), although the contrary was a case. As a proponent of Eastern Learning, ironically Suwun was found guilty and summarily executed on charge of being a promoter of Western Learning in 1864. His successor, Son Byeonghui, resurfaced in 1892. When the Donghak Revolution in 1894 occurred on the eve of the Sino-Japanese War, he reorganized Donghak and renamed it to Cheondogyo (Teachings of the Heavenly Way) when Korea was forced to become a protectorate of Japan in 1905. Son Byeonghui again led the historic March First Independence Movement on the first day of March, 1919 to protest against an outright annexation of Korea in 1910 as an integral part of imperial Japan, but his movement ended in a fiasco soon thereafter because of Japanese suppression. As its successor of the Donghak movement, the Jeungsan movement followed suit in 1901, but it was disbanded in 1941 due again to the Japanese high-handed policy. Won Buddhism appeared much later in the 1930s, patterning itself after the model of the two predecessors. In short, all these three new religions came from the same spiritual roots and the same topological environment, and they all met the same fate, suffering greatly at the hands of the Japanese imperialists because they were all from the same place at about the same time.

Under such unfortunate circumstances, those indigenous religions somehow managed to survive, if not thrive. But they were unable to continue to do so ultimately because of Japan's increasingly oppressive policy in Korea. While Cheondogyo, Jeungsanism, and Wonbulgyo were making their respective debut, Japanese imperialism reached its nadir in terms of power or influence in Korea. Thus all these three indigenous religions soon began to decline: most went underground, if not altogether disappeared, during the Japanese colonial period (1910-45). Historically and ideologically, the late comers—both Jeungsanism and Wonbulgyo—have been considered as offshoots of Donghak (or Cheondogyo). Thus they naturally share with each other's theory and practice. In addition, they all were born and actively propagated in and around North Jeolla province. Since most adherents came

from this particular region, naturally their history and ideology were similar to their forerunner, Donghak, in terms of theory and practice, particularly in its origin and development.

In order to put the above religions in a right historical perspective, we must understand the backgrounds of their history and ideology. That is, when and how did they come into being and how did they develop their doctrines, and to what extent and/or in what manner did they actually propagate them for people. In order for us to better understand them, we must take into account at least two factors: one is external international situation and the other, internal domestic conditions.

### **External Threats**

First, let us turn to the international threats posed to Korea before we discuss births and growths of the indigenous religious movements. As mentioned earlier, they all came into being during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, during which Korea had gone through a series of trying times; the nation's survival was at stake, which was caused primarily by the growing Western encroachments on East Asia in general and subsequent Japanese colonialism in Korea in particular, and partly by the decay and decline of Korea which in turn shook the very foundation of the old order which had sustained stability in Korea for nearly five centuries. Initial Asian encounter with Western nations resulted in an incipient nationalism in the form of indigenous religious movements--messianic and/or millenarian movements--while Western imperialist wars were going on in Asia for some time. To cope with the very problems of their national survival, indigenous religious movements grew as nationalist movements in response to the threat from the West, thus making themselves as harbingers of Korean nationalism. To meet the challenge from the West, the Korean people responded negatively to the Western imperialism designed to expand their sphere of influence in East Asia.

For that matter, other Asian nations' response to the West was equally negative because they had felt its imperialistic threat during the wars against

China in the 1840s, Japan in the 1850s, and Korea in the 1870s-80s. All those three East Asian nations became subjugated by the Western powers directly or indirectly, thus being reduced to the status of full-fledged colony and/or semi or hypo colony of the Western nations, culturally, economically, or politically. In fact, Western imperialism had three forms: first, missionary endeavors to spread Christian religion to every corner of the world (cultural imperialism); second, mercantile interests to boost profits through free trade by opening the countries to expand foreign markets (economic imperialism), and third, military interventions to protect and promote their national interests—missionary and mercantile-- by acquiring extra territories or creating their own sphere of influence within China which the Chinese called a semi-colony or hypo colony of the West (territorial imperialism). Thus, Western imperialism undermined the very foundation of the nation-state's sovereign right and territorial integrity, its agrarian economy, and its cultural tradition. In short, nationalism in Asia is believed to be nothing but a byproduct of, and/or a response to, Western imperialism during the turbulent 19<sup>th</sup> century.

During the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western imperialism was in full swing, conquering one country after another in East Asia. First, China became humiliated by England in the aftermath of the Opium War of 1840-1842 and was open and available for all kinds of Western exploitations. As a result of this unprecedented national trauma, the old order in China began to crumble. In response to this external shock, one cataclysmic domestic uprising occurred in China: the Taiping Rebellion of 1850-64. Although unsuccessful in bringing about the "Christian Kingdom of Great Peace" or a paradise on earth, the Chinese people became fully aware of the shortcomings of old Confucian ideas and institutions and later tried to change them for the betterment of the country. It is generally believed that this large-scale political and religious challenge to the old order of China is considered a direct response to Western encroachment on China.

A decade later, in the 1850s a similar event took place in Japan. Three black ships of the United States navy forced Japan to open its door to the outside world by military threat. Japan gave in to the pressure of "gunboat

diplomacy.” Japan unwillingly accepted America’s arm-twisting demands and signed a treaty of amity and commerce (peace and trade) with the United States in 1854 and soon thereafter made similar treaties with other Western powers, thus enabling her to avoid a humiliation or defeat China had experienced. By so doing, Japan tided over its national peril without subsequent sufferings. A big political reform took place in the wake of the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Japan followed the path of Western imperialism.

By the mid-1890s, both China and Japan had military confrontations over the question as to who has the right to control Korea. This dispute between the two resulted in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 and the war settled the issue in favor of victorious Japan. During and after this historic event, Korea reacted to the outside forces and launched a nation-wide campaign against them. Japan eventually reduced Korea to the status of its semi-colony in 1905 and its full colony in 1910. At the end of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, Korea became a Japanese protectorate, or semi-colony, and by 1910 it was annexed outright by Japan and became an integral part of the Japanese empire.

While Japanese imperialism was holding a firm footing in Korea during and after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, the Korean people rose to resolve both domestic ills and foreign encroachments once and for all through the Donghak Revolution. The hope of Donghak rebels—who aimed at changing the nation and people for the better—was dashed by both Korean and Japanese government troops. Under those circumstances, Korean nationalist movement could not develop a political movement but it could grow more or less in the form of a religious movement with the purpose of protecting and promoting the innate Korean or Eastern values as opposed to Western counterparts. One can see why ex-Donghaks changed the direction of their subsequent movement from violence to peace: a Cheondogyo movement, led by Son Byonghui in the first and second decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was a typical non-violent peace movement unlike Donghak followers.

Earlier, Korea had undergone through a series of Western aggressions: British, Russian, German, French, American, and Japanese: they all forced Korea to have relations for the furtherance of their national interests—

mercantile (trade), missionary (culture) and military (territory). By then, the Korean people realized that they did not have any other alternative but to use newly adopted, non-violent religious means to better the fate of the nation and its people. As will be shown below, the Jeung-san movement is no exception: Jeung-san, the inheritor of Donghak, also adhered to the newly adopted principle of non-violent tactics in promoting his cause.

## **Internal Responses**

Second, let us discuss domestic conditions during the height of Western and Japanese imperialism during the 19th century. Earlier in 1866, when carried out the policy to suppress the growing influence of Catholicism, the Korean government intended to wipe it out and its supporters because they were spreading like a wild fire, first among the discontented elite yangban class—civil and military officials—and later among the ordinary people at large—farmers, merchants, and the like. The government decided to put an end to the Catholic movement once and for all and its adherents were arrested, tortured, imprisoned, or killed. The government persecution policy against the Catholic movement reached its zenith, resulting in deaths of nine French missionaries and 8,000 Korean believers in 1866. This is considered as the highlight of a long-standing conflict between old Confucianism and new Christianity.

Earlier in 1786, the government had branded Catholicism as heretic and began to suppress its followers for the same reasons mentioned above. Likewise, in 1801 when threatened by Catholicism, the regime banned it altogether officially. Its followers such as Yi Seunghun and like-minded fellow scholar-officials were victimized: they were arrested, tortured, executed, and banished to remote places. They were charged for a high treason against the state. In 1839, a similar event repeated again; many died for their faith as martyrs, including the first Korean priest, Kim Daegeon, and three French missionaries. By that time, at least 20,000 Catholic followers were actively practicing their faith throughout the country and they even established a

seminary to train their leaders in Jecheon, North Chungcheong province.<sup>3</sup>

The Korean government's anti-Catholic campaign in 1866 resulted in part from the Western attempts to open trade relations with Korea early in the first half of the 19th century. In 1831, a British merchant ship came to Korea to sound out the intention of the government but without success, and again in 1845, another similar attempt was repeated, but with no luck. Likewise, other Western nations followed suit: a French warship in 1845, a Russian warship in 1865 and Germans on a British merchant ship in 1866, came to Korea for the purpose of establishing trade relations with Korea, but all without success. Having failed in all those attempts, in the same year 1866 American and French navy ships tried to use military might upon Korea. The results were equally discouraging: American navy ship, General Sherman, was burned to the ground in Pyongyang and French navy ships attacked the Kanghwa Island near Seoul but in the end expelled by Korean defenders, and in 1871 the United States, having failed already in 1866, dispatched its five warships to the Kanghwa Island area to retaliate against Korea's burning of the battleship General Sherman in 1866 in Pyongyang, North Korea, but with little luck as before.<sup>4</sup>

Now let us get back to the Korean people's reactions to these domestic developments in the midst of the international turmoil. Because of Western missionaries, merchants, and military forces, the Korean government could not deal with the domestic problems effectively. Worse yet, its domestic problems further weakened the already shaky government. Among them two problems stood out: one was social and the other economic. There were four classes—sa-nong-gong-sang(scholar-officials, peasants, artisans and merchants) in Korea, as in China. The first one is the ruling elite and the other three the ruled commoners. But unlike Chinese social system, ordinary people in Korea were

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<sup>3</sup> Yi Gibaek, *Hanguksa sinron*(New Interpretation of Korean History), Seoul: Iljogak, 1966, pp.286-287. All background historical accounts in this study are taken from this book.

<sup>4</sup> Yi, *op. cit.*, pp.291-293.

not allowed to climb up the social ladder based on scholarly merits through civil service examinations. In other words, there was a substantial amount of social mobility within the class of ordinary people, that is to say, at least one-third of the ruling elite would lose their first class status and thus there was always a glimmer of hope for the future of those who were commoners in Chinese society. In sharp contrast, however, the Korean counterpart was soon changed into somewhat different system of the four classes—first, yangban (civil and military elite), second, jungin (middle people or illegitimate sons of yangban’s concubines, whose jobs are in practical fields such as medicine, law, astronomy, mathematics and arts, all low ranking government positions), third, sangin(ordinary people): farmers, artisans, and merchants), and the last four class--social outcast, substantially large portion of the total population—cheonmin (mean people), known notoriously in terms of chilcheon (seven mean occupation holders; government messengers, guardsmen, watchmen, oarsmen, sailors, torch guards, and postal carriers) and palban (eight low status people); (1) public or government slaves, (2) personal domestic slaves, (3) professional entertainers, (4) fortunetellers, (5) sorcerers and sorceresses, (6) butchers, blacksmiths, and craftsmen, (7) Buddhist monks and nuns, and (8) artists(magicians or shamans) and acrobats.<sup>5</sup>

The socio-economic order was so rigidly fixed in old Korea that none of the ordinary people were happy with the government, not to mention cheonin. And even some jungin, or second-tier class of people, were equally unhappy with it. Worse yet, even within the yangban class, some questioned the merit of neo-Confucianism as orthodox doctrine of the state and turned their attention to the study of Silhak (Practical Learning) based on Western sciences and technology, plus Christianity. As a consequence, those who were out of power and prestige were discontented, not to mention the ordinary

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<sup>5</sup> Kim Sang Yil, (eds.), *Studies on Religions of Korea*, Seoul: Association of Korean Native Religions, 2006, pp.165-167; see also Benjamin B. Weems, *Reform, Rebellion and the Heavenly Way*, Tucson, Arizona: the University of Arizona Press, 1964, p.4.

people.

But those in power continued to exploit the ruled by imposing a variety of taxes to maintain the status quo ante. Worse yet, the rulers from top down made concerted efforts to exempt themselves from the heavy burdens of all kinds of excessive taxations. In addition to those man-made disasters, there were a series of droughts and famines across the country, thus resulting in severe starvations and popular uprisings in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The government had no solutions to the problems but continued to impose taxes for its own survival. The whole nation found itself in a turmoil continuously one after another, especially when cheonmin, the bottom class people in Korean society, had suffered most. The result was disastrous: a series of continual popular uprisings, small or large, and economic or religious, rose and fell in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: in 1812, 1813 and 1816.

Even afterwards, no significant dent was made to improve the situation despite the government's efforts, and so the situation went from bad to worse continually to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Korean people at last rose against foreign powers and their own government during the course of the Sino-Japanese War and/or the Donghak Revolution in 1894-95. Under such external and internal circumstances, Jeungsan tried to right wrongs of the country and the world by peaceful means, that is, through his religious movement which he had started right after his spiritual awakening in 1901 and continued his peaceful crusade until his death in 1909, a year before Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910.

### **Jeungsan's Life**

Against the above historical backdrops --such as unprecedented external and internal crises in Korea--Kang Yilsun—often known as Jeungsan (literally meaning a “Great Vessel” or a mountain-like vessel which contains, accommodates, and unifies all beings in the universe) and Gucheon Sangje (“Lord of the Ninth Heaven” or Lord who monopolizes total control over every being in the universe)--was born in Gobu (nowadays city of Jeongeup), North Jeolla

province on November 1, 1871.<sup>6</sup> At the time of his birth, the legend says, two female fairies descended from heaven on the delivery room, in which sweet scents and mysterious spirits were filled, as if they were being good omens for the forthcoming of a baby god (*sangje*) on earth. It is interesting to note here that his followers called him the god, omnipresent, omnipotent and all-knowing: he may be the first one who identified himself as such. Moreover, Jeungsan put himself above Confucius, Buddha, and Jesus, claiming that *Sangje*, mentioned in the *Donggyeong Daejeon* (the Great Book of Eastern Classics) of Suwun, the founder of Donghak, is none other than himself. The youthful Jeungsan is known to have been precocious for his age: he was unusually intelligent and yet kind and generous, tolerant and broad-minded. From his childhood he always had been respected and admired by people for his intelligence and wisdom. He learned Chinese classics at a village school and mastered them to the point of memorizing or reciting all of them by heart. It is said that whatever he learned, he always turned out to be the top student in all classes in a village school. It seems that he had a photographic memory.<sup>7</sup>

In 1895, in his mid-twenties, he and his brother, Kang Yonghak, ran a village school to make a living by teaching young children near his birthplace. Many parents admired him for his erudition as well as his teaching skill. After the Donghak Revolution and the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95, he took refuge in the remote countryside. After the aftermaths of those two historic events he settled down. Soon thereafter, he ran a village school near his native place with his brother. After a year stint of teaching, he shut down the village school altogether in 1897. He began a long soul-searching journey,

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<sup>6</sup> Jeungsan's other titles or names are: Cheonbu (Heavenly Father), Cheonsa (Heavenly Teacher), Hanulnim or Haneulnim (Heavenly Master), or Mirukbul (Maitreya Buddha) *Sangje* (God), Yowun (Dazzling Cloud), Seosin (Western God), Saryeong (Commander), Sinin (Divine Man), or Daeseonsaeng (Great Teacher). For these, see Kang Don'gu, *Han'guk geundae jonggyo wa minjokjuyi* (Korean Modern Religions and Nationalism), Seoul: Jimmundang, 1992, p.92 and see also Jeon-gyeong (Canon of Jeungsanism), pp.17-18, 22, 92, 266.

<sup>7</sup> Jeongyeong, op. c it., pp. 2-4.

looking for the direction or meaning of life and traveled around the entire country for three years (1898-1901). At the end of his three-year wandering, he became spiritually awoken at Temple Daewonsa in Jeonju, the regional capital of his native province. In 1898 he met an important mentor, Kim Yilbu, foremost authorities on *Yijing* (the Book of Change). According to Jeungsan, Kim helped him understand or clarify why his forthcoming new world had to be created. He continued that Suwun, the founder of Donghak, made the coming of a new world known to the world and Jeon Bongjun, the leader of the Donghak Revolution, prepared the path for the forthcoming religious or spiritual crusade on behalf of Jeungsan. In a nutshell, Jeungsan said that he intends to destroy anything old in the existing world and then to create everything new in the forthcoming world of his own. In 1902, a year after his spiritual enlightenment, he formed his organization and started his religious activities and continued to carry them out until his death in 1909. Mostly, he preached messages of peace and prosperity to create “a paradise on earth (*jisang cheonguk*)” for all people in “the later world (*hucheon segye*).” In the process of realizing an ideal world he emphasized the importance of Korea because it would play a central role in it. In addition to these good words, both spiritual and physical, he practiced healing ministry, performed all kinds of miracles, emphasized extensive spiritual and physical training as a means to attract people to his cause. By so doing, he only employed peaceful means so as to be acceptable to the authorities with which he had to deal.

His missionary career was brief because of his untimely death in 1909 and yet his followers continually carried out his mission, though on the on-and-off basis, to this day. As we have seen, despite many ups and downs in the movement, Jeungsan’s legacy managed to survive to this day. As we have shown in the above, in all likelihood it would continue to stay alive, if not necessarily always thrive, in Korea at least in the foreseeable future.

## **Donghaks**

Our first question is what are Jeungsan’s views of, and his relations with, Donghaks and their teachings. It is generally known that he had considerable

connections with the Donghak movement in 1894, not only ideologically but also geographically. Strangely enough, at first Jeung-san took no interest in it, nor did he participate in it, as if he had nothing to do with it. Later, however, he made some indirect but negative remarks on the Donghaks. Since most of his followers were ex-Donghak rebels who were from the same North Jeolla province, there were undoubtedly considerable relationships between his religious doctrine and practices and Donghak's counterparts. For example, Kobu (now Jeongeup), the birthplace of Jeung-san, was also the home of the Donghak movement as well as its leader, Jeon Bongjun. With the help of his fellow countrymen, Jeung-san, like Jeon Bongjun, started a series of the crusades against internal and external authorities to win the hearts and minds of the Korean people as well as those of the people in the world, hopefully in the future.

What is more interesting here is to find that although the Donghak leader, Jeon Bongjun, was tough and aggressive in opposing the inept Korean government and ruthless Japanese colonialists, Jeung-san was prone to be more passive and patient towards the authorities, Korean or Japanese. Furthermore, his followers were urged also not to resort to any violent means in attempts to resolve any issues with the authorities. While alive, he adhered himself strictly to the principle of non-violence in dealing with the authorities.

From this brief review of his life, one can say that by nature he seems to have had a peaceful propensity unlike Donghaks who had resorted to a series of violent armed struggles to attain their goals. Very likely, his non-violent behavior had come partly from his past unhappy experiences with violence-prone Donghaks, and partly from aggressive Japanese and equally aggressive Russians, both of whom were deeply involved in Korean affairs. In the course of our examinations, we must assume that Jeung-sanism was influenced considerably by external and/or internal conditions of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Korea, as we had explained at the beginning of this study.

The following case suggests something about his way of thinking. For example, Jeung-san was not supportive of the Donghak leader Jeon Bongjun, a fellow countryman, from the same district. Moreover, he turned against Jeon

Bongjun, blaming for his anti-government stand and armed resistance against the authorities, both domestic and foreign. According to Jeung-san, Jeon Bongjun only undermined the foundation of law and order in society. The Donghak movement intended to fight against corruptions or mismanagement of the Korean government and to prevent the Japanese government from intervening in affairs of Korea. The Donghaks advocated its slogan, “protect the nation [from foreign powers, especially Japan] and promote peace and prosperity for [the Korean] people(boguk anmin).” They rose against the authorities, both internal and external, resorting to violent means, but all Jeung-san had done during his life was just the opposite thing, that is, he tried to avoid trouble, if at all possible, with both Korean and foreign authorities. Even after obtaining his spiritual awakening after 49 day fasting at age 30 at Temple Daewonsa, he avoided to live in the cities in carrying out his activities and instead he chose to work and live in remote villages, hopefully to minimize the possibility of his contact with the authorities. While teaching his followers, he constantly moved around from place to place, staying only briefly in the same place for fear of the dragnet of Japanese police or army. From this fact alone, one can see why he was so much reluctant to be close to the authorities, physically or psychologically. His reluctance seems to have stemmed partly from the fact that he personally witnessed his faithful disciple, Cha Gyeong-seok, who had suffered greatly because of his being an ex-Donghak leader: Cha’s father had been killed on account of his connections with the Donghaks by the authorities. Above all, he also witnessed with his own eyes an infamous massacre of over 20,000 Donghak faithfuls in the aftermath of the 1895 Donghak rebellion.<sup>8</sup>

From 1901 to 1909, keeping in mind the above-mentioned traumas, Jeung-san judiciously carried out his mission, preaching both peace (mental health) and prosperity (material wealth) to his people who would live in the “forthcoming paradise (hucheon seongyong)” soon to be realized on this earth. This latter-day kingdom can come to us only through his religion, when Jeung-san

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.122.

and his followers will resolve all the universal problems in this world once and for all, about which he called the “reordering of the universe (cheonji gongsa).” By so doing, they believed, all the entanglements, that is, all the problems in the universe can be untied or removed by means of what he called “resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of all life” (haewon sangsaeng).” When all this happened, the new paradise would be realized on this earth for the benefits of all people. To change this troubled world, he believed, he must change the government and its people only by peaceful means, that is, proselytizing to his religion through education, but not violent revolution. To materialize these ultimate aims, Jeungsan most frequently took advantage of his healing ministry to nurse and nurture the mind and body of all sick people, that is, he made good use of his healing power as a means of saving the world. This sort of ministry, often used by many other religious organizations, is considered a culmination of peace-oriented mission work to benefit unfortunate people.

In sharp contrast to the Donghaks who had taken part in a violent rebellion, Jeungsan refused to resort to any violent means to realize his ideal world.<sup>9</sup> He was active in proselytizing people mostly in his home province, making the rounds at rallies held in safe places such as his birthplace where everybody knew everybody else. These areas were known as the home of Donghak rebels. When the Donghak movement collapsed, many ex-Donghaks joined Jeungsan’s religious movement, because it had only resorted to peaceful means. Even so, Jeungsan was always conscious, if not fearful, of the danger of watchful eyes of both police and army. His followers were told not to divulge his whereabouts or movements to the authorities concerned. This means that he constantly needed a new haven for his safety, thus forcing him to travel incognito to avoid surveillance from the authorities. He had intended to lead a peaceful and quiet life, if at all possible, by not offending any authorities, military or civil. But he was not always lucky: at one time he was arrested and

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<sup>9</sup> Kang Dongu, *op. cit.*, p.23

imprisoned despite the fact that he had nothing to do with the Donghaks who caused serious political trouble, having challenged the inept Korean regime in 1894.<sup>10</sup> The past experiences of this sort must have made him feel insecure about his safety. Similarly, in his earlier days, he also made negative remarks on Donghaks, saying that by the winter of 1895 the fall of the Donghaks would be imminent due to large-scale crackdowns on the Donghaks by the Korean and Japanese government. Thus Jeungsan asked his followers not to join in the Donghak movement. In fact, what he said is that the earlier Donghak movement failed in the 1860s under the leadership of its founder Choe Jewu because it had given the government an excuse to destroy his movement even though he had nothing to do with any type of armed uprising against the reigning regime. But he was charged of the high treason against the state and then executed for the crime which he had not committed in any violent way. He only talked about Donghak (Eastern Learning), a native religion, as opposed to Seohak (Western Learning) or a foreign religion. Jeungsan felt, however, that Choe's Donghak movement would have been successful if he had preached more peaceful messages of his faith. At the same time, Jeungsan considered Choe Jewu, or Suwun, as a trouble maker because he had started a rebellion (*jakran*). In contrast, Jeungsan regarded himself as a trouble shooter (*chiran*) because he had brought about a peaceful solution for the problems of people. Thus, Suwun was considered a loser because he had failed in his mission to resolve problems of the people, that is, he did not have the mandate of heaven to realize a new paradise on earth. For this reason, Jeungsan put himself in charge of the project for creating a forthcoming new world. To the end of his life, Jeungsan continually preached messages of peace to his followers in order not to make the same mistakes that Suwun had committed.<sup>11</sup>

Jeungsan's non-violent attitude stemmed undoubtedly in part from a disastrous defeat of the Donghak Revolution and in part from the deep

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<sup>10</sup> Jeongyeong, p.276.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.8-9; and see also No Gilmyeong, *op. cit.*, p.92 and Gang Don'gu, *op. cit.*, p.256.

wounds inflicted on his fellow compatriots. During and after the Donghak Uprising of 1894-95, the country paid a dear price, resulting in highest casualties in the native district of Jeungsan which was also the home of the braves such as the Donghak leader, Jeon Bongjun, and most of his soldiers. Understandably, Jeungsan desired not to repeat such traumatic tragedies again. Referring to the Donghak Revolution, he said, “I came [to the earth] to observe it, not to participate in it.”<sup>12</sup> He leveled scathing criticisms at Son Byeonghui, the leader of Cheondogyo (or formerly Donghak), criticisms amply demonstrated in the Supreme Scripture(Jeongyeong). As to the disastrous Donghak Uprising in 1894-95, he said that Son Byeonghui, a follower of Suwun, could have become a hero, but unfortunately he turned out to be a loser because he was more prone to be a trouble maker than otherwise. In fact, throughout his life he had continually made one trouble after another. Thus it is highly unlikely for Son to succeed in the forthcoming uprising unless and until he can become a “great man (daein)” in his own right. In other words, he should have made himself humble in behavior to the point of declining offers to lead his people at least three times before he accepted the offer for leadership position. According to Jeungsan, Son was not good enough to be a hero.<sup>13</sup>

Even a decade later, when making rounds at various rallies during a nationwide crusade for his cause, Son was told flatly by Jeungsan not to come to Jeonju, the capital of North Jeolla province. In short, Jeungsan did not allow Son and his followers to come or visit there because they were suspected of being rebellious “righteous army soldiers (euibyeong)” in 1907. Following Japan’s de facto takeover of Korea as its protectorate in 1905, Jeungsan was well aware of the Japanese intention to control over Korea’s diplomacy and armed forces. In 1907 the Korean army was formally disbanded and thus they were no longer able to fight against the Japanese army stationed in Korea. Soon thereafter, the Korean righteous army was newly organized to put up a last

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<sup>12</sup> Kang Don’gu, op. cit., p.120.

<sup>13</sup> Jeongyeong, p.330-331.

fight against the Japanese army: some of its soldiers were ex-Donghaks. But most Donghaks did not want to be part of the Korean righteous army, nor did they desire to fight the Japanese; in fact, a substantial number of ex-Donghaks were pro-Japan Iljinhoe members. For this reason, Son's Cheondogyo followers, or mostly ex-Donghaks, were often branded as pro-Japan in their attitude or outlook and thus deserved to be treated as such by some historians. Ironically, however, some former Donghaks and Korean righteous army soldiers were ambivalent or ambiguous in their stand: in spite of this fact, they were later massacred en masse by the Japanese authorities. Many ex-Donghaks and Korean righteous army soldiers were considered once good enough for them to be cooperative with Japanese authorities. Thus they were kept alive for a while but later they were branded being untrustworthy by the Japanese authorities and they all got killed in the end.<sup>14</sup>

From the above, we can get also an inkling that Jeungsan was fond of Donghak doctrine and practices. He showed great respect and admiration for Donghak teachings and its founder Choe Jewu, or Suwun. He frequently quoted Donghak ideas and phrases when he talked or wrote about his own teachings.<sup>15</sup> For instance, he recognized the importance of the Donghak doctrine composed of *yu-bul-seon-eumyang-chamwi*: that is, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Yin and Yang, Shamanism in reaction or response to the challenge of Christianity or Western Learning.<sup>16</sup> Discussing all these traditional religions, ranging from Confucianism to Shamanism, he said, they all contributed to the formulation of Donghak theory and practice.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Donghak also contributed substantially, if not equally, to Jeungsanism and Won Buddhism in the process of formulating the latter two's respective theory and practice.

No matter how similar or different both Jeungsanism and Donghak may

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<sup>14</sup> Kang Don'gu, *op. cit.*, p.126.

<sup>15</sup> Jeongyeong, p.114.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.17, 88, 96.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

be, there is no denying that they all shared many things in common in terms of theory and practice. Despite this historical fact, Jeungsan's views of Donghaks and their movement are sometimes unclear; they are either ambiguous or ambivalent, to say the least. In other words, Jeungsan's attitude toward Donghaks is positive and peaceful on one hand, and on the other hand, it is also negative and passive. So one finds it confusing and even difficult to define or discern Jeungsan's views of Donghak. On balance, however, one can say that Jeungsanism in general seems to have been more passive and peaceful while Donghak was active and aggressive. In other words, Jeungsan was more peaceful than Donghaks in theory and practice more often than not, as we have seen in the above.

### **The Iljinhoe and Japanese**

Let us now turn to Jeungsan's relationships with the Iljinhoe (One Step Forward Society), an allegedly known pro-Japanese organization, through which its Korean members were eager to help Japan annex Korea in 1910. He did not like the organization nor did he intend to harm it in any violent way. But he made some indirect, yet unfavorable remarks on Japan and Japanese during his sermons. When pro-Japanese Koreans brought the Iljinhoe into existence, Jeungsan made a mild protest against Japanese, about which he chose to make his discontent known to the world by means of a metaphor, in which he said that in protest he gave up wearing a formal Korean hat (gwan) and he instead put on an informal hat (sakat). Likewise, he wore only white clothes as outfits because Iljinhoe members did wear black clothes in imitation of Japanese. Since Japanese ordinarily put on white clothes inside and black ones outside, Jeungsan did the opposite unlike the Japanese, saying that "since Iljinhoe people wear black clothes, I might as well do the same thing but in a different way."<sup>18</sup> This means that he wears typical white clothes outside like all Koreans, but he did wear something black inside like the Japanese. This

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.13, 26.

tantalizingly subtle, indirect, and non-antagonistic remark was a typical way of his expressing anti-Japanese feelings.

At one time, however, Jeungsan gave an altogether different interpretation as to why he wore a black coat like Japanese. He wore it, not because he liked Japanese, but because he was told to do so by “divine spirits (*sinmyeong*)” which had descended on him back in his earlier days.<sup>19</sup> What he said is that he was given the sense of mission to follow what the god wanted him to. For example, when he atoned those who had suffered from grievances (*won han*) in their earlier life, he had to follow the divine god or spirit who would dictate him what to do. To save hopeless and helpless souls from the fetters of the past grievances, he invented his own method of expunging the grievances such as revenge and regret and trying to bring about the peaceful co-existence throughout the world in the future, explaining it in terms of his own phrase, that is, “resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence of all life (*haewon sangsaeng*).”

Likewise, dealing with the *Iljinhoe*, Jeungsan urged Gongsin, one of his close disciples, to reconcile and forgive their common foe, Song Daehwa, who had worked as an important staff for the *Iljinhoe*. This indicates that patriotic Gongsin was forced to be on good terms with pro-Japanese Song at the urging of his mentor, although they were altogether incompatible politically and ideologically. Despite all this, Jeungsan nonetheless believed that he was responsible for ironing out differences between the two sides by taking full advantage of means of reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Jeungsan intended to forgive all the sins committed earlier by members of the *Iljinhoe*. Here again, he preferred peaceful means to violent actions when it came to resolving the differences in ideas and opinions among people.

In July 1904, Choe Changgwon, an ex-Korean government official, planned to raise a Korean righteous army to destroy the pro-Japanese *Iljinhoe* movement. He appealed to his fellow countrymen to rise up in support of his cause.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75.

In the midst of this movement, Jeungsan asked Choe not to undertake such a task. To tide over the potential crisis, the former instead recommended the latter to make concerted efforts for reconciliation between him and Iljinhoe members. In order to do this, he believed, both Choe and Iljinhoe members must come to good terms with one another not only to avoid but also prevent any violent confrontation. Through Jeungsan's counseling and mediation, both sides finally did settle a potentially explosive situation in time. As a result, Iljinhoe people could enter the city of Jeonju without a single shot or bloodletting largely because Choe's planned fight with the Iljinhoe was cancelled in the nick of time. Jeungsan proudly mentioned of this incident, saying that "I stopped a fighting" between Iljinhoe supporters and its opponents. To bring about this result in the process of making peaceful settlements, he said, he spent his own "money(six yang) to prevent a bloody clash."<sup>21</sup> This suggests that he did not mind bribing concerned parties with money although it was immoral to do so. This also suggests that at least for him it was morally tolerable, if not legally justifiable, to employ such a means as long as he could make peace between the two opposing groups.

At one time, when urged to join the Iljinhoe, Jeungsan declined the offer. When Iljinhoe members threatened to harm him physically, he was ready and willing to make a compromise in order to avoid a confrontation with them in advance. They first humiliated him psychologically by cutting or shaving his hairs from the head against his wishes. When realized the possibility of a similar physical humiliation, he offered to voluntarily cut a bunch of his own hairs by himself to prevent another humiliation. When the authorities arrested those involved in the incident for interrogations, Jeungsan requested to release all of the defendants and drop the case altogether. As before, he chose peaceful settlements again because he did not believe in either prosecution or punishment for the crimes they had committed.<sup>22</sup> Soon thereafter, as he wished, the government agreed to drop the case and ended

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.34, 30.

the whole investigations altogether. Later on, Jeungsan nevertheless could not protect or save all the Iljinhoe members from further troubles. Despite his earlier successful arbitrations on behalf of the Iljinhoe, he was not always lucky. The Japanese army killed 21 Iljinhoe members by accident; they wrongly identified them with the Korean righteous army who had troubled the Japanese authorities in Korea for some time. As a result of this tragic accident, many Iljinhoe members turned to Jeungsan for help and became his faithful disciples on their own volition. Most were loyal to their new-found faith but some were not. When a schism occurred over the problem of integrity among the converts of former Iljinhoe members, he persuaded those, particularly unfaithful ones, to adhere to their new-found faith, saying that no one can serve two masters at the same time.<sup>23</sup> In dealing with the Iljinhoe turncoats, Jeungsan was lenient and tolerant to them; he never punished or purged any of them. He made peace to maintain the solidarity or unity among the followers. Here again, he used non-violent tactics, only committing himself always to the principle of peace.

In 1905, when the Korean righteous army initiated a series of armed resistance movements, Japanese took over Korea's diplomacy and defense and so the Japanese army soldiers were more than ready to wipe out Korean rebels completely. Those, directly involved in the righteous army movement, were shot to death summarily without due process of law, when and if they got caught. Those under suspicion were arbitrarily arrested, tortured, interrogated, and imprisoned. Jeungsan was also suspected of being involved with the movement and so he went through a series of ordeals along with his followers. He was arrested and imprisoned for a time. Even in prison, he made peaceful gesture: he did not protest against the authorities in any way, nor did he ask his fellow prison-mates to do anything for their civil rights. They were submitted to the authorities, thus they all went to prison en masse. Literally, he did nothing for himself and/or his followers. While virtually all of his followers were in prison, only two managed to escape from the prison

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.35, 163, 270.

terms. Instead of fighting back, they ran away and hid themselves in remote places, far from the watchful eyes of the authorities. While in prison, they all suffered miserably. But Jeungsan was more fortunate than his fellow inmates because he was given preferential treatment and transferred to a more spacious cell, thanks to one inmate who had bribed prison guards to provide comfort for his master.<sup>24</sup> About this episode, he mentioned nothing; he did not condemn bribery nor did he justify to buy comfort only for himself. His silence seems to suggest that he intended to ignore or transcend the circumstances and submit himself to the principle of peace at all cost. He never attempted to resort to any form of violence no matter how serious the circumstances might be. He only tried to transcend himself beyond and above the realities he had faced in his actual life; he always did remain calm and peaceful.

One can understand why he did this sort of act. For one reason, Jeungsan was always under government surveillance. His close associates were often questioned of his whereabouts by the authorities. His detractors kept the authorities informed of his activities. Especially, when traveling on the road, he made maximum efforts not to confront Japanese forces, military or police, often taking safer detour routes to avoid them, routes that Japanese seldom had used.<sup>25</sup> On one occasion, his detractor, Cha Mungyeong, having accused Jeungsan of being a traitor, notified Japanese military authorities of his whereabouts. When military police arrived on the scene, Jeungsan was already gone to another hideout, making a narrow escape from the dragnet of the authorities.<sup>26</sup> He wondered why some people stealthily reported of his activities despite the fact that he was trying to do something conducive to the welfare of the country and its people.<sup>27</sup> If at all possible, he did not want anything to do with Japanese, especially Japanese army. Having heard about places or roads which Japanese had once stayed or passed through, he

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.47, 49.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

deliberately made a detour while traveling to conduct his religious crusade. In fact, at one time he refused to take the road that the Japanese cavalry had once passed through, saying that “I would rather not see them since there is no good compelling reason to do so.” He made numerous tours to make his peaceful messages come across, ordinarily in and around his home province. Here one might add that he seldom traveled to other provinces except once; he had made only one nation-wide tour in his lifetime. He often chose to stay with his disciples in a small village; he avoided a big city like Gunsan (or Gunhang) on purpose, perhaps for fear of potential trouble with the authorities and detractors alike.<sup>28</sup> He also limited the scope of his activities in and around his native province; this may have something to do with his cautiousness about Japanese military with which he had experienced so many unpleasant things earlier. His main mission was to realize a peaceful world on this earth without making any trouble, physical or otherwise, with the authorities, if at all possible. In short, his only mission was to bring about the peace at all cost for the realization of his spiritual world.

Likewise, Jeungsan had gone through enough trouble with the authorities, army or police. He was arrested once by police in Gobu near his birthplace, along with 20 other followers, allegedly involved with the Korean righteous army. During police interrogations, he denied being involved with the righteous army, saying that “I am a [Buddhist] monk helping to deliver the world from evil.”<sup>29</sup> His followers made similar excuses to get away from cruel tortures and interrogations by Japanese military or police. When they got stopped by the Japanese, they all said in unison, saying “we are on the way to fetch a doctor to take care of our sick family members.”<sup>30</sup>

Here again, he never acknowledged that he had told white lies to the Japanese, nor did he explain to his followers why he had told such a white lie. Two possibilities remain in this case. He did not want to explain his

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65.

activities to the authorities in the first place since he had done nothing wrong with his activities. The other possibility is that he believed that his true and honest explanations will not make any differences one way or another as far as the Japanese authorities are concerned.

Let us now turn to more specific views of Japanese entertained by Jeungsan. He believed that Korea and its people were in jeopardy largely because of foreign interferences. Moreover, Korean leaders were divided into many factions due to their ideological and political differences within the government. Some chose to side with Japan, saying that it would be essential to establish good diplomatic relations with Japan and some with Russia and those, siding with Japan, tried to tide over the national crisis with Japanese support. At that point the country was in a state of mess, many compatriots, including Jeungsan, desired to maintain friendly relations with Japan to secure Korea's national survival and security, for which there were two reasons: first, Russia is geographically too far away from Korea, while Japan is close to Korea in distance; and second, Russians are too different from Koreans in terms of race; the former is white and the latter yellow. For these reasons, Jeungsan advocated that Korea must support Japan first and then secure its aid to remove Western influence from Korea once and for all

Oddly enough, Jeungsan then asked divine spirits to intervene to resolve problems of this world, exercising their power. When the Russo-Japanese War took place for the control over Korea, he said, he would side with Japan, hoping its victory over Russia.<sup>31</sup> He continued that "our brethren in Orient would be permanently under the yoke of Western powers unless Western menace was removed from Orient." By this statement, he implies that he was the one who had made it possible for Japan to attain a victory over Russia; he said that without divine interventions from heaven his power alone would not be able to bring about Japan's victory and expulsion of Russia from Korea. What he meant is that without his prayer for divine interventions

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.101.

Japan could not have won a war against Russia.<sup>32</sup>

In a similar vein, Jeungsan made remarks on the Sino-Japanese War of 1895. He said that if Russia were given control over Korea, it would be impossible for Korea to survive because of Russia's cruel treatment and racial discrimination against the Korean people. He went on to say that if and when China won a war against Japan for its control over Korea, there would be no hope for Korea either, because Chinese were simply too stupid to deal with Koreans effectively. By all these remarks, he seems to say that Japan must control Korea for the benefits of both nations.

To our amazement, however, Jeungsan had an unswerving faith in Japan's role in Korea despite the fact that he had some reservations about Japan's future role in Korea. His doubts stemmed largely from the historical precedents. For instance, in 1592 and 1597, Korea defeated Japanese invaders twice militarily in Korea, and yet he still believed that Japan is and will be destined to unify the world ultimately; it can do the job only with the help of divine spirits when and if Japan can resolve its past three grievances which Japan had accumulated during the Korean invasions in 1592 and 1597. The first one was Japan's unsuccessful occupation of Seoul; the second, its wanton killings of so many innocent Koreans, and the last or third, Japanese introduction of rice cultivation techniques into Korea to keep their soldiers alive during a long fight against Koreans.<sup>33</sup> All these remarks initially intended to forgive Japan for whatever it had done in deed in the past. In other words, Jeungsan pacified Japan first and foremost although it had harmed Korea militarily to realize its larger goal to ultimately conquer Ming China. Here again, he stressed the principles of reconciliation and peace for the benefits of all parties involved in untangling or resolving what he called the three grievances of the past.

Jeungsan's other remarks on Russia, China, and Japan are somewhat

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.317.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.115, 335.

confusing, if not contradicting. For example, he predicted that there would be two wars between Japan and China, but the second round of their fight would last “ten years”, after which Japan would be kicked out of Korea by China. China then would control Korea only north of the Han River.<sup>34</sup> This prediction seems to be based on the fact that deep in his mind he was fearful of Japan unconsciously and thus he was more prone to pacifying Japanese rather than offending them. Undoubtedly, this kind of pro-Japanese thinking can come out of the patriotism he entertained to save his country and to benefit his people as well. He believed that the security of his country and welfare of his people should come first before anything else, thus implementing these objectives at the expense of foreign powers in Korea. Since he saw no possibility for the Korean government or people to do the job adequately, he turned to Japan for the purpose of helping both the government and people of Korea. He, again as before, used peaceful means to solve the diplomatic problems Korea had faced.

At about the same time, however, there were a lot of domestic reactions to outsiders’ encroachments on Korea. During the course of flurries of the Korean righteous army movements against Japan throughout the country, Jeung-san heard of the capture of Choe Ikhyeon, leader of the Korean righteous army, in Sunchang, North Jeolla province. Jeung-san blamed Choe for the failed armed struggle against the Japanese army, saying that he did not have talent or tactics to deal a blow to the mighty Japanese military, thus resulting in huge casualties on the part of his righteous army. Since his country was on the verge of extinction, Jeung-san believed, the demise of Choe was desirable and justifiable because it could pave the way for the nation’s survival, thereby showing a new direction for the Korean people to save their nation from total extinction.<sup>35</sup> Even under such trying circumstances, Jeung-san preferred peace to war. He really believed that there was no substitute for peace. That is, he insisted on maintaining peace in Korea at

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.317, 139.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.107, 253.

any cost. To him, war was simply something very evil and destructive. This means that by all possible means he wanted to avoid or divert all disasters, both natural and man-made, for the benefits of the Korean people, for whom he had shown so much concern and compassion.

Often, Jeungsan manifested a variety of his feelings, both positive and negative, towards the Japanese people. He said, for instance, that by nature the Japanese people were not only active and energetic but also greedy and aggressive in attitude, so much so that very likely, Korea would become a victim of Japan. In fact, he pointed out, Korea had been invaded by Japan so many times in the past. Unless and until Japan removes its excessive energy or desire for the war by itself, there will be no chance for Korea to fulfill its grandiose dreams soon, said he.<sup>36</sup> Like Donghaks, Jeungsan also recognized the importance of Japan in maintaining peace and stability in Korea. For the furtherance of peace in the region, he gave due credit to Japan. But Jeungsan was quite different from Donghaks in terms of manners or tactics in dealing with Japanese. For example, Donghaks were aggressive and sometime even violent and so they often resorted to physical force as a means of settling issues with the authorities, Japanese or Koreans. In contrast, Jeungsan was cautious and slow in taking action and so he did nothing violent or drastic in dealing with Japanese. He believed that time would take care of everything for the better in and/or of itself, insofar as the question of Japan was concerned. Why did they do so? In answer to this question, one writer suggests that Donghaks became pro-Japan to save their religion and country, whereas Jeungsan and his followers did so for the same reasons, believing that someday Japanese would go back to their homeland and leave Korea alone.<sup>37</sup> If we follow the logic that both anti- and pro-Japanese actions are one and the same, Jeungsan and his followers must have found themselves often in the state of conflict before they carry out their activities.

As a result, as we have seen above, both Cheondogyo(Donghak) and Jeungsan

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.144-145.

<sup>37</sup> Kang Dongu, *op. cit.*, p.133.

followers had been controlled and broken by the Japanese. In the midst of such a chaos, Cheondogyo members joined in the rank and file of Jeung-san followers to get away from the Japanese who intended to annihilate the Korean anti-Japanese movement. Without such compromise, in all likelihood, neither Jeung-san nor Donghak believers could have survived under the harsh Japanese rule. In order to survive in the teeth of Japanese oppression, Jeung-san upheld the idea of “mutual co-existence(sangsaeng)”, with which he tried to lead Cheondogyo believers to the safe path for their security and survival. A series of these actions meant to benefit all parties involved.<sup>38</sup> For him, life must come first before death. Under any circumstances, he believed, there is no substitute for life and so he had strived towards it so hard but always by peaceful means.

## The World

Jeung-san boldly claimed that he is to be “Maitreya Buddha(mirukbul), God-like Person(sinyin), God(sangje), and/or Substitute Teacher(daeseon-saeng)” for Donghaks, and he declared that any of the four could come to this world to help resolve a myriad things, including human beings.<sup>39</sup> This assertion clearly meant that he can be anything and everything, ranging from Buddha, God, to Man at one and the same time. It also meant that he is in control of what he calls the “three worlds(samgye)” made up of “divine world(simyeonggye)”, “natural world(jayeongye)”, and “human world(ingangye)” and thus he came to the earth from the three worlds for the purpose of saving both god and man, not to mention everything in the universe. To save everything good and positive about god and man in these three worlds, he said, he first had to “resolve grievances for the mutual beneficence of all life (haewon sansaeng).”

His next mission is to establish a latter-day ideal, that is, peace on earth in the “Later World (hucheon seongye).” In the process of creating a paradise

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<sup>38</sup> No Gilmyeong, op. cit., p.137.

<sup>39</sup> Joen'gyeong, pp.22, 42, 67, 266.

in the forthcoming new world he chose Korea to use it as a staging area--on which he had descended from heaven-- not only to lay the foundation of his mission but also to complete it. He believed that he had the sense of mission to carry out his work with the help or request from divine spirits. This demonstrates that he was extremely ethnocentric in thinking, that is, Korea should be the center of the world to bring about a new ideal world which he had envisioned for a long time.

From these statements we can also detect the strong sense of patriotism or nationalism on the part of Jeung-san: he loved his country greatly, so much so that he wanted to do something good for his people. He had a set of new ideas to bring about an ideal world in Korea. He took some old ideas from all traditional religions and made good use of them in formulating his own religious doctrine and practices. But he simply did not integrate all the existing religions into his own counterparts. Instead, he only took substantive and useful doctrines and practices from Donghak so as to formulate his own, which in turn can be something unique and universal. In other words, he wanted his theory and practices to transcend above and beyond what they are. Furthermore, he tried to put into effect these new "true laws (jinbeop)," with which to create an ideal world for the Korean people in the not too distant future. In short, to make Korea a first-rate nation, he said, he had to come up with genuinely true laws(jinbeop), by which he can unify the world under the leadership of Korea. When it comes to ruling the world, he continued, Korea should bring all nations in the world under the influence of Korea and rule them by means of persuasion not coercion, taking advantage of Korea's spiritual strength and superiority. It is his firm belief that when the world will become one family or household, Korea can and must emerge as the top world leader.

By these statements, Jeung-san literally meant that Korea would represent the truth, unity, and leadership of the world. He also meant that Koreans had been superior racially, spiritually, and ideologically to any other people in the world, though not politically and militarily. He believed that the Korean people were given the sense of mission to lead the world and ultimately to deliver people on this planet from all the entanglements caused by regret and remorse

(won han) prevalent in the so-called three worlds. It seems to suggest that since Korea had been subjugated by the imperialist powers such as Japan militarily, economically, and politically, Jeungsan attempted to restore Korean national identity and dignity so as to promote their national interests religiously, ideologically, and socially. He did prophesy that people would exchange many of the good ideas among themselves for their own benefits, regardless of places, east or west. He said that it would be possible to materialize the ideal world since the “true law(jinbeop)” was intended exclusively for the furtherance of the benefits of the entire world. This phenomenon he compared to the harvest which provides all the foods and fruits necessary for people to live in happiness or joy.<sup>40</sup> He even predicted that there will be one common world language when the world is unified into one, but he did not elaborate or specify what language will be used for the world language.<sup>41</sup> In short, he did not say that the Korean language will be the world language. His ethnocentrism stopped there: it did not go farther beyond that point. At this point, however, one wonders why Jeungsan, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient, did not state the exact time for Korea to rule the world under his spiritual leadership.

## The West

Jeungsan’s attitude towards the West is equally ambiguous and ambivalent. Referring to Christianity or Western teaching(seogyo), he said, the “divine spirits(sinmyeong)” was not on the side of Christianity since it failed in whatever endeavor it had attempted before.<sup>42</sup> The failure of Christianity in Korea resulted from the fact that the Korean divine spirits did not favor it and then moved to the West instead to create a big turmoil there.<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere, he also said, “all good gods(dotongsin)” would go to the West unless people in Orient did follow the wills or teachings of the good gods. It implies that gods

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.257.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.258.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.232.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.59.

are not willing to go to the West or to be on the side of the West. For the realization of gods' wills, Jeungsan performed dutifully his rituals to prevent the West from extending its influence and exercising its power in Orient because he believed that the threat from the West was real and imminent during the time of his life. In fact, he said, the Korean people had personally witnessed the Western menace and experienced enormous sufferings at the hands of the Western powers. All this task or mission can be accomplished by means of what he called "the reordering of the universe (cheonji gongsa)."<sup>44</sup>

He singled out Christianity and attacked it directly and indirectly. He once borrowed the Bible from his disciple, Kim Gyeongan, but without reading it he burned it down for no reasons. When asked to return the book, he got another Bible from one of his disciples and returned it to the lender. The book-burning incident symbolizes the fact that there would be nothing to learn from the Bible as far as Jeungsan is concerned. Having examined Christian rituals and canons at a Christian church in October 1906, he finally reached the conclusion that Christianity is worthless or good for nothing.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from his direct negative remarks on Bible, Jeungsan also made some favorable observations on it. He quickly came to recognize the importance of "Christianity or Western Way (seodo)"—a crystallization of Western civilization-- as one of the four great teachings in the world—Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity--all of which he considered as the foundation of all cultures. Despite these favorable comments on Christianity, he soon claimed that the contrary is the case, as pointed out in the above; he had a low opinion on Christian values, belittling the importance of Western religion. The reason for this change in his attitude is that after the death of Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary from Rome, "gods of Oriental civilization (munmyongsin)" moved from China to the West, where he initiated the so-called age of Renaissance which in turn led to the flowering of Western

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.136.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.42.

civilization with the help of gods from Orient.<sup>46</sup>

Jeungsan implies from the above account that Western civilization is a copy or imitation of Eastern civilization, but the former had earlier changed the latter into something bad and irreparable, that is, materialistic Western civilization harmed spiritual Eastern civilization, so much so that there ensued many other undesirable side-effects such as destruction of the nature and environment, degradation of the human morality and ethics, violation of “heavenly principle (cheondo),” all of which were committed against the will of heaven and man.<sup>47</sup>

But at the same time he encourages his followers to make best use of Western inventions--such as machine--which make us more comfortable and convenient for our daily life. Nonetheless, Jeungsan regarded all these Western inventions as nothing but replicas in imitation of the East. The East had initially bestowed these favors upon the West these favors for which the latter was indebted to the former. He symbolizes the East in terms of what he called the “kingdom of heaven(cheonguk)” with which he identifies his forthcoming ideal kingdom in Korea.

What he implied is the following. First, Western inventions such as machine and gadget should be utilized to better the life of people because they are nothing but tools to be used for the convenience of their life on earth. Second, since all Western science and technology originated initially from the heavenly kingdom in the East and thus there is nothing wrong for the Korean people to take full advantage of Western inventions.

This sort of ethnocentric attitude or thinking can be interpreted in terms of a well-known Chinese phrase—*daoqi* or *tiyong*—which has been also popular and prevalent in Korea. This can be paraphrased as follows: Eastern learning is an essential truth whereas Western counterpart is a practical tool. This phrase manifests nothing but cultural superiority on the part of people in the east and at the same time it indicates lack of knowledge of the world

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.181-182, 199.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.111, 155.

in general and that of the West in particular on the part of Jeung-san. Jeung-san nonetheless had some admiration for the West, particularly its utilitarian values in science and technology, but at the same time he also had a low opinion of the materialistic aspect of Western civilization. He even refuses to give due credit to the intrinsic value of Western civilization per se, saying that everything originated in the East and thus his ethnocentrism, racial or cultural, was amplified in his basic way of thinking.

## **Korea**

As we have seen already, Jeung-san maintained the strong sense of mission to realize a divine kingdom in Korea for the benefits of the world. In fact, he personally took charge of the mission to bring about a new world to do justice for all in the forthcoming new era. If he could not want to do so, he believed, someone else should. Unless someone takes responsibility for this mission, there will be no fruitful result. To do all this, he said, he alone is destined to be in charge of assuming full responsibility for the mission.<sup>48</sup> In the process of performing all this task, Korean gods or spirits (*sinmyong*) must play an important role; first, let Korean gods dictate the course of a history in the Western world by righting the wrongs there first and then allow them come back from the West to Korea to make it a first-rate super power. What he meant to say is that ultimately the Western civilization, which had served well in the West, is supposed to be under the control of the East, meaning Korea, when an ideal world on earth came into reality.<sup>49</sup> The reasons why this enormous task should be carried out by Korea in the East are: there is no other place in the world like Korea, where gods or spirits are revered highly because the Korean people will appreciate always the divine grace they have received. Thus, Jeung-san, calling himself Sangje (god), paved the path for removing all the entanglements of grievances and regrets

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.100, 62.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.317-318.

(won han) from people of the world, all stemming largely from differences in cultures which in turn appear often in the form of human conflict or frustration. He then integrated them into one universal culture so as to be shared with one another, irrespective of place or people throughout the world. He considered this synthesized form of culture as a crystallization of the civilization of the “later world (huse).”<sup>50</sup>

How does this ideal world possibly materialize in reality? To answer this question, Jeung-san cited the fact that he personally holds big authority to control or rule over “the three worlds(samgye)”-spiritual, human, and natural—and thus he believed that he can rectify all the rules and regulations in the three worlds so as to create new ones. When he ushers in a new age to Korea to create a forthcoming divine kingdom for the world, he believed, all the three worlds will have to be changed from bad to good and/or from competition to cooperation. To do so, people must remove all the entanglements caused by grievances or regrets from their life. By so doing, they can stop their sufferings or pains. When this is done, he said, it is possible to realize peaceful co-existence among the people of this world. He described or explained this process in terms of what he called “resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of all life (haewon sangsaeng)”

The next step is that gods of truth must control the laws of all nations, resulting from differences in their cultures and then change all laws of the world into one universal law.<sup>51</sup> Jeung-san intended to create a brand new law for the forthcoming new world to make it available to all people fairly and equally without any discrimination. He believed that the division or disunity among people was caused largely by conflicts of the old traditional cultures or religions, so that it must be removed beforehand. To be more specific, old Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Christianity should be done away with to make a new religion or culture—an integrated and transcended one—for the latter-day world, although Jeung-san took many ideas from the above

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.254.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp.271, 311, 313.

old religions. He admitted that they all are inter-connected or inter-related to one another in many respects. Each and every religion or culture once had its own merit in and/or of itself. But when a new era dawns, it turns out to be no value at all. To enhance the value of his new world and law, Jeungsan played down the importance of all old religions in Korea.

For example, Jeungsan stated bluntly that he learned nothing from Mengzi, a student of Confucianism, and at another time, one of his disciples, Jin Muk, threw away in the street 80 volumes of Confucian Classics (*seongli daejeon*) which he had borrowed from his acquaintance. When asked to return the books, Jin Muk asked the acquaintance to dictate what he would say, saying that he got rid of the Confucian Classics because he believed that they were useless or worthless. He memorized them all and recited by heart one volume after another without any single mistake.<sup>52</sup> This episode suggests that undoubtedly Jeungsan had a low opinion of Confucianism to a considerable degree. That is to say, he valued more about his own ideas-- such as the new world, new truth, and new law-- than the Confucian classics because he had some reservations about their true value or utility and thus, he was often prone to undervaluing, if not totally disregarding, the old Confucian classics.

For another example, Jeungsan continued that he once frequented Buddhist temples to study and meditate since he was fond of many Buddhist teachings from which he often quoted during sermons to his disciples. At one time, when in Temple Songgwangsa, he was offended by unruly monks. So he counter-attacked them verbally, making unkind and negative remarks to the effect that they were corrupted to the core. He said that they were not only troubling society but also hurting people in the name of Buddha, and finally he sternly admonished them to behave properly. Without behavioral changes on the part of these bad monks, he said, he would chase them out altogether from the temple.<sup>53</sup> This incident suggests that Jeungsan did not hold Buddhist monks in high esteem, to say the least, although he used their

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.50, 187, 135-136.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.6-7, 91, 97.

facilities for his religious study and training from time to time.

As to Christianity, Jeung-san made several demeaning remarks. He asked his disciple to get a copy of New Testament of the Bible for him. The disciple borrowed it from his acquaintance to present it to his master Jeung-san. Instead of reading it, Jeung-san burned it down. When the owner asked him to return it, he got a copy, free of charge, again from another acquaintance who happened to have the Bible although he did not believe in Jesus Christ. In October 1906, he visited a church to learn more about Christian rituals and teachings. He said later that “there is nothing worth to learn from Christianity.”<sup>54</sup>

Though there is no evidence to indicate that Jeung-san read the Bible thoroughly, there is some evidence to suggest that he learned at least some important things about Christian doctrine and its adherents. For instance, he talked about Christian key ideas such as love, forgiveness, peace and tolerance. He asked his disciples not to hate a bad drunken Christian, Kim Chunggu, and instead he asked them to forgive his bad behavior and treat him as though they were good Samaritans who had helped people in trying circumstances. When there is a quarrel between people, there should be only fight for peace, nothing but peace. In other words, he did not believe anything destructive or demeaning even in the quarrel. He commended 12 Christian pastors for their behaviors; they had got together to pray for a quick and safe recovery of the man beaten by a bad Christian. In other words, they tried to express the feelings through their prayers, wishing that we have to love one another, even our enemy under all circumstances. Even if beaten almost to death by the enemy, they should not revenge.<sup>55</sup>

On balance, Jeung-san seems to have valued Christian teachings in general and their behaviors in particular. Donghaks had suffered a great deal at the hand of the Korean government because of their alleged association with Christianity, but Jeung-san and his followers did not. He did not wish to be identified with Donghak rebels and moreover he refused to be treated as such.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.10, 42.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.231, 238, 248.

As we have already seen, Jeungsan's attitude towards Christianity is ambivalent and ambiguous. Publicly, he did not praise it, but privately he recognized the importance of intrinsic values of Christian teachings. However, he did acknowledge his indebtedness to the value of Western civilization indirectly. In order not to be punished by the government like Donghaks, he deliberately avoided making the same blunders that the Donghaks had made during their uprising of 1894-95. By so doing, he became successful in propagating his own teachings: he only resorted to peaceful means to accomplish his mission. We are led to believe, therefore, that on one hand he played down the importance of things foreign, Christian or Western, if possible and on the other hand, he promoted the indigenous Korean religion for the sake of saving his country and the world and often he did so at the expense of foreign religions, as we have seen in the above.

## **Conclusions**

Dealing with Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity, Jeungsan has shown both positive and negative attitudes toward them. He praised some aspects of these "imported" religions, but more often he was critical of them in order to replace them by promoting his own ingenious religious teachings. This sort of a double-edged way of thinking was often tintured with the senses of ambivalence and/or ambiguity. Manifestations of such logic can be explained also in terms of superiority and inferiority complex demonstrated on the part of Jeungsan. On one hand, he had the strong sense of mission to make his native land, Korea, as one of the best places to live in, from which he would rule the world for the good of other nations as their undisputed leader. On the other hand, to realize his future dreams he had to come up with the best ideas to make them universally acceptable to all people of the world. They were so well integrated into his new religion that he believed that it will be universally valid and valuable as the religion of the world. But it was hard for him to advance and advocate his nationalistic ideas openly under the trying circumstances. When putting his religion into effect, he was reluctant to do so because authorities, both domestic and foreign, had been

trying to stop or frustrate all his attempts often by violence force during his lifetime.

In fact, when Jeungsan was about to carry out his work, the Western and Japanese governments imposed all sorts of hurdles upon him. Under the circumstances he did not have power to challenge those threats, nor did his country have power to do so for him. He and his country had no match to the militarily superior West and Japan when they intended to fight them back. Under such circumstances, no alternative was left for him to do anything but to compromise with the harsh realities he had faced. By cooperating, if not collaborating, with the opposing forces, he learned how to stay alive. The only thing that he could do under the circumstances was to address the question of national survival, for which he preferred peaceful method to violent confrontation to bring about some kind of peaceful solution by spreading good words from mouth to mouth. This means that the ultimate solutions for the ills of the nation and its people can come also from his religion which puts emphasis on peace and compromise. He became convinced from his personal experiences that the future vision for Korea and the world must come from peace not war.

Donghaks had failed in defending Korea from the West and Japan, although they resorted to a series of violent armed revolts. From this example, Jeungsan learned the lesson the hard way. He did not want to repeat the same mistakes of the past. So he turned to non-violent ways, ways often seemingly passive and negative, to resolve the crises in Korea. In the end, he learned about the stark reality that he could not fight against the authorities, both foreign and domestic, with physical force, nor could he do anything to alleviate the plight of his country and people materially in the course of his short religious activities. Being a perennial optimist and pacifist, he wanted to do something feasible for his nation and people by peaceful means, religious or ideological. In addition, he called upon the Korean people to rise against the foreign authorities peacefully and not by confronting or challenging the authorities, both foreign and domestic. But the result was poor. His followers did not do well either because they found it difficult to realize their dreams only by

peaceful means although they had been faithful to his teachings. Under these circumstances, many followers had to be either reluctant collaborators with the Japanese authorities, or silent do-nothing spectators against their wills during the Japanese occupation period of 1910-45. They had no other choice but to compromise the harsh reality of the time. In short, as Japanese suppressions became severe, Jeungsan followers found a lesson of the future vision in their mentor who emphasized peace or non-violence until their future kingdom will come. Until that day, they learned, it would be wise for them to disperse, if not disband altogether, to survive as followers of Jeungsan. Peacefully and quietly many went underground to continue their mission work until the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945. In fact, this was what Jeungsan wanted his followers to do. In a sense, he paved the way during that time for the followers to materialize his vision for the future world. As a visionary pacifist and spiritual optimist, he taught his followers in the past how to survive under the difficult circumstances and at the same time he also taught them how to look forward to the future to thrive on his teachings.

# The Correlative Cosmology of Daesoon and Ecology

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## I. Introduction

This paper examines ecological ethics in terms of the correlative cosmology developed in Daesoonjinrihoe, the Fellowship of the Daesoon Truth, which is one of the Korean native religions. The interaction of heaven and nature with human beings is greatly articulated by the tenet of Daesoonjinrihoe (大巡真理會): Yeumyanghapdeok (陰陽合德 the unity of yin and yang), Shininjohwah (神人調化 God-human harmony), Haewonsangseng (解冤相生 the mutual beneficence of all life for resolution of grievance), and Dotong-jingyeong (道通真境 the realm of truth in which the ultimate way pervades the whole world).

By analyzing the significance of these doctrinal standards from the relational paradigm of Daesoon thoughts, I will illustrate the anthropocosmic view of the world in which the respect of the human being is achieved greatly in connection with divine reality and nature. In Daesoon thoughts, mutual existence means the mutual growth of all elements that comprise the universe. For mutual existence, a person constitutes himself or herself in harmonious relation to divine reality and nature. In this relational paradigm, it is not that the respect of the human being is one thing, and that of nature is another. All opposite elements are correlative in the process of Yeumyanghapdeok, the yin-yang unity. The respect of one entity automatically entails that of another in the cyclical movement of yin and yang. In other words, God, nature, and the human being (or heaven, earth, and the human being) reveal themselves in their deep-seated relation. Given this cosmological view, I will argue that ecological ethics begin with this principle of mutual existence-in-support and harmony nurtured in Daesoon thoughts, and explore how the Daesoon

theory can respond to environmental problems and ecological crises that we face today.

## **II. The Origin and Development of Daesoonjinrihoe and the Relational Paradigm of Daesoon Thoughts**

Daesoonjinrihoe (The Fellowship of Daesoon Truth) begins with the teaching of Gu-cheon Sangje (Lord of the Ninth Heaven), who descended to Korea at the end of the nineteenth century and envisaged the new paradigm for human life and the world in dynamic relation to all other elements of the universe. Gu-cheon means the Ninth Heaven, supreme realm of heaven while Sangje literally means Lord. In this manner, Gu-cheon Sangje literally means “the Lord of the supreme realm of Heaven.” In short, this refers to the greatness of divine reality or the Almighty.

This definition of Gu-cheon Sangje, of course, makes a distinction from the traditional Western concept of heavenly God who exists above the earth. The concept of heaven in Daesoon is also different from Mircea Eliade’s identification of the symbolic contents of heaven with the transcendental world in distance from the secular world of earth: the sacred mountain plays a significant role in linking earth with heaven. For Eliade, heaven symbolically expresses the “above,” the image of the highest point toward which the human being rises through the medium of the cosmic mountain. The sacred place is described as “the center of the world,” which connects the two different entities of spatial distance, heaven and earth.<sup>1</sup>

This definition of heaven, however, is different from the symbolic meanings of heaven and earth developed in Daesoon thoughts. Heaven is not in a linear pattern from the lower regions to the highest point. To put it another way, heaven has a meaningful relation to earth and the human being not in a linear pattern but in an organic relation, by way of which one cannot exist

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<sup>1</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 39.

without the other.

The term Daesoonjinri can be understood in this circular pattern of heaven and earth: Daesoon means “the Great Itineration” while jinri means “truth.” In other words, Daesoonjinri refers to the truth of great pervasion or permeation in a cyclical movement. The truth goes around or permeates circularly into all the elements constituting the universe. From the view of Daesoon, the truth does not proceed in any unilateral direction from heaven down to earth but rather develops in a multilateral or circular relationship among those that comprise the universe. The circles developed in the truth of Daesoon does not indicate any repeated movement but rather the creative process in which all factors of heaven and earth transform one another in their mutual interaction.

Jeung San Kang (1871-1909) is believed to be Gu-cheon Sangje, who penetrated into the whole world: heaven, earth, and human being. According to Daesoonjinri, Kang came from heaven and renewed this world for nine years by relieving a deep-seated rancor against one another accumulated in the history of humankind.<sup>2</sup> Opening the new world means embodying a new paradigm into this world. The world prior to this renewal is called *Seoncheon* (*the Prior World*) whereas the new world given us subsequent to the renewal is called *Hoocheon* (*the Late World*). *Hoocheon* refers to the living world constructed by the new paradigm, in which all bitterness and conflict made in the old paradigm of *Seoncheon* come to an end.

The task of *Hoocheon* initiated by Gu-cheon Sangje is to renew and reconstruct three realms—heaven, earth, and human. From the Daesoon perspective, the current world in which we live is established by the new paradigm that preceded the age of opening the new world, called *Hoocheon Gaebuyuck*.

Cho, Jeong San (1895-1958) inherits Kang’s teaching and greatly develops the system of Daesoon thoughts. Cho specifically clarifies the meaning and

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<sup>2</sup> The Discipline of Daesoon [Daesoonjichim] (Seoul: Daesoonjinrihoe, 1984), 17.

value of Daesoon by establishing its tenet and ultimate purpose.<sup>3</sup> The tenet specifies the characteristics of *Hoocheon*. Eumyanghapdeok, which means the unity of yin and yang, is the heavenly principle to realize the harmonious world of the future. Shininjohwa means God-human harmony, or the divine nature-in-human being and vice versa. In other words, the human world potentially is full of divine nature, whereby there is no intervention of injustice and violence in our life. Haewonsangsaeng refers to the way in which people embody their existence-in-support to relieve their bitterness and malice. Dotongjinyeong indicates the realm of truth in which the ultimate way pervades the whole world.

From the perspective of Daesoon, these four principles are keys to open the new world. While mutual antagonism represents the old world, mutual beneficence of all life represents the new world. Mutual antagonism means the state filled with mutual conflicts and destruction. Classicism, sexism, and racism are the examples of mutual antagonism. The human conquest over nature in the subject-object paradigm is responsible for that destruction.

Humankind always has been exposed to the world of mutual antagonism-in-destruction. In the development of civilization, humankind has been overcome with industrialism and materialism. By focusing on material values, humankind has been losing moral values. This problem continues to destroy the relation among heaven, earth, and human beings. In terms of the correlative cosmology of Daesoon, the human being is not isolated but rather is interdependent with the rest of the world. Gu-cheon Sangje, therefore, viewed the absence of harmony among the elements of the universe as the most serious problem. According to Gu-cheon Sangje, the past world had been dominated by the principle of mutual antagonism, and human greed was deeply rooted in such destruction. He notes the following:

The human being had been dominated by mutual destruction, so that heaven

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<sup>3</sup> “Daesoonjinrihoe”, in *Korean Native Religions* (Seoul: The Association of Korean Native Religions, 2005), 198.

and earth were full of rancor with a loss of the ultimate way, whereby our world was brought into disaster. Therefore, I retrieve the original principle of heaven and earth, embody the harmony between the divine and human being, and relieve the rancor accumulated in humankind. These tasks serve my purpose to save people's lives by way of mutual beneficence of all life.<sup>4</sup>

Mutual exclusion brings some negative results, according to Darwin's theory that only the fittest members of the species survive long enough to breed and pass on to future generations genes enabling them to survive as well. In this situation the unfit cannot adopt themselves to their environment and thereby will not survive. Mutual beneficence of all life cannot be made under the theory of survival of the fittest.

In particular, human scientific achievement greatly affects our view of nature. According to the Newtonian-Cartesian scientific paradigm based on the subject-object separation, the object is passive whereas the subject is active. In this paradigm, nature is regarded as dead or barren, without any sense of the interaction with the human being.

This subject-object paradigm has contributed greatly to the Western scientific model based on the mechanical view in which the human being is separated from nature. In this mechanical paradigm, human as the subject is in opposition with nature as the object. The unlimited pursuit of industrialization and material wealth is taken at the sacrifice of nature. Yet, the bitter feeling of nature returns to the human life and thereby causes environmental problems. For Daesoon thoughts, natural disasters are understood as mutual exclusion, i.e., the loss of organic relationship among heaven, earth, and human. Since nature also is regarded as a living being, human domination gives rise to the rancor of nature. Thus, relieving rancor means restoring the harmonious relationship, which is destroyed by the mutual antagonism between human and nature. This restoration means Sangje's renewing the world or the *Hoocheon*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "The Work of Renewal [Gongsa]" in *The Book of Daesoonjinri* (Seoul: Daesoon-jinrihoe Publication, 1982), 1:3.

<sup>5</sup> "Daesoonjinrihoe", in *Korean Native Religions*, 198.

### III. The Interaction of God with the World in Daesoon Thoughts

The world of *Hoocheon* is based on the relational paradigm in which the divine reality and human being always are intermingled. All contradictory relation is dissolved by the divine presence into the world.

The notion of God in the Daesoon tradition is quite different from that of God as transcendent reality developed in the traditional Western theism in which God influences the world but not vice versa. In this theistic tradition, God is strictly distinguished from the world and thereby described as a controller. The world is totally dependent on God but not vice versa. God is described as almighty and immovable and dominates the world. This view of God has difficulty in explaining the problem of chaos and evil in the world. As a result, it was greatly challenged by an atheistic view with an emphasis on reason. Developments in science and reason signaled the end of the view of God formed in the Western medieval era and brought the beginning of the modern one. The beginnings of modernity are found in the new promises held out by science and reason. The cosmic view based most notably on the theocentric model of the universe and a central dogma was being overthrown. But instead, a new conception of human existence valued the individual and the individual's right to live his or her own life with an emphasis on reason and without intermediation of some external authority.

In Daesoonjinri is found a different model of God from such a traditional Western theism, however. God does not the control the whole process of the world. God does not only affect the world but God also is affected by the world. The divine reality in Daesoon thoughts is not a fixed or static being but always exists in dynamic relationship with the human mind and nature. In this sense, the divine represents the meaning of the ultimate in relation to the human nature. The divine signifies the force to bind heaven, earth, and human into peace and harmony. The Book of Daesoonjinri writes the following:

Every person is protected by the divine, according to their abilities and task.  
[Yet] if I only envy other people's qualifications and admire their disciplines  
without practicing myself, the divine presence in me is left for others...

Because heaven and earth is full of the divine reality, even a grass leaf will be dried up if divine force goes away from it, and the soiled wall will fall down when the divine leaves it.<sup>6</sup>

As is known in the above, the divine reality is not separated from the human mind and nature. “Heaven and earth is full of the divine reality” means that everything in heaven and earth exists in relation to the divine reality. That is to say, the divine cannot exist without the world and vice versa. The divine means the force of harmony and order for the world. The goodness of our mind and nature is based on the divine spirit, which is in and with all created entities in the universe. From the Daesoon perspective, the truth refers to the state in which the divine permeates into everything constituting the universe; the harmonious state of the universe is based on the divine spirit and order to be actualized in the human world.

This relation between God and the world is rooted in the pattern of yin-yang dynamics. According to Daejin Jung, “while God is compared to yin due to its invisibility, we humans can be to yang because of the existence of our body.”<sup>7</sup> Yin and yang are defined in the relation of both opposition and fellowship. While yin represents the image of “soft” or “yielding,” yang does that of “assertive.” Both opposite images are not static but are of change and transformation in their fellowship.

From the Daesoon perspective, God does not control but always cooperates with the world, whereby God does not give any male image of active and controlling power, of independent reality without any receptiveness and responsiveness.

This view of God from Daesoon is parallel with Whiteheadian process view of God. For Whitehead (1861-1947), God is an actual entity that is defined in relationship with the rest of the universe. The essential nature of

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<sup>6</sup> “Gyobup” [Disciplinary Standards] in *The Book of Daesoonjinri*, 2:17; 3:2., hereafter referred to Disciplinary Standards.

<sup>7</sup> Daejin Jeong, *The Collection of Theories on Daesoon Thoughts* [Daesoonsasang Nonchong] (Gyunggi, Korea: Ilsim, 2004), 57

actual entities is their prehension, which describes how an entity reacts or responds to its environments. Actual entities mean the subjective moments of experience of which the world is made up. All existences in the universe are formed in each moment of my experiences. In this sense, according to Whitehead, actual entities also are defined as temporal actual occasions. God is exceptional, however, because God is non-temporal. So God is an actual entity but not an actual occasion.<sup>8</sup>

God and the actual world creatively interact with each other through their prehensions. Their prehensions begin with God's supplying each temporal actual entity with its initial aim, whereby God influences the world. God's initial aim is driven from God's conceptual prehension of the entire multiplicity of eternal objects. This process of prehension is what Whitehead calls "God's primordial nature."<sup>9</sup> This primordial nature of God is related to the character of yin. God's primordial nature is characteristic of God's initial aim, which only displays the vision of the world but does not coerce the world to realize it in His/Her controllable force. God's primordial nature does not refer to any actualized one but a potential urge toward particular realization.

On the other hand, human beings, as temporal actual entities, first perform their physical prehensions. This echoes Jung's statement that "humans can be compared to yang because of the existence of their body."<sup>10</sup> The human prehensive mode starts with casual efficacy, causally inherited from the immediate past, which is very dim and obscure. This is the primitive prehension taking place in the initial phases of concrescence as "reenactive" or "conformal" feeling. According to Whitehead, this mode of prehension is based on bodily feeling in the experience of actual entities.<sup>11</sup>

Whitehead argues that God's consequent nature is another aspect of divine

<sup>8</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An essay in Cosmology*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 75.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-4.

<sup>10</sup> Jeong, 57.

<sup>11</sup> Whitehead, 118-23.

character, which is in a complementary relation with God's primordial nature. God's consequent nature manifests God's dependence on the world. In God's primordial nature, "there is no reference to particular actualities or to any particular actual world."<sup>12</sup> God's primordial nature is God's purpose or initial plan with regard to the temporal world. On the other hand, God's consequent nature means God's receptiveness and responsiveness in which God is affected by all the myriad things and cocreative with the world.<sup>13</sup>

This receptive and responsive characteristic of God's consequent nature is well exhibited in the following statement of Daesoon: "The fight of human beings causes that of gods in heaven, so that the result of the humans' fight in this world is determined by the end of gods' fight."<sup>14</sup> Sangje continues to write for the interaction of God with the human being:

While God has no place to be dependent on if there were no people behind, people has no place to be dependent on if there were no God ahead. All things are greatly achieved by the harmonization of God and humanity. The divine reality waits for human beings and vice versa, so that yin is united with yang. In this manner, after God communicates with humanity, the way of heaven and earth is performed. The divine matters are followed by the human matters and vice versa."<sup>15</sup>

This shows how human behaviors can affect the divine realm and thereby the divine consequently cares for their matters. "God is affected by the incantation of the person who practices the Way." In other words, God cannot exist without the world. God is not the wholly other independent of human affairs. God reveals Godself in cooperation with the human affairs. According to the Disciplinary Standards, "Do not hurt others. You will pay for it. Also, do not hate others. Before they are not aware of it, God first perceive and will get even with it."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 207.

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

<sup>14</sup> Disciplinary Standards, 1:54

<sup>15</sup> "Disciplinary Practices" [Gywoon] in *The Book of Daesoonjinri*, 2:42.

<sup>16</sup> Disciplinary Standards, 2:44.

God as the cooperative image is specifically illustrated in C.G. Jung's description of God-image as formed in the archetypal process of human unconscious mind. Archetype is defined as the a priori pattern formed in the unconscious self. Jung argues that the archetypal vision in our unconscious self brings us an image of God. In this sense, we cannot separate God from the unconscious self in our experience of the divine symbolically represented in the depth of the psyche. Thus, Jung does not describe God independently of the psyche. Our experience of God cannot be understood apart from our collective unconscious (as the deepest layer of the unconscious beyond the personal dimension). However, as the collective unconscious is distinguished from the personal psyche, we cannot say that Jung views God only in terms of the inner psyche.

By connecting his psychological perspective with the religious experience of God, Jung writes that "it is only through the psyche that we can establish that God acts upon us, but we are unable to distinguish whether these actions come from God or from the unconscious. We cannot tell whether God and the unconscious are actually two different entities."<sup>17</sup>

According to Jung, the idea of the divine reality "is present everywhere, unconsciously if not consciously, because it is an archetype."<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the unconditioned archetype is represented through the human psyche. Thus, for Jung, the divine reality acting upon the depth of the psyche results from archetypal representation. In this sense, God cannot be separated from the unconscious self, thereby being deeply engaged in the development of the self.

The unconscious is to the conscious what yin is to yang. From the perspective of Daesoon, God as yin is uncontrived and everywhere but is known by our conditioned life context as yang. In yin-yang unity, however, God and the human world are not explained independently but in their complementary

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<sup>17</sup> Carl Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vol. 11, *Answer to Job* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1968), 468.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vol. 7, *On the Psychology of the Unconscious* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1970), 110.

relation by way of which creative advance is motivated by the transformation of their relation. Yin and yang cannot be apart from each other, so it is the natural principle for yin and yang to be intertwined in a cycle in which God and humans influence each other, and the human history has been developed in relation to the divine.

In this manner, God cannot be defined without the human life context. God is the motivation for the creative change of human mind and the world, which should proceed continuously to harmonious relation by meeting opposites and by creatively transforming them.

#### **IV. Correlative Cosmology in Daesoon Thoughts**

The tenet of Daesoon—Shininjohwah, Eumyanghapdeok, Haewonsangsaeng, Dotongjingyong—ultimately accentuates that myriad things are developed through the pattern of the contrast and interdependence between yin and yang. In this pattern of Daesoon, diversity and unity are not contrasting notions. This system of Daesoon represents the cosmological view of the Korean native religious tradition that regards a thing not as a substance but as a flowing of events whereby contradictory elements are interrelated paradoxically. Because a thing is not defined a fixed frame but by relationship with others, it draws a pattern of change and transformation with others. Daesoonjinri observes that human mind and nature is based on this relational system. A life is not constituted by its unchangeable essence but by the interaction with other lives. A life then is defined in a relational character shaped by way of change and transformation.

Thus, the Daesoon thoughts do not support the unchangeable and static generality disassociated from the dynamic phenomenal world in order to seek the essence of a thing. From the Daesoon perspective, to define an object in a fixed frame leads to an estrangement between the dynamic actuality and the concept of the object. While the actuality of the object is in the process of change and transformation in organic relation with the rest of the world, its concept refers to the abstract feature of a certain thing.

From the correlative view of cosmology, the human being-in-divine or the

divine-in-human being means the agent who develops wisdom and the art of constantly and concretely seeing and listening to be able to respond to Heaven and Earth. In this context, the Daesoon theory enhances the dynamic actuality of life that cannot be found in conceptual language.

The world view of Daesoon always refers to the flowing world in the rhythmic balance between yin and yang. The harmony of all things is produced by the interaction between the correlation of yin and yang. This means that any existence can be defined neither as yin itself nor as yang itself; the most significant nature of yin and yang is their dynamic change and movement in their mutual interaction.

From such a mutual relationship, the production and transformation of nature is accomplished by the circle of its unity and diversity. This process reveals the significance of Daesoon cosmology. Daesoon means the principle of all myriad elements of which the universe is composed. It is based on the creative process in change and transformation in which nature is interrelated organically with the human mind. The change and transformation of mind and nature are conducted by the yin-yang dynamics in mutual existence.

Eumyang Hapdeok in Daesoon therefore signifies that the interaction of human mind and nature is made by the diversity and unity of yin and yang. Daesoon is the principle of the universe developed in the creative process and dynamic movement of the opposites. As Moo Mock Yang says, “Daesoon means eternity and circulation. Eternity means that there is the beginning but not the end while circulation means the constant repetition.”<sup>19</sup> This meaning of Daesoon can be expressed as “eternity-in-process” or “process-in-eternity”, which does not mean simply change in process. It means that the ultimate principle of the universe is circulated constantly in the organic relation between mind and nature. This refers to the change in the process of transformation, in which all beings are situated. The foundational principle of

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<sup>19</sup>Moo Mock Yang, “Formation and Significance of Daesoon” in *The Academic Journal of Daesoonjinri*, vol.1 (Gyunggi, Korea: Institute of Daesoonjinri of Daejin University, 2007), 75.

transformational change is developed not in the abstractedness of concept and essence of being but in concrete phenomena revealed in immediate experience as irreducible to the dualistic form of either A or not A.

Since Daesoon concerns itself with process, its logical pattern is distinguished from abstract logic or formal logic in which truth and falsehood are divided clearly. It is beyond the demarcation between truth and falsehood that a correlation of antithetical elements is developed creatively in a paradoxical system.

The correlative cosmology of yin and yang is developed in the patterns of diversity-in-unity and unity-in-diversity. Daesoon accentuates that all the lives of the universe should return to the harmonious state of human mind and nature, which means none other than the ultimate way and thereby aims to bring into the new world the realm of truth in which the ultimate way pervades. This realm of truth signifies Dotongjingyong, which is the harmony of mind and nature.<sup>20</sup> It is also the Non-ultimate, whereby being and non-being are not contradictory but combined paradoxically. Jeong says that Dotong-jingyong refers to something ultimate and at the same time non-ultimate.<sup>21</sup> Unlike Aristotle's Law of Contrast, the world of Dotongjingyong is described in both A (the ultimate) and -A (non-ultimate), which forms the foundational logic of Daesoon. Dotongjingyong as the principle immanent in all things does not work in itself. The ultimate does not mean transcendent from the world but rather the comprehensiveness of paradoxical situations and dynamic tension of yin and yang. Therefore, the ultimate is different from eternity reality such as Plato's Idea or the transcendent God in Christianity developed in the Western tradition.

God in Daesoon's view refers to the process transforming the ego-consciousness. The self is defined not as an isolated and fixed self but as a changing and growing self within creative process, by which the self accomplishes transformation by taking one's own knowledge and experience to a wider and deeper horizon. Such

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<sup>20</sup> "Religions of Kang Il-Soon/Daesoonjinrihoe," in *Studies on Religions of Korea* (Seoul: The Association of Korean Native Religions, 2006), 257.

<sup>21</sup> Jeong, 118.

an in-depth horizon can be defined as the Non-Ultimate, which cannot be confined in the logical frame formed within the knowledge system of conscious activity. Yet, the Non-Ultimate always is manifested in the world of humanity. According to Jeong, the Non-Ultimate means no ultimate end: our strong attachment to either spiritual value or material value shows an ultimate end of our pursuit. But the Non-Ultimate way refers to the comprehensive and mature state leading the transformation of either extremity of mind or body.<sup>22</sup> That is to say, the Non-Ultimate indicates combining principle with individual things in the yin-yang movement. It is in the ideal world that the religious stage representing human spirit and scientific civilization leading the material world are highly and maturely developed. Jeong maintains,

Both material and spiritual truths are derivative of one Way. The world in which the Way pervades all around presents the very significance of Dotong-jingyung. There will be no irregularities or absurdities in this world because all human desires are purified by relieving rancor through mutual existence. Also, the environmental elements as the source of desire are overcome with Yeum-yanghapdeok, i.e., the yin-yang unity, and the ethical order is maintained by the harmony between God and humans.<sup>23</sup>(118)

The harmony between God and human, Yeum-yanghapdok, and Dotong-jingyong are the major principles for opening the new world. “It is opening the new world that is greatly achieved by gathering all the principle.”<sup>24</sup> These principles are to restore the religious and moral depravity that our world has ever made. They are the most basic and ultimate principles toward the betterment of our society. From the view of Daesoon, the disharmony between God and human, between yin and yang, is the major cause for the loss of religious and moral values.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 64.

These major characteristics of Daesoon underscore a correlative cosmology, which articulates the ceaseless interaction of heaven, earth, and human being to overcome their mutual antagonism. “The mutual antagonism dominated over all humans and matters in the past world... Yet, in the new world such an unrighteous matter cannot occur by the strict moral rules.”<sup>25</sup> The strict moral rules are none other than the rules of harmony based on correlative cosmology, which manifests that all elements of which the universe is made up are interacted by the harmonious system.

The world of Dotongjinyeong does not manifest the hierarchical order. The identification of the Non-Ultimate and the Ultimate based on the dynamic relationship of yin and yang provides the essential outline of the Daesoon theory. To put it another way, the true realm in Dotongjinyeong cannot be referred to as a certain substance because it is not a matter; in and in terms of material force, the true realm cannot be regarded as nothingness because it is in all matters. The true realm cannot be said to be being or non-being. This implies conversely that we can refer to the true realm as both being and non-being.

Daesoon emphasizes the One Mind, which is the source of all life and the indivisible state of mind that is free from all the shackle of self-deception. The One Mind is considered a cosmological explanation of existences in the universe.<sup>26</sup> This realm of the One Mind is different from the soteriological ideal emphasizing the attainment of the divine and the sacred world separated from the secular. Instead, the explanation of Dotongjinyeong is about the peace and harmony of existences in this world through the dynamic inter-relatedness between the mind and nature.

Dotongjinyeong is considered the cosmological harmony of all existences in the One Mind. In this true realm, God, human, and nature are harmonized and unified, whereby all conflicts can be overcome by a greater and broader horizon toward the ultimate reality.

According to Daesoonjinri, no individual gains complete power or can

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<sup>25</sup> *Disciplinary Standards*, 3:34

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:20.

exercise one's full power until one is given some environment. Specifically, one's power is exhibited only when an individual is in an organic unity and relates with other environmental worlds. An individual exists interdependently with his or her environments in organic society. When an individual participates in organic unity with others, it is said to be a wholistic existence. The feature of the truth of Dotongjinyong is described as the One Mind in which all contrasting elements are paradoxically combined and all discriminations are dissolved. God, human, and nature are not three different substances but can be unified in the world of Dotongjinyong that practices the One Mind. They are identical in terms of the ultimate reality in which all phenomenal distinctions are abolished.

Self-deception originates from the mutual exclusion and opposition in which all phenomena are filled with conflicts and struggle made by bitter feelings. By way of this, the value of good and evil is misplaced, so that the morality of family and society is lost. The human ego is responsible for such an opposition. Dotongjinyong understands that the ego-consciousness always can be apart from the divine-human-nature harmony, and thereby distort the true self united with the divine and nature.

The divine order in the world of Dotongjinyong is not a transcendent order but the harmonious order formed by embracing the contrasting poles of yin/yang, heaven/earth, the masculine/the feminine, the mind/nature, good/evil, and true/false. Although Heaven is not identified with human mind and nature, it also is not an agent outside them. Heaven is the motor energy that potentially exists in the human mind and nature. The religious formation in Daesoon means to actualize the divine way and heavenly principle in this world. The true realm filled with the divine way is not only comprehensive but also creative in that it is engaged continuously in the world of the mind and nature of things.

In Daesoon, the late universe means the harmonious proceeding of the opposites. It is to open the Later World accomplished greatly by bringing all the opposites into their correlation. This principle of Daesoon can be applied to the cyclical relation between the individual and nature. This cyclical relation

means that the two different entities interact continuously and thus are mutually transformed with no hierarchical order.

While yin-yang unity is cosmological, the divine-human harmony is the result of the correlative cosmology. This divine-human harmony also contains their harmony with nature in its meaning. "In the Later World, a new plant comes from its root in each year, whereby harvest is naturally made and land becomes fertile."<sup>27</sup> The disharmony of human and nature also is made by that of yin and yang. By way of yin-yang disharmony, heaven and earth are divorced from human being. In the new world, however, yin-yang unity is based on mutual beneficence of all life.

In sum, Daesoon thoughts are based on the harmonious system; all things can be united; all existent matters cannot be separated from the universe because it comes from and returns to the universe. In this manner, God, human, and nature should be comprehended in terms of the correlative cosmology. The harmony between the divine and the human begins with the interaction of the human with nature in yin-yang harmony. In the Later World, the harmony of Daesoon thoughts is the harmony among humans, the harmony between human and nature, and the harmony between the divine and the human. In the Later World, we cannot deal with this complicated world without harmonizing in various ways.

## **V. Ecological Significance in the Cosmology of Daesoon**

Daesoonjinri constantly applies the metaphysical principle of interrelatedness to our life-context. This application is developed by a practical principle of Haewonsangseng, which mean practicing mutual existence to relieve rancor accumulated by one another. The purpose of this principle is to indicate specifically how to practice our harmonious life in the world. For practicing the harmonious life, I will discuss the ecological significance of Daesoon thoughts in terms of Haewonsangseng in this part.

Daesoonjinri as a religious thought has a great value to discuss the environmental issue. "As the human community struggles to formulate different attitudes

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:41.

toward nature and to articulate broader conception of ethics embracing species and ecosystems, religions may thus be a necessary, though only contributing, part of this multidisciplinary approach.”<sup>28</sup> In the same way Daesoon, the Great Iteration, serves this purpose of religious system to develop the ethical view of ecology.

According to Daesoon thoughts, above all, the past world was based only upon mutual opposition and exclusion by way of which our history has been filled with conflicts in materialism and self-desire. Jeong writes,

The civilization rather promoted the human arrogance in materialism and thus shook the heavenly principle and conquered nature: humans have committed sins, whereby the source of the Way fell down. All primitive deities, Buddha, and Bodhisattvas gather together and exposed such problems to the heavens.”<sup>29</sup>

The materialism and selfishness have produced mutual exclusion between the human mind and nature, so that the people’s pursuit of material wealth in the industrial society conquers and suppresses the natural world. Thus, the task of Daesoon was to turn from “mutual antagonism” to “mutual beneficence of all life” so as to relive the rancor of nature exploited by human ego and desire.

In contrast with the Prior World in mutual antagonism, the way of mutual beneficence of all life means the living principle of the new world in which eternal peace comes true without any harm to human being or nature. From this idea of mutual beneficence of all life, Daesoon presents a new paradigm with the relation between human and nature.

Such a new paradigm, Jeong argues, is based on the God-human harmony and yin-yang unity in Daesoon thoughts.<sup>30</sup> That is to say, Shininjohwa and Eumyanghapdeok refer to the whole feature of the Later World while Haewon-sangsaeng is a practical principle of our life. The idea of Haewonsangsaeng seeks

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<sup>28</sup> Marry Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, “Series Forward”, in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds* eds. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams (Harvard University Press, 1997), xix.

<sup>29</sup> Jeong, 81.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

a concrete method to practice the mutual beneficence of all life for us to live in harmony. Such a principle, therefore, includes the ethical practice of ecological movement.

For the mutual beneficence, all lives exist in their interdependence on one another in their environments. They adapt themselves in the organic relation to natural environments. Therefore, ecology deals with all facets of lives in their interdependence. In other words, an individual life cannot be developed separate from its community. The ecological significance is found in the organic interaction of all elements of which the universe is made.

According to Descartes' dualism, nature is only the object separated from the human mind; it is the tool that can be dominated by the human being as a thinking subject. In this way, the Cartesian dualistic paradigm may be supportive of today's ecological crisis. Because the human being without natural resources cannot endure, he or she is defined in connection with nature. The human being is related organically with his or her environment. The mutual existence of lives and their dynamic relation take place in every group of life, including the interdependence of the tree root and bacteria/mold on each other. Land is covered with fallen trees and leaves, rotten things, and fermented excrement. It also divides them with water, sunlight, and microorganism. All of these elements are placed in their organic relation. Yet the garbage increased by the modern industrial society does harm to such an organic relation. This is why the ecosystem cannot accept contaminated materials. Their influences return to those who destroy the ecosystem. What goes around comes around. This ecological crisis also causes the crisis of the human world by killing other animals and plants for economic purpose. By way of this, the ecosystem and human beings are interdependent on each other.

From the Daesoon perspective, such an ecological crisis brought by human abuse of natural resources causes grievances of the natural community. Sangje says, "The eternal peace is to be achieved by eliminating all disgraceful things made by grievances."<sup>31</sup> The idea of resolving grievances is the practical

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<sup>31</sup> "The Work of Renewal [Gongsa]" in *the Book of Daesoonjinri*, 3:4.

principle of the late universe by opening to the new world of heaven, human, and earth.

The new world is full of all harmonious relationships between opposites. For instance, there is no discrimination of races or sexes. “The tradition and custom of male-privilege will be broken down in the new world.”<sup>32</sup> In this manner, Daesoon seeks mutual beneficence between opposites. All opposite elements—Heaven and earth, water and fire, human mind and nature—support each other in mutual beneficence. Mutual beneficence of all lives means supporting others to make my life better by making other existences necessary for mine. The discipline of Daesoon thoughts thus emphasizes that the way to mutual existence leads the peace of the world.

The past world was accentuated by people’s self-desire, the harmful result of which returns to themselves in the end. The self-desire has been responsible for disintegrating the ecosystem by disregarding the ecological order. Human selfishness harms the natural environment by constantly exploiting the natural resources, and the natural world returns its harm to the human world in a vicious circle. Sangje says,

“I am so sad because you are blinded to the accumulation of material although the world is about to falling down.”<sup>33</sup> The accumulation of materials contains the fact that humans recklessly abuse the environment and natural resources for their material wealth.

Jeong makes a distinction between mutual existence and “togetherness.” This distinction is made by the environment surrounding human beings. The environment provides us with natural resources for our material needs. Yet, the natural resources may become insufficient and finally depleted in the near future. Thus, we should save and maintain them by taking their limited amount into consideration. In other words, togetherness means that the humankind

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<sup>32</sup> *Disciplinary Standards*, 1:68.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:1.

shares the limited source of nature to live together in the community.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, Sangsaeng, mutual beneficence of all life, leads human beings and nature to grow with each other in yin-yang harmony.<sup>35</sup> The correlative cosmology of the opposite elements of yin and yang is developed in the patterns of diversity-in-unity and unity-in-diversity. The serial relationship of the patterns is that of the life and nature of the universe. By way of this close connection between the images of yin and yang, Daesoon presents the idea of mutual transformation in the process of the development of the cosmos. “The key of Daesoon thought is to make peace. The peace of humankind is to realize the infinite truth of the Way by embracing, respecting, and loving others. The Way is the initiation of the universe and leading the change of life and growth.”<sup>36</sup> From the view of this correlative cosmology, human beings and nature respect and support each other, whereby natural worlds continue to produce their sources for the human world, and humans protect and love nature.

For the ecological view of Daesoon, mutual beneficence is the ultimate principle to practice the peace and harmony of human and natural worlds. “Yin-yang relation is the water-fire relation. . . Water comes from fire and vice versa.”<sup>37</sup> The purpose of mutual existence is to benefit one another by practicing “self-giving” instead of the “self-interest” that prevails in the paradigm of mutual exclusion and opposition. In mutual exclusion, natural resources become depleted by human self-desire. The past world overlooked the fact that the earth is an organic life interdependent on human beings. Conquering the land and overusing limited natural resources, the huge industrialization in unlimited human selfishness promoted the ecological crisis.

The air pollution caused by the wasteful fuel of automobiles or factories is a threat to human life and the environment. It is one of the main reasons for respiratory disease, bronchitis, and lung cancer. Lead and mercury coming out

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<sup>34</sup> Jeong, 94.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>37</sup> *Disciplinary Practice* [Gyowoon], 1:66.

of automobiles may cause brain disease. Further, air pollution is responsible for acid rain, so as to disturb agriculture, stunt the growth of trees, and corrode stone architecture. Also, it acidifies water and weakens the productivity of land. A number of trees and forests are being destroyed by acid rain.

Water is the source of life itself. The contamination of water is a big threat to the human community. Water contamination means that polluted materials are mixed with such waters as stream, lake, river, or sea. This environmental situation has put the ecosystem in disorder, so that we no longer may be able to use the water resource in the near future. Waste water discharged from factories and foul water caused by city industrialization accelerates water contamination. It is also a threat to human health and thereby raises the rate of cancer and the delivery of deformed babies.

One of the ways to overcome this situation of environmental problems can be found in the relational paradigm of the world in Daesoon. Daesoon highlights that the virtue of mutual beneficence in the yin-yang incorporation constitutes the ideal environment for the rich sources of the natural worlds. Heaven and earth represent the natural worlds in the complementary relation between yin and yang. The heaven and earth in yin-yang unity produce the infinite ground of things and constitute the rich environment of nature without any agony and insufficiency.

Daesoon argues that this yin-yang unity becomes the source of divine-human harmony. From this harmony, human is divine, and divine is human. In this divine-human harmony, the human respect of nature is shaped naturally by the way in which human beings constantly transforms themselves in divine nature. This view represents the East Asian relational paradigm of correlative cosmology.

The seamless interconnection between the divine, human, and natural worlds that characterizes three traditions has been described as an anthropocosmic worldview. There is no emphasis on radical transcendence as there is in the Western traditions. Rather, there is a cosmology of a continuity of creation stressing the dynamic movements of nature.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Duncan Ryuken Williams, "Introduction," in *Buddhism and Ecology*, xxvii.

Haewonsangsaeng can be understood as the mode of life in the new paradigm in which divine-human-nature harmony is performed. This mode of life is also based on mutual existence-in-support. Further, according to Daesoon, the mutual beneficence of all life refers to the feature of the true world in which the ultimate way pervades.

The material condition surrounding the human refers to material resources or energy for bringing comfort to us. The convenience of human beings has been made by scientific achievement. Yet, any scientific achievement requests a higher level than the one already achieved, so as to constantly promote human self-desire. According to Daesoon, the completed state of all scientific and spiritual worlds is based on Dotongjinyong, the true realm in which the Way pervades in yin-yang harmony. In this realm, Daesoon assumes that there is no scarcity of natural resources in our world. Jeong writes that “the world of Dotongjinyong provides us with infinite richness in yin-yang unity.”<sup>39</sup> In the world of Dotongjinyong is the balance of the ecosystem in which our life is enriched and there is no struggle or conflict caused by material possession.

In this manner, the Dotongjinyong reveals the original feature of the natural environments surrounding us, i.e., the ideal condition and temperature for the earth. The abnormal temperature of the earth and global warming are threatening today’s human world by way of air contamination. Daesoonjinri insists that this condition of the earth, however, disappears in Dotongjinyong. “There is no such thing as three disasters of water, fire, and wind in Dotongjinyong.”<sup>40</sup> In this view, Dotongjinyong is said to be the world in which the order of the ecosystem is maintained. In other words, the ideal form of natural environment is one of the features in Dotongjinyong that Daesoonjinri presents.

The ecosystem is properly made by the unity of human and nature. The separation between human and nature is abolished in the Dotongjinyong. This means each element constituting the world is interdependent. The Later World for opening the new world draws the realm in which there is no

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<sup>39</sup> Jeong, 129.

<sup>40</sup> “Prediction” [Yeshi] in *the Book of Daesoonjinri*, v. 81.

obstacle among the human world and natural world. The unlimited richness and benefit of nature are preserved in Dotongjingyong.

Daesoon thoughts are based on the relational paradigm of mutual respect by way of which the world is newly created in harmony and transformation: there is no natural disaster, no war, and no human greed, which brings into the peaceful world. Cheonjigongsa (天地公事) (Reordering of the Universe) aims to realize the world achieved by Eumyang Hapdeok and Dotongjingyong.

Ecology deals with all facets of lives in their interdependence. Each individual life cannot be developed by being separated from its mutual community. Ecological significance is found in this organic interaction or mutual existence of all elements of which the universe is made. Daesoon thoughts can be a key to the embodiment of ecological ethics.

## VI. Conclusion

For Daesoon, the true realm is the optimal condition of both the human and natural worlds. “All heaven and earth becomes one family, and all the worlds are united in the global age, so that perfect harmony will be achieved... All humankind never have greed in their equality.”<sup>41</sup> In the true realm, the natural environment and temperature is the optimum for human existence. It is the world with no natural disaster. As a representative of Heaven-Earth, the human does not conquer and use nature for his own convenience and private enjoyment. But rather, it is the comprehensive knowledge of Dotongjingyong that enables us to take care of other life-forms and nature.

From the Daesoon perspective, the task of the renewal by opening the new world is the creative work for the paradigm shift to mutual beneficence of all life. The method of this task is to embody the divine in the world. The divine is the normative way to relieve the bitter feeling of nature exploited by human ego and self-desire. In this paradigm, the God-human-nature harmony realizes the principle of mutual beneficence of all life. This is the way of Daesoon to the unity of all elements constituting the universe.

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<sup>41</sup> Jeong, 341-2.

Daesoon observes the ecological crisis in terms of the disharmony among God and the human being. They are not in a hierarchical relation. The concept of divine has meaning in-and-with the human. God is not described as a transcendent reality in a dualistic structure between God and the world. God is God-within-the-human mind and nature. However, the God-within does not mean the product of the subjective inner experience. The reason God cannot simply be identified with the individual self is that the self is interconnected with the rest of the world. The significance of divine reality in relation to human religious experience is not God outside from the human and natural worlds but the *God-within* experienced in the harmony between the human being and the natural world engaged in the creative process of Dotongjinyeong, the realm of the truth that Daesoonjinrihoe presents. This God-human-nature unity is the primary condition of Dotongjinyeong, which enhances the ecological significance based on correlative cosmology.

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# Daesoonjinrihoe's Religious Thought :

## From a Confucian and Comparative Perspective

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### Introduction

Daesoon thought began with Kang Jeungsan (also spelled as Cheungsan, 1871-1909) and Cho Jeongsan (Chǒngsan, 1895-1958), and it is generally recognized as a major position in the modern history of Korean religions. Since the early 1990s, scholars in Korea have studied it more objectively through research and creative discussion. Daesoonjinrihoe is influenced by other traditions such as shamanism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity.

This paper explores Daesoon's religious thought by presenting the way in which Confucianism influenced its ethics and spirituality. It also discusses how Daesoonjinrihoe's founding master Cho Jeongsan assimilated Confucian ideas with his creative thinking and spiritual practice. Jeongsan contributed to the development of Daesoon as a distinctive form new religions in modern Korea. We also consider some questions: e.g., what is unique about Daesoon thought; and how does it contribute to modern Korean religion? The paper consists of three sections: i) the religious foundation of Daesoon thought; ii) Confucian influence on Daesoon ethics and spirituality; and iii) further comparative perspectives as conclusions.

I use a textual and interpretive method in a historical-cultural framework; i.e., it is not just to translate the text or repeat what the text says, but rather to offer a meaningful interpretation about its religious significance. I consult the relevant materials while utilizing my familiarity with Confucianism and comparative religion. The primary sources include the *Jeongyeong* scripture

and *Daesoon jichim*, and my reading of these texts highlight those chapters dealing with moral and spiritual practice, especially the “Four Fundamental Principles” (*sagangryǒng*) and “Three Fundamental Attitudes” (*samyoch ’e*). I anticipate this paper to make a three-fold contribution: i) articulate Confucian influence on Daesoon thought; ii) shed new light on the uniqueness of its religious faith and practice; and iii) recommend more discussion from a broader comparative perspective of East Asian and world religions.

## I. Religious Foundation of Daesoon Thought

This section presents the religious foundation of Daesoon thought in terms of its basic beliefs and doctrines, pertaining to god, prophecy, and Confucian and eclectic influence. Cho Jeongsan played a major role in founding Daesoon thought by assimilating Confucian ideas with the teaching of Kang Jeungsan, shamanism, and other religious traditions in Korea. Indeed, Jeongsan developed it into a distinctive form of ethics and spirituality in 1925. According to Daesoon-jinrihoe’s claim, it has been over a century since Kang Jeungsan gave a divine mandate to Cho Jeongsan who was succeeded by Pak Udang (1917-1996).<sup>1</sup> The current establishment Daesoonjinrihoe, a branch of Jeungsangyo religion, was succeeded from Jeongsan to Udang who renovated its organizational structure with a new name in 1969. As recorded in the *Daesoon Supreme Scripture (Jeongyeong)*, Cho Jeongsan is said to have received a prophetic message from Kang Jeungsan in 1917, and eventually established a set of doctrines (including

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<sup>1</sup> It is stated that “Daesoonjinrihoe began when Sangje Kang (Jeungsan, 1871-1909) revealed himself in 1917 to Doju (master) Cho (Jeongsan, b. 1895), who was in Bongcheon, Manchuria at that time... The term Daesoon (Great Itineration) comes from the *Jeongyeong*, the Scripture of Daesoonjinrihoe... Daesoonjinrihoe is founded upon faithful submission to Doju Cho’s (Jeongsan) teaching, a product of his fifty years of religious activity, which is the truth inherited in Sangje’s *Daesoon*.” See *Daesoonjinrihoe yoram* (Essentials of Daesoonjinrihoe), pp.5, 9. Translation is taken from the official English version of this text, *An Introduction to Daesoon-jinrihoe* (2009), pp.1, 7, which will be abbreviated as *Introduction* hereafter.

*chongji* and *shinjo*), thereby founding a new religious group which later became known as the Daesoonjinrihoe.<sup>2</sup> In 1958 he renovated its doctrinal and organizational system, and then died in the same year after transmitting the leadership to Pak Udang.<sup>3</sup>

The *Jeongyeong* scripture is believed to be Cho Jeongsan's confessional written record of religious faith and experience. For example, Jeungsan told Jeongsan:

Sangje, God of the Ninth Heaven, descended to Cheongye (Heavenly gate) Tower in the Western Land of the great Law, because all the divine sages, Buddhas, and bodhisattvas who have exited since the origin of the universe had gathered and earnestly made their appeal. Near the end of his Great Itineration (*Daesoon*) of the world, I, Sangje, entered the statue of a golden Maitreya Buddha and remained there for thirty years; this statue is enshrined in the three-story hall of Geumsan Temple at Mt. Moak. During these thirty years, I also revealed to Ch'oe Cheu (Suwun; 1824-79) the great Way (Tao) of governing the world. However, Ch'oe could not accomplish this divine mission for the salvation of the world since he was unable to overcome the limit of the Confucian tradition and norms. So I discontinued my heavenly mandate and divine teaching, and eventually decided in 1871 to incarnate myself (*kangse*) in a worldly, human form.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In 1925 Cho Jeongsan he established Mugeuk-do (Way of the Non-Ultimate), the earlier version of Daesoonjinrihoe, which competed with other sects of Jeungsangyo religion organized by Jeungsan's followers. religion. Cf. *Jeongyeong*, Kyoun (Doctrines) 2:32 (p.201).

<sup>3</sup> See *Jeongyeong*, Kyoun 2:64-66 (pp.219-220).

<sup>4</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyoun 1:9 (pp. 155-56). This translation also accommodated the official text, "Our History" in Translation, pp.9-10. See also a similar passage appears in another section; it is almost identical except the following sentences: "... Lord Sangje revealed the heavenly mandate and divine doctrines to Ch'oe Cheu (Suwun) in order to establish the great Way (Dao) of governing the world. However, God Sangje discontinued his divine work and eventually decided in 1871 to descend himself (in an incarnated form) in the world." See *Jeongyeong*, Yesi (Prophecy), section 1 (p.311).

In other words, God Sangje once gave a divine message to Ch'oe Cheu (Suwun), the founder of Tonghak (Eastern Learning), a school of thought and a religious and social reform movement concerned mainly with improving the peasantry's living conditions.<sup>5</sup> However, it could not be fulfilled by Ch'oe. So it is said that God Sangje decided to become incarnated in the body of Kang Jeungsan later (in 1871), as stated in the *Jeongyeong*. The frequently-quoted passage above symbolically suggests the divine origin of Daesoon thought religion: to believe Kang Jeungsan, as God Sangje revealed himself to the human world. Note the distinctive theme of Daesoon thought regarding this divine nature of the person Kang Jeungsan who is believed to be incarnated being of the Sangje.

Nonetheless, we can also see some Confucian and Taoist influence here. The name Sangje (Shang-ti in Chinese) often appears in the Confucian classics as a personal god; this term was used interchangeably with "Heaven" in early Confucianism. In the pre-Confucian Chinese tradition, Shang-ti was worshiped as the divine protector of the state and ruling class, and a popular god for personal fortune and family protection. In the early Confucian classics, the term Sangje was also used in emphasizing the absolute moral power, insofar as it was sometime identified with Heaven (*t'ien*) or the Mandate of Heaven (*t'ien-ming*).<sup>6</sup> In the later Confucian and Neo-Confucian schools in China and

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<sup>5</sup> Tonghak also criticized Western learning (*shak*) identified with Catholic learning (*ch'ŏnjihak*) which was flourishing in the capital in the nineteenth century. Even a Neo-Confucian thinker and reformer, Ch'oe developed it into a pseudo-religious system based on Confucianism, Christianity, Buddhism, and indigenous shamanism. It eventually became known as Ch'ŏndo-gyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way), one of the major "new religions" in modern Korea. For English works on Ch'oe's Tonghak, Ch'ŏndo-gyo, and Confucian and other influence, see Y. C. Kim 1978; Weems 1964; and Baker 2006.

<sup>6</sup> This topic is discussed in the current scholarship on ancient Chinese religions. See, for example, Ching's *Chinese Religions*; her *Mysticism and Kingship in Ancient China*; H. Smith's *Chinese Religions*; de Bary's *Sources of Chinese Traditions*; etc.

Korea, Sangje was sometime mentioned as the ultimate moral power like Heaven. However, among Korean Neo-Confucian reformers who liked Practical Learning (*sirhak*), Confucian classic studies, or Catholicism (*ch'önjuhak*) and Western thought, Ch'ong Tasan (1762-1836)<sup>7</sup> and his colleagues preferred to use the name Sangje interchangeably with "Heaven" in referring to a supreme personal god (pre-Confucian belief) or even the divine ruler of the universe who is considered as compatible with (or identical to) the Christian god called Ch'önju (Heavenly Lord). In other words, this might have influenced Jeung-san and Jeongsan a century later if they were familiar with such a new, theistic trend of Neo-Confucian thought.

Confucianism was highly influential among upper social classes in Chosŏn Korea, especially for state religion, ethics, and education. In this regard, it is not surprising that the founder Cho Jeongsan studied Confucian classics, such as *Odes*, *History*, *Changes*, *Analects*, *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Book of Mencius*, and *Elementary Learning*.<sup>8</sup> So Jeongsan was probably able to assimilate the early notion of Shang-ti and other Confucian ideas. Furthermore, the name Sangje was popular in the Taoist and folk religious tradition of China

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<sup>7</sup> The early Korean knowledge of Catholic faith was first introduced by Matteo Ricci's famous *T'ien-chu shih-i* (The true meaning of God) from China in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Ricci's book was a major Catholic interpretation of Christianity as compatible with classical Confucianism in particular. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Catholicism approached Chinese intellectuals along with Western knowledge. Accordingly, Korean Sirhak scholars such as Tasan naturally became interested in Catholicism and Western thought. In 1784, Tasan was also introduced to Christianity by a Korean Confucian Catholic, Yi Pyöck, one of the founding members of the Catholic church in Korea. So all this had enough impact on Tasan's theistic view of the Confucian notion of Heaven. Tasan discussed the *Doctrine of the Mean*'s idea of "Heaven-endowed human nature" in terms of Sangje (Shang-ti in Chinese). See Tasan's *Yöyudang ch'önsö* II, 4:3a. Tasan considered the Sangje not only as a personal, supreme god, but also as a divine ruler of the universal order and cosmic harmony. For English works on Tasan and the Silhak school, see Setton 1997, 1989; Baker 1990; and Kalton 1981.

<sup>8</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyoung 2:62 (p.219).

and Korea that referred to the Jade Emperor Shangdi as a supreme ruler of religious divination and good fortune. The Jade Emperor Sangje is not believed to be an almighty god or the divine creator and savior.<sup>9</sup>

According to the Daesoon scripture, its basic tenets were revealed from the Sangje when he descended to this world, and then “people began to believe and venerate the Sangje with Haneu-nim (One Lord).”<sup>10</sup> It is not clear about how the Sangje became identified as Haneu-nim, the most supreme god in Korea. The Daesoon scripture and guidebooks are silent on this question, which can easily become a conflicting theoretical or theological issue. Here we can see that the folk tradition of Korean religious experience was basically represented by shamanism and the Tan’gun myth of creation. These indigenous beliefs are about the native supreme Korean God, Haneu-nim. It was also likely that the Taoist Sangje Jade Emperor and the Confucian Sangje could not sufficiently play a central, universal role in the Korean religious life, especially among the commoners (including the peasant class); this was probably because they could not really satisfy the people’s spirituality centering on Haneu-nim as one supreme god and a personal-and-universal savior. Ordinary people’s popular belief in Haneu-nim (also called Hana-nim; literally, “one lord” or “one supreme god”) naturally became incorporated into national religious mentality.<sup>11</sup> As a result, this cultural-and-religious assimilation could have easily motivated both Kang Jeungsan and Cho Jeongsan to identify the Sangje also as Haneu-nim in such a way to popularize their religious messages.

Furthermore, we can relate this point to Jeongsan’s religious experience as well. In 1918 he received a prophetic message from the Sangje after nine

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<sup>9</sup> For this topic on Chinese Taoism and Taoist gods including Shang-t’i, see Ching 1993; Kohn 2001; Maspero 1981; Smith 1968; and others.

<sup>10</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Yesi 9 (p.313)

<sup>11</sup> For recent works on Korean shamanism and culture, see Kendall and Dix 1987; Keith 1998; and Jung Yung Lee 1988. For a similar topic on the cultural and religious assimilation between the native Korean god (Haneu-nim or Hana-nim) and Christian beliefs especially the early Protestant church, see Palmer 1967.

years of intensive study and spiritual cultivation. He is also said to have received a paper charm mentioning the name Ch'ŏnju: "Be devoted to the Heavenly Lord (*shi ch'ŏnju*). Enjoy harmony and balance, the eternal world with no destruction..."<sup>12</sup> His religious experience also included a related message, "saving the world and governing the people..." This sacred spell is claimed to be connected to an earlier prophecy Ch'oe Cheu (Suwun), the founder of Tonghak (Eastern learning), received from the Ch'ŏnju who is also identified as Haneullim (Heavenly Lord) in Ch'oe's writings.<sup>13</sup> And the Sino-Korean term *ch'ŏnju* was already being used by early Korean Catholics during Ch'oe's time. So Ch'oe's god is claimed to be no different from the Sangje who was later revealed through Kang Jeungsan. As Professor Lee Kyŏngwŏn (2005:257) of Daejin University pointed out, this is a relevant matter because it represents Cho Jeongsan's experience of a special "I-Thou" relationship with the Sangje.

Ch'oe's Tonghak developed prior to the emergence of Jeungsan-gyo religion. Through an eclectic way of thinking, it assimilated a theistic pattern of Confucianism with some basic tenets of Christianity, Buddhism, and indigenous shamanism. Ch'oe was able to combine what he thought to be the best tenets of these religions into a new nationalistic, religious ideology. As a Neo-Confucian scholar-reformer,<sup>14</sup> he tried to integrate Confucian ethics with

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<sup>12</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyoung 2:7 (p.191).

<sup>13</sup> For Ch'oe's major writings, see his *Tonggyŏng taejŏn* (Great compendium of Tonghak doctrines) and *Yongdam yusa* (Hymns from dragon pool); Ch'oe Tong-hee's *Ch'ŏndo-gyo kyŏngjŏn* (Ch'ŏndo-gyo Scripture); and Yi Ton-hwa's *Tonghak chi insaenggwan and Ch'ŏndogyo ch'angŏnsa* (A history of the founding of the Religion of the Heavenly Way). For English works on Ch'oe's Tonghak, Ch'ŏndo-gyo religion, and Confucian and Christian influence, see also Y. C. Kim 1978; Weems 1964; and Baker 2006.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, Ch'oe Che-u (Suwun) was originally a leading member of the Chugip'a (school of *ki*) of Neo-Confucianism during the mid-nineteenth century; for this topic, see my book, Chung 1995. Ch'oe's Tonghak, a pseudo-religious system, also became a social reform movement which was concerned with the peasantry

the Catholic idea of god to some degree. As a result, his syncretic thinking would have had some influence on Kang Jeungsan and Cho Jeongsan, insofar as it is indirectly expressed in Daesoonjinrihoe texts.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, I basically agree with Kim Chongsuh of Seoul National University (2005:134) that we need to explore how the similar and different aspects of influence actually “helped the Daesoon religion in developing a new, creative interpretation of Korean religious experience; for example, why Jeungsan became interested in Ch’oe Che-u’s Tonghak, and why Daesoon thought also addressed Western Learning (*sōhak*) [also related to Catholicism]...” It is therefore important to study how Jeongsan became interested in Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

As taught Jeongsan, Daesoonjinrihoe’s religious essence engages a faith in the Sangje as a personal god and a divine law-giver. In other words, it surely has a theistic dimension. For Daesoonjinrihoe followers, its daily practice is “to realize oneself as a human being living in the world mastered by the Gucheon Sangje,” and “having full of reverence and a unified mind on devoting faith in the *daesoon* truth of Lord Sangje...”<sup>16</sup> This is a type of what I call devotional theism: a unique dimension of Daesoon ethics and spirituality I want to present further in the following section.

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and the betterment of their living conditions. It eventually became known as Ch’ōndo-gyo, one of the major “new religions” in modern Korea.

<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Ch’oe was probably unable to move beyond Confucian belief in the unity and oneness of Heaven and humanity, which is basically about the transcendent truth of Heaven inherent in the goodness of human nature. Being committed to his key doctrine, “Be devotional to Heavenly God” (*shi ch’ōnju*), Ch’oe could not make a prophetic-and-personal claim that he himself was indeed an incarnated being of God Sangje or Haneunim. In other words, Jeungsan probably realized that he needed to make such a claim by assimilating the Christian concept of incarnation (i.e., God or the word of God as incarnated in the person of Jesus) Perhaps, this was viewed as consistent with indigenous shamanism in Korea.

<sup>16</sup> *Daesoon jichim* (Daesoonjinrihoe handbook) 2.2.1 (p.50).

## II. Daesoon Ethics and Spirituality

This section presents the key examples of Daesoonjinrihoe's spiritual practice in relation to its religious foundation (which is presented in the preceding section). It will help us to explore the interplay between Confucianism and Daesoon doctrines. According to the Dasesoon Scripture, the tenets of faith were revealed by God Sangje:

Sangje descended to this world and then arranged the way of heaven and earth. He creatively nurtured the united virtue of *yin* and *yang* (*ūmyang hapduk*); transformingly harmonized divine beings and human beings (*sinin chohwa*); eliminated grievance for the mutual beneficence of all life (*haewōn sasang*); and established the ultimate Way (Tao) of the world (*tot'ong chingyōng*). Lord Sangje opened the door to the Later World.<sup>17</sup>

Each is a four-character tenet of faith, the key teaching of the Daesoon jinrihoe tradition.

Daesoonjinrihoe's ethics and spirituality center around the so-called Precepts (*shinjo*) system of *sagangryōng* (four fundamental principles) and *samyoch'e* (three fundamental attitudes). As indicated in the *Jeongyeong* Scripture, it is a way of following faith in the "Four Tenets" (*chongji*) revealed by God Sangje. The Four Fundamental Principles are: peaceful mind (*anshim*; officially translated by Daesoonjinrihoe as "quieting the mind-heart"); peaceful body (*anshin*; "quieting the mind-heart"); reverence to Heaven (*kyōngch'ōn*, "respecting the Divine"); and the way of cultivation (*sudo*, also translated as "observing ritual practice"). The Three Fundamental Attitudes are: sincerity (*sōng*), reverence (*kyōng*), and faithfulness (*shin*). The *sagangryōng* is said to be the key to seeking the ultimate truth revealed through God Sangje's *Daesoon*, which also corresponds to *tot'ong chin'gyōng* (which I translate as pervading Way and the ultimate truth). The *samyoch'e* is intended to be the fundamental virtues that ought be developed by all followers of Daesoonjinrihoe.

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<sup>17</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Yesi 9 (p.313). Note that Deasoonjinrihoe's official translation is assimilated here. See *Introduction*, p.15.

The *Daesoon jichim*, another Daesoonjinrihoe text, deals specifically with the daily practice of morality and spiritual development in a way that appears to be highly informed by the ethical Confucian tradition. It explains various doctrines and values that ought to be followed by Daesoonjinrihoe members: e.g., the understanding the Daesoon truth properly<sup>18</sup>; right spiritual cultivation<sup>19</sup>; observing ritual practice (*sudo*) such as mind rectification (*chōngsim*) and self-cultivation (*susin*) through utmost sincerity (*chisōng*)<sup>20</sup>; a life of cultivation according to Precepts (*shinjo*)<sup>21</sup>; and practicing the Four Fundamental Principles and understanding Three Fundamental Attitudes.<sup>22</sup> As well, Daesoonjinrihoe's organizational system is emphasized in terms of maintaining group order and prosperity through virtuous harmony (*dukhwa*) and the rules of ritual propriety (*ye; li* in Chinese).<sup>23</sup> For moral and social actions, it formally developed an organized set of guidelines called *such'ik*.

The *Daesoon jichim* handbook presents daily life guidelines as a way of “becoming a true person” through the *sagangryōng* and *samyoch'e*.<sup>24</sup> The key ideas and ideals are highlighted, and many of them seem compatible with the Confucian teachings: e.g., self-cultivation; filial piety to parents; conjugal harmony; human relationships; trust among friends; respect to the elders; social harmony; loyalty to the state; etc. Regarding group harmony and order, Daesoonjinrihoe emphasizes “nation's prosperity and people's happiness.” In this regard, the Confucian *Great Learning* and its ethical and statecraft spirit might have been a major source of inspiration in shaping Daesoonjinrihoe's system of learning, ethics, and social actions. Also, the modern implication of Confucian ethics concurs with Daesoonjinrihoe's active record of volunteer services, social charity programs, and educational work over the past several decades in South Korea.

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<sup>18</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, part I, chapter 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, part II, chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, part II, chapter 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, part II, chapter 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, part II, chapter 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, part III, chapter 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, part II, chapter 2.

### **sagangryŏng: Four Fundamental Principles**

Taken together, the way of *anshimi* and *anshin* could be seen as a combination of yin and yang. The *anshim* is a way of “making the mind peaceful,” and the *anshin* is about “making the body peaceful.” The verb *an* also means “to secure, comfort or calm down.” Hence, the body and the mind have to be harmonized and united into a well-developed state. From a psychological and ethical perspective, this dual teaching clearly affirms the Confucian and East Asian belief that a healthy mind and a healthy body cannot be separated because they complement each other in the way of self-cultivation.

The *anshim* is about having a cultivated and controlled state of the mind free from selfish feelings and thoughts, so that it can follow the human *yangshim* or innate heart-mind, thereby enabling self-cultivation toward the perfection of character. According to the *Daesoon jichim*, “the mind acts as the master of oneself and integrates the myriad things.” The mind is also said to be “the channel through which the spirits come and go; so get rid of your wicked mind and maintain the *anshin* through the rules of propriety (*ye*).”<sup>25</sup>

*Anshin* is closely associated with the practice of *anshim*. It therefore allows each person to follow right words and actions according to the innate good heart-mind (*yangshim*). As taught by Cho Jeongsan, Daesoonjinrihoe asks its followers to do good accordingly. It is about developing a disciplined and controlled body in harmony with “the mind acting as the master of the body.”<sup>26</sup> The cultivated mind leads one’s physical self. Hence, if one returns to the original *yangshim* and establishes the controlled and peaceful mind, one will not be affected by selfish desires but will be able to arrive at one’s peaceful body (*anshin*) while following moral principles and ritual propriety (*ye; li* in Chinese).

The Daesoon language is somewhat associated with the Buddhist teaching of meditative mind control. However, it better connects to the Confucian

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<sup>25</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.1 (p.48).

<sup>26</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.1 (p.48).

tradition; the classical and Neo-Confucian teaching of “ritual and propriety” (*ye; li* in Chinese) could have influenced the Daesoon way of cultivating the body and the mind through the *anshim* and *anshin*. Also, the idea of *yangshim* (*liang-chih* in Chinese; innate good heart) is a key teaching in Mencius and Korean Neo-Confucian thought, according to which the innate human goodness is bestowed by Heaven and should therefore be extended to others in daily life.

However, Daesoon thought developed a theistic doctrine and effectively integrated it with the traditional way of self-cultivation, thereby providing a religious foundation: e.g., utmost faith in the Sangje as a divine protector and law-giver. The *anshim*-and-*anshin* combination is “to practice a way of self-cultivation in thanking the divine grace of Lord Sangje...”<sup>27</sup> Religious gratitude for God Sangje is significant here because Daesoonjinrihoe emphasizes a faith and a virtuous life, a religious theme common among world religions including the biblical tradition.

Thirdly, the teaching of *kyöngch’ön* means to maintain reverence to Heaven and a life of moral practice. The connection between *kyöngch’ön* and *sudo* is similar to that between *anshim* and *anshin* in the sense of being complementary. The *kyöngch’ön*, too, accords with the Confucian teaching that the governing principle of the world was created by Heaven (*ch’ön*). The *sudo*, the fourth and last of the *sagangryöng*, basically means “cultivating the truth (*do*)” in following a proper path of life. It requires one “to get rid of distracting thoughts and desires and to be dedicated cultivating the truth”<sup>28</sup> Of course, it is to be done with the practice of *kyöngch’ön*, engaging the *anshim*-and-*anshin* system of making the mind and the body united and peaceful. To maintain reverence toward Heaven as a higher truth or moral power naturally requires one’s proper thinking and action. The way “to get rid of distracting thoughts and desires is closely in line with Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. I suggest that this Daesoon teaching is associated with the Neo-Confucian notion of Heaven’s Principle (*ch’ölli*) as

<sup>27</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.1 (p.50).

<sup>28</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.1 (p.50).

the self-transcending reality. This means reverence toward the oneness of Heaven and human nature in following a sagely way of self-cultivation. In particular, as I discussed elsewhere, the leading Korean Neo-Confucian Yi T'oegye emphasized the spiritual cultivation of reverence (*kyōng*) as part of following a *religious* way of realizing Heavenly Principle (*ch'ōlli*) as the ultimate truth or higher being.<sup>29</sup>

However, the *kyōngch'ōn* also includes one's faith in God Sangje (or Haneu-nim as discussed in the previous section), thereby pointing to its theistic dimension as well. For Daesoon followers, "It is to realize that one is a human being in the world designed and mastered by God Sangje," and "having your mind full of reverence, united will, and dedicated faith in the *daesoon* truth of Lord Sangje without selfishness or hypocrisy."<sup>30</sup> An element of devotional theism is certainly evident: one's true understanding of human existence is divinely mandated by the Sangje. As I have discussed in the preceding section, we can see a distinctive element of Daesoon thought in this regard.

### **Samyoch'e: Three Fundamental Attitudes**

Daesoonjinrihoe enriches the *sagangryōng* practice with a specific set of three essential attitudes as virtues that should be developed in self-cultivation and religious practice. The Three Essential Attitudes are sincerity (*sōng*), reverence (*kyōng*), and faithfulness (*shin*). They are grounded in the original Confucian ideas.

Sincerity (*sōng*) means to have a mind free of deceit and to hold fast to utmost sincerity. It also implies "the path and movement of the Heavenly Way (*ch'ōndo*)." And "to follow the benevolent goodness (*insōn*), our original mind

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<sup>29</sup> T'oegye takes "the Heavenly principle" of humanity as the intrinsic foundation of goodness and virtue. To become one with it, he emphasized moral effort as well as a contemplative way of spiritual self-cultivation. For the current scholarship on T'oegye's Neo-Confucianism and comparative thought/ religion, see my (Chung) 2007, 2004, 1995, 1992; see Kalton 1988 as well.

<sup>30</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.1 (p.50).

without evil. So the individual's sincerity is a right example of the supreme sincerity (of the Tao). Even the myriad things (of the world) cannot exist without it."<sup>31</sup> Note that Daesoonjinrihoe's ethical interpretation is similar to the Confucian teaching of sincerity. For example, the ideas of "original mind," "the Heavenly Way," "benevolent goodness," and "moral sincerity" variously relate to the Confucian and Neo-Confucian teachings. Sincerity *shin* (*ch'eng* in Chinese) is frequently emphasized in the Chinese and Korean traditions, including Confucius's *Analects*, *the Doctrine of the Mean*, and Sung Chinese Neo-Confucians, such as Chou Tun-i and Chu Hsi. In their major writings, Chou Tun-i, Chu Hsi and Korean Neo-Confucians generally emphasized sincerity as one of the core virtues endowed by the Great Ultimate (*t'ai-chi*) or Principle (*li*).<sup>32</sup> Hence, it is included in the sagely way of self-cultivation.

The Daesoon handbook states, "the true sincerity is that which unites and integrates the vital essence (*ch'ong*; liquid form of *ki*), vital energy (*ki*), and spiritual mind (*shin*) in the human being."<sup>33</sup> This vague teaching is unexplained by Daesoonjinrihoe, but it appears to be based on the Taoist religious practice of cultivating the three centers of spiritual energy in every human person.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Daesoon Master Cho Jeongsan had studied religious Taoist texts and was able to utilize some relevant ideas from the Taoist tradition.

Reverence (*ky'ong*), the second essential attitude, is about maintaining a

<sup>31</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.2 (p.51).

<sup>32</sup> Basically, the Great Ultimate is identified with the universal *Li* which means the unitary and omnipresent ground of being present in each phenomenon in its fullness of goodness and truth. For English works on Chu Hsi and other Chinese Neo-Confucians, see Chan 1967; Ching 2000; de Bary 1989; Gardner 1990; Taylor 1991; Tu 1985; etc. For the Korean tradition, see Yun 1991; Kalton 1988; and Chung (my) 2004, 1998, 1995. For translations and other works on Confucius and the Four Books, I have consulted Lau's translations, de Bary 1960; Chan 1963; Legge 1962; and Tu 1989.

<sup>33</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.2 (p.51).

<sup>34</sup> For this topic on Taoist beliefs and spiritual practice, see Kohn 2001 and 1993; Maspero 1981.

reverential attitude toward Heaven and spiritual beings, as well as to show respect for fellow human beings (including parents and elders). As a serious way of fulfilling sincerity, it also requires the virtue of reverential dignity in practicing our original goodness. As the *Daesoonjichim* states, “For self-cultivating people, reverence means to devote oneself to the eternal vision of the Sangje,” and “not to deviate from abiding in utmost sincerity.”<sup>35</sup> In daily life, it is a way of regulating the self and the world according to ritual propriety (*ye*) and the moral norms.<sup>36</sup> This idea basically originated from the Confucian tradition, insofar Daesoon master Cho Jeongsan was familiar with Confucian ethics. As discussed above, the notion of *kyōngch'ōn* (reverence to Heaven) is also relevant here. Early Confucians, Sung Neo-Confucians such as Chu His, and Korean Neo-Confucians like Yi T'oegye all addressed the significance of *kyōng* (*ching* in Chinese) in terms of emphasizing a moral-spiritual way of self-cultivation.

Faithfulness (*shin*), the third and last of the *samyoch'e*, is a virtue of honesty and uprightness. A trustworthy way of life begins with one's self-realization.” It is about “not going against the fundamental will of faith.”; it also means “to accomplish the self through sincerity and reverence as well....” In a broader context, then, an untrustworthy person is like the situation where “people do not trust their nation, and children do not trust their parents.”<sup>37</sup> So the virtue of trust is important for social morality and political responsibility. The Daesoon handbook gives an overall instruction on the three *samyoch'e* virtues:

Sincerity is free from selfish mind; reverence is to act according to propriety and manners; and trust is not to have any kind of distrust...Virtuous preaching, transforming through teaching, and self-cultivating the truth will not be accomplished independent of, or separable from (these three virtues) sincerity, reverence, and trust.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.2 (p.52).

<sup>36</sup> *Daesoon jichim*, 2.2.2 (p.52).

<sup>37</sup> *Daesoon chich'im*, 2.2.2 (p.53).

<sup>38</sup> *Daesoon chich'im*, 2.2.2 (p.54).

In his pioneering study of Daesoon thought, Professor Chŏng Daejin (2001:1-22) of Daejin University pointed out that although it is rooted in Confucianism, the Daesoonjinrihoe approach to self-cultivation is different because its followers also participate in religious practice, such as scripture chanting and prayer. I agree that the unique part of Daesoonjinrihoe is represented by these devotional acts (chanting and prayer) in their temples and homes. Indeed, this concurs with the Daesoon founder's role-model; e.g., "Faithfully serve Lord Sangje, without having any deception."<sup>39</sup> In following "the original mind without evil," one is to trust the divine grace and teaching of the Sangje. The self-cultivated person would also follow "the eternal vision of the Sangje." In short, Daesoon thought is enriched with a devotional dimension of faith, which includes the same *theistic* element found in the practice of the Four Fundamental Principles as well.

### **Completion of the Human Virtue and Envisioning an Ideal World**

According to the Daesoon scripture, "Alas! It is sad that people are blindly attached to gaining material wealth, without realizing themselves and a new beginning of the world."<sup>40</sup> The time of respecting humanity is called "the Later World" (*huch'ŏn saegyŏ*), a world to come, which "opens up a new age through reform and renovation." As revealed by the Sangje, it will create an ideal society in which all human beings are honored, suffering is eliminated, and the difference between the rich and the poor disappears. And "mutual living," "harmonious transformation," and "united oneness" are also established.<sup>41</sup> In other words, Jeongsan's nationalist religious nature has an idealistic belief in creating a new world without hatred, problem, and disorder.

For this goal, Daesoonjinrihoe emphasizes the ideal of "self-completion." The human way (*indo*) is to realize the Truth (*dao*) and transform one's mind

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<sup>39</sup> *Daesoon chich'im*, 2.2.2 (p.51).

<sup>40</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyobŏp (Teaching method) 1:1 (p.221).

<sup>41</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Yesŏ (Prophecy) 81 (pp.336-337). Here, the Four Tenets of Daesoonjinrihoe faith are obviously related: *ŏmyang hapduk*; *shinin chohwa*; *haewŏn sasang*; and *tot'ong chingyŏng*. See also *Jeongyeong*, Yesŏ 9 (p.313), as well as *Introduction*, p.15 for translation.

and unite with the mind of Heaven and Earth. From a syncretic standpoint, developing the *chinshim* (true heart-mind) is encouraged, so that one becomes happy and blessed. In this regard, the practice of daily ethics (*such'ik*) is also encouraged, as I discussed in the preceding section.

The Daesoon scripture is concerned with promoting human values such as love and happiness. “Get rid of hatred at your enemies. If you love them as the people who helped you, then you will be happy and blessed.” and “... Do not hate others; the divine will (of Sangje) knows if you hate them...”<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, this moral demand for loving one's enemies is claimed to be part of Cho Jeongsan's teaching in accordance with the Sangje's divine message. Indeed, it sounds quite similar to the New Testament teaching of love, especially Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. So I note that Jeongsan probably adapted such a theme indirectly through Ch'oe Cheu's or Kang Jeungsan's syncretic thought, or by borrowing it directly from the Korean Christian church.

According to the Daesoon scripture, every person is equally endowed with dignity and goodness by the will of Heaven. Despite Confucian influence here, the Daesoon doctrine certainly has a theistic connotation, for it is commended by a personal god, Sangje. The *Jeongyeong* scripture *envisions* an ideal world as follows:

When spiritual beings and human beings are mutually harmonious (*shinin chohwa*), myriad things are accomplished. When they are mutually united, hundreds of merits are accomplished. The divine spirit (*shinmyǒng*) waits for human beings, as the human beings wait for the divine spirit. After *yin* and *yang* are united, the divine spirit and humans are integrated, and the way of Heaven and the way of Earth are fulfilled. Accordingly, as the *divine work* is fulfilled, the human work is fulfilled. When the human work is fulfilled, the divine work is fulfilled.<sup>43</sup>

God Sangje is said to be the ultimate level of the truth. “The perfection

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<sup>42</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyobŏp 1:56 and 2:44 (pp.231, 242).

<sup>43</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyoun 2:42, *Yumyang gyeong* (pp.206-7).

of the human self' is to be done in accordance with Heaven's will which is also identified as the "divine work" (of the Sangje). The way of becoming near to the divine reality is "to realize the pervading Way" (*tot'ong*). Despite the theistic and ethical theme of this message, one can also discover an implicitly mystical tone about the ultimacy of self-perfection as an intimate way of becoming one with the transcendent reality. It appears to be connected to Ch'oe Cheu's doctrine of *in-nae-ch'ŏn* (humans indifferent from Heaven). From a comparative perspective, this type of "introversive" mystical teaching basically concurs with the Neo-Confucian teaching of sagehood as a way of realizing the Heavenly Principle (*ch'ŏlli*). In this regard, T'oegye's Korean Neo-Confucian spirituality is relevant.<sup>44</sup> This also sounds somewhat like the Taoist way of becoming one and united with the eternal Tao. In short, the Daesoonjinrihoe notion of envisioning an ideal world has a syncretic nature of assimilating other religious traditions.

### III. Comparative Perspectives: Conclusions

It is necessary to do more comparative study of Daesoon religious thought. We cannot underestimate the similarities between Daesoon thought and the Confucian tradition; on the whole, Confucian ideas are strongly rooted in the former's doctrines of self-cultivation. Cultivating the self requires one's sincere will, reverence, and united heart-mind, so that one can arrive at the ultimate Way. As I pointed out already, the relevance of Confucian influence is significant. Daesoonjinrihoe's language is similar to the Confucian way of moral and spiritual cultivation as part of following the way of Heaven. Its way of "Four Creeds" (*sagangryŏng*) and "Three Essentials" (*samyoch'e*) certainly resonates with the Confucian way of learning, mind cultivation, self-development, human relationships, social harmony and responsibility, and national prosperity. So we need to recognize this matter concerning the formation of Daesoon

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<sup>44</sup> For the current scholarship on T'oegye's Neo-Confucianism and comparative thought/religion, see my (Chung) 2007, 2004, 1995, 1992.

jinrihoe as a new religious group in the history of modern Korea. In fact, as recorded in the Daesoon scripture, its founder Cho Jeongsan studied the Five Classics and Four Books of Confucianism.<sup>45</sup>

Belief in human equality is cherished by Daesoon thought: every person is said to be born with human dignity and goodness endowed by the Will of Heaven (Sangje). So the innate human goodness ought to be preserved in daily life. One cultivates and regulates oneself while maintaining sincerity, reverence, and honesty. In this regard, we can talk about Confucian texts such as *Mencius* and *the Doctrine of the Mean*, Chinese Neo-Confucians like Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming, and/or the leading Korean Yi T'oegye. They all affirmed the original goodness of human nature and universally emphasized it as a "heavenly-mandated nature." "The innate heart-mind (*yangshim*) to do good" is viewed as a moral and spiritual source of the ultimate truth.

On the whole, Daesoon religious thought has a theistic core: faith in a personal god, Sangje. This theism became integrated with a devotional practice as well: its followers are asked to thank God Sangje in their hearts, "serve Lord Sangje" faithfully, and to trust his divine will in following one's "innate human goodness." One may suggest that this would not contradict the Christian way of god, faith and devotion. On the other hand, however, the eclectic nature of Daesoonjinrihoe doctrines refers to God Sangje variously as Heaven, the will of Heaven (representing Confucianism), Hanu-nim (Ch'oe Cheu's Ch'ondo-gyo), Ch'ŏnju (Catholic-Christian term), etc.

As discussed in the first section, the Daesoon notion of divine revelation or that of incarnation (the Sangje in the body of Kang Jeungsan) is interesting and unique in a modern Korean context. Strictly speaking, it also appears to be vague or not highly original because it has a syncretic tendency of borrowing the basic ideas from other religions. But we can still consider it further for more discussion from a perspective of world religions.

Jeongsan's religious thinking assimilated Confucianism and other religions. In this regard, Jeongsan was able to articulate a new form of religious life; i.e.,

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<sup>45</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyouun 2:62 (p.219).

his response to a divine call from the Sangje was a typical religious feature (experiencing a personal god). This is unique in comparison with Confucianism, for instance because it includes a prophetic vision and a religious and moral life. As Yi Kyŏngwŏn (2005:266) correctly pointed out: “Cho Jeongsan completed a systematic foundation through realizing the need for creating a new religious group. Jeongsan’s work provided a basic form of faith in God Sangje and established a discipline of study and spiritual cultivation.”

Furthermore, Chŏng Daejin, a leading Daesoon scholar in Korea, addressed the notion of “transforming harmony between spirits and human beings” (*shinin chohwa*), one of the tenets of Daesoon faith.<sup>46</sup> As he said, “God (Sangje) is the ultimate reality, and human beings can become united with it...by developing an idealistic realm of human order.” And the original good-ness is grounded in our mind which “has a good capability of discerning right and wrong ..., fulfilling divine wisdom which is dependent on human beings” (Chŏng 2003:7-8). This basically indicates an idealistic type of reasoning in regard to the innate ability to do good. So Chŏng’s interpretation indirectly confirms the Daesoon understanding of “transcendence-in-immanence,”<sup>47</sup> which is about the most fundamental Confucian (East Asian) belief in *ch’ŏnin habil* (*t’ien-jen ho-i* in Chinese), whether religiously or philosophically speaking.<sup>48</sup> The *ch’ŏnin habil* means “the unity and oneness between Heaven and human beings.” For Daesoonjinrihoe, the term Heaven also refers to God Sangje who is identified with Haneu-nim or Ch’ŏnju as well.

From a related angle, it is also worthwhile to note the basic meanings of the term *daesoon*. For instance, the Daesoon scripture mentions “God Sangje’s

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<sup>46</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyeop 2:36, 56 (pp.241, 244) and 3:23 (p.254).

<sup>47</sup> For this Neo-Confucian and comparative topic on “transcendence and immanence,” consult Berthrong 1994; Ching 2000, 1975; Taylor 1991; Tu 1985; Tu and Tucker 2004; or Chung (my) 2007, 2004, 1995.

<sup>48</sup> For good sources on discussing the *t’ien-jen ho-i*, see Julia Ching 2000, 1997, 1993 and Kūng and Ching 1989.

*Daesoon* around heaven and earth”<sup>49</sup> and simply “the *daesoon* truth” (*daesoon jinri*).<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the latter phrase, *Daesoon jinri*, is the formal name of this religious group. The *daesoon* is also understood to be the transcendent-yet-immanent power as the Principle of existence, empowering the proper way of self-cultivation. From a comparative angle, it is linked to Confucianism and Taoism. In short, it is similar to the Neo-Confucian idea of Principle (*li*), as mentioned in the preceding section.<sup>51</sup>

Daesoonjinrihoe is a unique part of development in the modern history of religion in Korea. Its approach to spiritual cultivation does not particularly contradict the Confucian tradition or the virtuous ways of Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity. Its basic nature is inter-religiously open and philosophically eclectic. Indeed, one of its key messages is about God Sangje giving a message to the human world in order to fulfill the Truth (*daesoon*) far beyond Korea.<sup>52</sup> The Daesoon scripture also addresses a profound interest in promoting a pluralistic and multi-religious Way:

One day, the Jeungsan Sangje said: Followers of Tonghak are waiting for a renewed Ch’oe Cheu; Buddhists are waiting for the coming of the Maitreya Future Buddha; and Christians are waiting for the second coming of Jesus. Whoever comes—whether Ch’oe, Maitreya, or Jesus—that is my master, so follow the Way.<sup>53</sup>

Here I see a pluralistic and inter-religious tone; it is not only interesting in a

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<sup>49</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyoun 1:64. p.181.

<sup>50</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyoun 2.

<sup>51</sup> I can also add a related point: the Taoist idea of the Way (Tao), as presented in the Taoist classics such as the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Chuang Tzu*, is relevant here because a similar mode of philosophic thinking was used (adapted) in describing the *daesoon*’s universal power and creativity and its implication for perfecting the human virtue and establishing an ideal world. For English works on the Taoist texts, see Lau’s and Watson’s translations; Kohn 2001 and 1991; Maspero 1981; and Chan 1963.

<sup>52</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Kyoun 1:65; pp.181-82.

<sup>53</sup> *Jeongyeong*, Yeshe 79, p.336

Korean context, but also has a broader implication for comparative religion. We need to continue studying Daesoon religious thought from various historical and comparative perspectives engaging East Asian and world religions, as I have endeavored to do in this paper. I also agree with Kim Chongsuh (2005:130) that: "It is necessary to discuss the distinctive nature of Daesoon thought from a crosscultural and inter-religious angle."

The living traditions of world religions generally share a love of wisdom, despite their theoretical and cultural differences. Overcoming the limitedness of material life and the concrete reality is therefore to discover (or recover) the true humanity and everlasting wisdom through a moral-spiritual way of self-transformation. Regarding Daesoonjinrihoe, the transcendent reality of God Sangje is believed to be inseparable from its immanent goodness in humanity and universal harmony. The meaning of *daesoon* gives every individual the opportunity to search for a Heavenly-endowed image within the self.

As we know, the spiritual growth does not come from religious isolationism or doctrinal exclusivism. World religions are continuously encouraged to learn from one another through mutual dialogue; I would apply the same point to Korean religious groups including Daesoonjinrihoe. From a comparative standpoint of world religions, the notion of "the Ultimate Reality" is variously expressed according to the different religious traditions of the world.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, their common interests in searching for the Ultimate Truth (whether God, Tao, Heaven's Principle, Buddha-nature, Nirvana, or even Sangje's *daesoon*) are significant enough for us to advance our global efforts at promoting interreligious dialogue and multi-religious harmony. This quest is not just my philosophical argument or a scholarly commitment (whether Confucian, non-Confucian, Christian, or pluralistic); it could also be our "ultimate concern" for all humanity.

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<sup>54</sup> Recently, scholars have debated many models, ideas, and issues of interreligious dialogue from various perspectives (theocentric, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, pluralistic, comparative, etc.). For some of the leading works, I recommend Hick 1993, 1989; Knitter 2005, 1985; Cobb 1999; W. C. Smith 1993, 1981; Küng and Ching 1989; and Tillich 1963.

To conclude, I suggest that Daesoonjinrihoe's core system of ethics and spirituality may be a good example of new religions for more discussion in the currently advancing field of comparative religion. We need to continue exploring it not only from a modern Korean perspective, but also in a broader context of world religions and interreligious dialogue.

### **A Note on the Citation and Transliteration Style**

In most cases, Korean names, concepts and titles are romanized according to the standard McCune-Reischauer system which I (and other scholars in the West) prefer over the new Korean system adapted by the Ministry of Education, Korea. However, I also use the latter format in giving the key Daesoonjinrihoe names and terms because it is formally used and requested by Daesoonjinrihoe and the Daesoon Institute; e.g., Cho Jeongsan (rather than Chöngsan in the McCune-Reischauer system); Daesoonjinrihoe (not Taesun jillihoe), *Jeongyeong* (not *Chön gyöng*); etc.

Chinese terms are romanized according to the Wade-Giles system (my preference over the Pinyin system for a pronunciation reason). For Korean sources cited, only the Korean titles are given, as this is the standard style. Since this is a topic on Korean religion, most of the romanized philosophical and religious terms are given for the Korean pronunciation and then for the Chinese (if necessary). Furthermore, all references to the primary Daesoonjinrihoe texts are cited in the notes. For the reader's convenience as well, most citations from the relevant modern scholars are done directly cited in the text, except those lengthy ones included in the notes for further discussion and supplementary information.

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# Truth and Spatial Imagination: Buddhist Thought and Daesoonjinrihoe

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Is there a specific space where one encounters truth more genuinely than in other space? Is truth related to our notion of space, and if so, how do we define the nature of the truth that is encountered in a specific space? This essay explores ideas about this space of truth and the nature of truth that are present in the teachings of Daesoonjinrihoe [Taeun chillihoe], focusing on the concept of “*daesoon*.” In the process of examining the multifaceted meaning of *daesoon* (or widely touring the world),<sup>1</sup> this essay tries to answer questions about where and how truth emerges, how it affects our understanding of everyday life in the context of both mundane and sacred reality, and how it helps us understand our globalizing, multicultural society from the perspective of the teachings of Daesoonjinrihoe.

## I. Widely Touring the World (Daesoon)

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<sup>1</sup> In this essay, the expression *daesoon* is translated variously depending on the context: widely traveling, widely touring the world, or to travel around the world. The official translation of the expression *daesoon* by the school is “Great Itineration” and of Daesoonjinrihoe “The Fellowship of the Truth (Jinrihoe) and the Great Itineration (Daesoon). (See *An Introduction to Daesoonjinrihoe* [Gyeonggi-do, Korea: Daesoon Institute of religion & Culture, 2009], p.1.) However, since one major theme of this essay is to explore philosophical implications of the expression *daesoon*, in this essay I will use various different translations of this expression depending on the context.

The expression *daesoon* in Daesoonjinri appears several times in *The Scripture* (Kyochŏn) of the school. One passage describes how, upon hearing the complaints from “all the godly sages, buddhas and bodhisattvas” about disasters caused by the materialist worldview of the West that aggravates the pride of humans, the Lord on High “descended to the Tower of the Revelation of Heaven in the West and traveled around the world, and arrived at Three Story Maitreya Hall at Kŭmsan Monastery on Mountain Moak.”<sup>2</sup> The passage contrasts the two worlds: the Tower of the Revelation of Heaven in the West and Three Story Maitreya Hall at Kŭmsan Monastery in Korea. The *Scripture* further contrasts the two worlds through the materialism of the West and the recognition by the Easterner of the damage done by such a worldview. The major concern of the Lord on High, in this case, is stated as correcting the harms that were caused by the materialist worldview of the West.

In another passage in which the expression *daesoon* appears, the focus of the Lord on High changes. The Lord on High states:

After I had descended to the Tower of the Revelation of Heaven in the West, I had traveled through [*daesoon*] the three worlds. As I toured around the Eastern world, with the intention to reform the three worlds, with the power to control the three worlds, and thus to open a sagely realm and save the beings of the world in the state of dilapidation, I have decided to stay in your land, and that was because I wanted to give my priority to helping the powerless and nameless people who were in the midst of tragedy, and thus release them of their rancor that has been accumulated for ages. (CG 266)

The East-West contrast in the previous passage is replaced with ethnic concern and with the contrast between those who have and those who do not have power; the warning against the problems caused by materialism in the earlier passage is also replaced with the awareness of the resentment that has been experienced by those who do not have power and with the hope of releasing them from such rancor.

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<sup>2</sup> *Chŏn'gyŏng*, compiled by Daesoonchinrihoe kyomubu [Daesoon chillihoe kyomubu] (Seoul: Daesoonchinrihoe ch'ulp'anbu, 1974), p.155. Henceforce CG; citations from this text will be marked within the text followed by page numbers.

In yet another passage in which the expression *daesoon* appears, which is in the section on “Revelation” (Yesi), the goal of widely touring the world (*daesoon*) expands: the Lord on High wishes to bring order to the world in turmoil. The passage states:

When the Lord on High was staying in the ninth empyrean, the godly sages, buddhas, and bodhisattvas made an appeal that nobody but the Lord on High would be able to bring order to this world in chaos. In response to that appeal, the Lord on High descended to the Tower of the Revelation of Heaven [in the West]; He examined the three realms and traveled around the world [*daesoon*]. Having arrived in the East, he reached at the Maitreya Hall at Kūmsan Monastery on Mountain Moak, and stayed there for thirty years (CG 311)

The goal that the teaching of the *daesoon* tries to accomplish, then, contains three levels: on its first level, it aims to release, through the reformation of the three worlds, the resentment of those who do not have names and those who are powerless; on its second level, it aims to save the world from the damage caused by Western materialism and human pride; and finally it brings order to the world which is “out of joint,” to borrow a phrase from *Hamlet*. Before we address the issue of how such goals are to be achieved according to the Lord on High, let us ask the following two questions: Why do these tasks require “widely touring the world (*daesoon*)”? How is the concept of *daesoon* related to “truth,” since the two concepts—“widely touring the world” (*daesoon*) and “truth” (*chinri*)—construct the name and the major teachings of the school?

Two potential meanings of “*daesoon*” in relation to truth can be traced from the *Scripture*. In section 64 of “Management of the School” (Kyo’u), it is stated that Kong’u assisted the Lord on High for three years on various projects, and each time when a project was completed, the Lord on High commanded Kong’u, “Visit the followers of the school in diverse places and declare this message”; the Lord on High added, “This is what I call the *daesoon* of the world” (CG 181). The *daesoon*, or “widely touring the world,” in this case could indicate widely spreading the teachings that are learned through engagement with various worldly affairs. In another passage, the *Scripture* states that the “Master of Teaching (Toju) taught the truth that is earned through widely touring the world” (CG 195). Hence,

“widely touring the world” indicates both the truth earned through such traveling and the act of sharing this truth. The truth is earned by getting involved with various worldly affairs, and such truth is to be shared widely by the followers of the school.

What is the nature of this truth, then, and what does the sharing of such truth involve? If truth can be earned through such activities, does this mean that truth already exists in the world to be discovered and encountered by the traveler, or does truth happen as the traveler encounters the world and events, instead of encountering the already existing truth? The distinction I am trying to address here is similar to what Martin Heidegger once made between truth as *veritas* and truth as *aletheia*.

In a religious tradition, as well as in a philosophical tradition, truth is rarely understood as something that can be gained by traveling around the world. That is because truth in this case is not understood as being temporally or spatially specific: instead, what is truth should be universal, and thus truth should be the same whether it is understood in Greece in the first century or China in the twenty-first century. Such an approach to truth, according to Heidegger, defines truth as *veritas*. The concept of truth as *veritas*, according to Heidegger, is based on the idea of correspondence between knowledge and facts. Truth as *veritas* claims that when one’s knowledge about an object corresponds to the facts of the object, one reaches or attains truth.

Suppose a person has knowledge that an apple is round; if the fact of an apple also tells that it has a round shape, one can say that the person has truth about the apple. This simple example already demonstrates the limits of the idea of truth as *veritas*—correspondence between knowledge and facts. It is true that an apple has a round shape, but that is not the only fact about an apple. It sometimes has red color, sometimes green, or yellow; it could be sweet, or dull; it could be crispy and/or juicy, and so on. Can we say partial knowledge constitutes truth? How does the searcher of truth confirm that each piece of this knowledge corresponds to the facts of an apple? And how does one collect all the facts so that the person’s knowledge can reach the complete truth? Here one finds oneself in a vicious circle. In order to know the truth, one needs all the knowledge regarding the object of truth; in order to have knowledge, one needs facts. How does one know whether the facts are true or not unless one has knowledge about

the facts? And how does one have knowledge unless one knows the truth about the object about which one is to have knowledge? The circular movement involved in this speculation tells us that it is impossible to reach truth through correspondence between knowledge and facts, that is, truth as *veritas*.

The truth, in this case, becomes possible by artificially stopping this circular movement. Truth already exists, regardless of the environments in which the truth finds itself. With the idea of “discovering” the existing truth, as in the case of truth as *veritas*, truth is objectified as something fixed and something one can recover, and thus something one can possess. Possession is possible in the subject-object dualist structure; as the subject possesses the object, the subject is the owner of the object, but not a part of it. One owns truth, but as a result, the searcher of the truth will be forever outside of the truth.

As opposed to truth as *veritas*, Heidegger suggests truth as *aletheia* in his fundamental ontology. In this approach to truth, truth is understood not as ready-made, nor can it be simply discovered; rather, truth emerges as part of contextual reality. For Heidegger, this emergence of truth happens in a hermeneutical circle. The nature of truth that Daesoonjinri addresses shares some characteristics of truth as *aletheia*, instead of truth as *veritas*. This understanding of truth in the context of Daesoonjinri helps us understand the importance of widely touring the world in the teaching of Daesoonjinri and its relation to truth, as in the title of the school. Such an approach also demands that we consider a symbolic meaning of “widely touring the world” and understand the concept in the context of the religious tradition of pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage is usually understood as a journey to visit a sacred space; thus, a pilgrim pays homage to a space that has special meaning in a religious tradition. A pilgrimage to a sacred space denotes a special relationship that a religion maintains with a specific geography.<sup>3</sup> Pilgrimage is one of the traditional ways of practicing religious devotion. Physical presence in a certain space not only deepens one’s faith, but also facilitates a special relationship with the object of

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<sup>3</sup> Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage: Past and Present in the World Religions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). Simon Coleman and John Eade, eds., *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2005).

one's faith. This notion also suggests that a practitioner of a religion has a certain relationship with truth that is manifested in the religious tradition. With the same expression, "pilgrimage," different religious traditions, or different approaches to truth, propose different understandings of the meaning and function of pilgrimage in a religious practice and the practitioner's relationship with truth.

In Buddhist tradition, one of the classical texts, *The Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, identifies the four places of pilgrimage for Buddhist practitioners:

There are four places, Ananda, that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. What are the four?

'Here the Tathagata was born!' This, Ananda, is a place that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

'Here the Tathagata became fully enlightened in unsurpassed, supreme Enlightenment!' This, Ananda, is a place that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

'Here the Tathagata set rolling the unexcelled Wheel of the Dhamma!' This, Ananda, is a place that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

'Here the Tathagata passed away into the state of Nibbana in which no element of clinging remains!' This, Ananda, is a place that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

These, Ananda, are the four places that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. And truly there will come to these places, Ananda, pious bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, laymen and laywomen, reflecting: 'Here the Tathagata was born! Here the Tathagata became fully enlightened in unsurpassed, supreme Enlightenment! Here the Tathagata set rolling the unexcelled Wheel of the Dhamma! Here the Tathagata passed away into the state of Nibbana in which no element of clinging remains!'<sup>4</sup>

What does it mean that the Buddha identified the place of his birth (Lumbini), the place where he had attained enlightenment (Buddhagaya), the place where he had given his first sermon to the five ascetics (Sarnath), and the place where he had

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<sup>4</sup> *Last Days of the Buddha: The Maha-parinibbana Sutta* (revised edition), translated from the Pali by Sister Vajira and Francis Story (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998). Chapter 5, §§16-21, pp.62-63.

entered into the nirvana (Kushinagar) as sacred spaces where pious people should make visits and remember the teachings of the Buddha? The idea of the sacred space, and of pilgrimage, can be found in most of the major world religions, and one might say that the Buddha's statement accords with that tradition.

However, if we consider the basic Buddhist doctrines, this statement about four sacred places for pilgrimage, if it does not contradict major Buddhist doctrines, at least needs to be read with caution. That is especially the case in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition in which iconoclasm holds strong. In its extreme case, as is well-known, the ninth-century Chinese Chan Master Linji (?-867) declared:

If you meet a Buddha, kill the Buddha. If you meet a patriarch, kill the patriarch. If you meet an arhat, kill the arhat. If you meet your parents, kill your parents. If you meet your kinfolk, kill your kinfolk. Then, for the first time you will gain emancipation, will not be entangled with things, will pass freely anywhere you wish to go.<sup>5</sup>

In a tradition in which reification of any concepts, including that of the Buddha or of the patriarch, is strongly challenged, the idea that a certain geographical place holds a specially sacred meaning could be problematic. This, however, does not indicate that pilgrimage has no significance of its own in Buddhist tradition.

One way of explaining pilgrimage in Buddhist tradition is to understand it as a skillful means. For example, in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the Buddha explains the function of a skillful means of stūpa. In response to Ananda's question regarding for whom a stūpa should be erected, the Buddha identifies four groups, and explains why a stūpa needs to be erected. The reason is not to worship those four groups of Buddhists, but because "at the thought: 'This is

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<sup>5</sup> Linji lu, Taishō shinshū daizōkyō (Tripitaka Compiled during the Taishō Period). Ed. Takakusu Junjirō et al. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924-1935 [Hereafter T], 47.1985.496b-506c, p.500b; English translation by Burton Watson, *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1993), p.52.

the stūpa of that Blessed One, Arahant, Fully Enlightened One!’ the hearts of many people will be calmed and made happy,” and “so calmed and with their minds established in faith therein, at the breaking up of the body, after death, they will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness.”<sup>6</sup> A stūpa is here interpreted as an object that offers a means for the practitioner to move towards spiritual elevation. A stūpa as a structure is not an object of worship, but it facilitates an environment for the practitioner to cultivate his mind.

One can move one step further in considering the symbolic implication of erecting a stūpa, or by the same token, taking a pilgrimage. In the same text, the Buddha, on his deathbed, recollects his life and states,

In age but twenty-nine was I, Subhadda,  
When I renounced the world to seek the Good;  
Fifty-one years have passed since then, Subhadda,  
And in all that time a wanderer have I been  
In the domain of virtue and of truth,  
And except therein, there is no saint.<sup>7</sup>

Reading this in the context of the discussion of a stūpa and a pilgrimage to a sacred space, the Buddha’s reflection of his life seems contradictory to his previous statements. A stūpa or a sacred space (and thus a pilgrimage to a sacred space) presupposes a journey toward a pre-arranged destination, whereas the Buddha defined his own life as a life of a wanderer. Why does the Buddha identify himself as “a wanderer... in the domain of virtue and of truth”? Was he not the one who had completely embodied both virtue and truth? What is the relationship between being a wanderer and embodying “virtue and truth” in one’s life?

To answer these questions, we need to consider the symbolic meaning of pilgrimage in the context of Buddhism, which will also allow us to further expand our understanding of “widely touring the world” and “truth.” In the case of Daesoonjinrihoe, the meaning of pilgrimage is not limited to the traditional

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<sup>6</sup> *Last Days of the Buddha*, Chapter 5, §§28-31, p.64-65.

<sup>7</sup> *Last Days of the Buddha*, Chapter 5, §62, p.72.

mode of one's actual presence in sacred space; instead, pilgrimage is itself a mode of search for truth and its emergence in space.

## II. Pilgrimage in Truth

The symbolic meaning of pilgrimage, which is fully charged with the soteriological implication of Buddhism, is well-articulated in *Huayan jing* (Flower Garland Scripture), the major scripture of Huayan Buddhism, which has significantly influenced the formation of Buddhist thought in Korea. In the chapter entitled "Entering the Realm of Reality," one of the most well-known sections of this immensely large scripture, a young truth-searcher named Sudhana is determined to learn to practice bodhisattva path, having been encouraged by Mañjuśrī's recognition that he has accumulated roots of goodness. Sudhana asks Mañjuśrī (Manjushri):

Noble One, please give me a full explanation of how an enlightening being [bodhisattva] is to study the practice of enlightening beings, [of] how an enlightening being is to accomplish it. How is an enlightening being to initiate the practice of enlightening beings? How is an enlightening being to carry out the practice of enlightening beings? How is an enlightening being to fulfill the practice of enlightening beings? ... How can an enlightening being fulfill the sphere of the universally good practice?"<sup>8</sup>

Instead of offering an answer to these questions, Mañjuśrī simply directs the young pilgrim to a monk name Maghaśrī. Mañjuśrī tells the young truth-searcher:

Go to him and ask how an enlightening being [bodhisattva] should learn the conduct of enlightening beings, and how to apply it; how one is to fulfill, purify, enter into, carry out, follow, keep to, and expand the practice of enlightening beings, and how an enlightening being is to fulfill the sphere of universally good

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<sup>8</sup> *Huayan jing*, T 10.279.1a-444c, p. xx. English translation by Thomas Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avantamsaka Sutra* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 1993), p.1178.

action. That spiritual friend will tell you about the sphere of universally good conduct.”<sup>9</sup>

When he heard this, Sudhana was “pleased, enraptured, transported with joy, delighted, happy and cheerful, laid his head at the feet of Manjushri in respect, circled Manjushri hundreds and thousands of times, and looked at him hundreds and thousands of times, with a mind full of love for the spiritual friend, unable to bear not seeing the spiritual friend, with tears streaming down his face he wept, and left Manjushri.”<sup>10</sup> This description might be exaggerated, but it is not difficult to share the joy and emotion that this young pilgrim experienced when he thought that he would finally find the answer to his search for truth and would finally learn about the way of bodhisattva practice “once and for all.”

As he meets Maghaśri, however, Sudhana realizes that Maghaśri is not the only teacher from whom he will learn; instead, starting with Maghśri, each of Sudhana’s teachers continues to refer this truth-searcher to yet another teacher once he or she has shared the truth about spiritual practice that he or she has learned. In Sudhana’s pilgrimage for the search for bodhisattva path, there is a constant deferral of meaning and of truth, which does not promise a final goal, unlike a teleological scheme of progress which always moves toward a fixed destination. Hence, Sudhana, who was directed to the monk Maghaśri by Mañjšri, is referred to the monk Sagaramegha; the monk Sagaramegha refers Sudhana to the monk Supratishthita; and so on, until Sudhana meets fifty-three dharma teachers. More interestingly, the fifty-three spiritual benefactors of Sudhana do not consist exclusively of monks or nuns. Among them are a grammarian named Megha, a distinguished man named Muktaka, a laywoman named Asha, a seer named Bhishmottaranirghosha, a girl named Maitrayai, a boy named Indriyeshvara, a perfumer named Samantanetra, a king named Anala, a mariner named Vaira, a nun named Sinhavijumbhita, a bodhisattva named Avalokiteshvara, and an earth goddess named Sthavara, in addition to Manjushri, Maytreya, Vairocana, and Shamantabhadra, the spiritual benefactors

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<sup>9</sup> T 10.279.333; English translation, Cleary, p.1179.

<sup>10</sup> T 10.279.334; English translation, Cleary, pp.1179-1180.

of traditional Buddhism. Using a modern expression, one might say that this list of spiritual benefactors is very “politically correct”; it includes both monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, kings, goddesses, girls, boys, and average workers.

What could be the religious and philosophical implications of this rather unusual list of spiritual benefactors that “Entering the Realm of Reality” provides? Even though the *Sūtra* offers the names of only fifty-three dharma teachers whom Sudhana had to meet, at the end of the chapter, the *Sūtra* states that he has passed “more than one hundred and ten cities” in his search for various spiritual teachers<sup>11</sup> and that he has met “as many spiritual benefactors as atoms in a billion-world universe.”<sup>12</sup> How high would be the number of “atoms in a billion-world universe”? Does the number mean anything at all? The idea is that in a bodhisattva’s efforts to learn about the bodhisattva path, to purify the mind and exercise compassion for other beings, there can be no ending of learning and searching. This explains why Mañjuśrī did not immediately explain Sudhana what he had to do in order to practice the path of bodhisattva and why he instead directed Sudhana to go through an endless journey, when, at the end of the journey, Sudhana would return to Mañjuśrī. The nature of existence, life, and truth that Buddhism envisions cannot propose any fixed concept of truth. All things in the world exist through multilayered causation with no independent essences of their own, and so does truth. Buddhism explains this nature of existence, and thus of truth, through the theories of dependent co-arising and of emptiness. Fazang (643-712), who has been credited as the systematizer of Chinese Huayan Buddhist philosophy, calls this nature of reality “inexhaustibility” (C. *chongchong wujin*; K. *chungchung mujin*). The nature of existence is such that no one or two truths can comprehensively represent the truth of all things in the world. As suggested by Sudhana’s encounter with the endless numbers of spiritual benefactors, truth is not a fixed concept that can be imparted to people through one or two statements; instead, truth emerges as each individual encounters and engages himself or herself in

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<sup>11</sup> T 10.279.439; English translation, Cleary, p.1502.

<sup>12</sup> T 10.279.439; English translation, Cleary, p.1503.

various situations of life. Heidegger defines this approach to truth as *aletheia*. That is, truth is disclosed within the context that one encounters. The truth that Huayan Buddhism envisions through the symbolic journey of Sudhana is not much different from the idea of truth as *aletheia*.<sup>13</sup>

In the section entitled “Revelation,” the Lord on High states, “In the previous world, the world is small and matter of affairs is simple, and it is possible to overcome the obstacle by only employing one teaching; however, in the world to come, the world is wide, and the matter of affairs are complex; without utilizing all the possible teachings together, it will not be possible to bring order to the confused world” (CG 313-314). The world that Daesoonjinri predicts is a multicultural, multi-ethnic globalized world in which different ethnic groups, cultures, traditions, and issues are intricately interwoven and in which the sum of different issues generates a texture of reality which no one method can disentangle. Despite the complexity that such a world is pregnant with, the world that Daesoonjinri envisions is not a clash of civilizations, as some have proposed. Instead, the fundamental vision of the world of Daesoonjinri is based on the idea of “*haewŏn sangsaeng*,” that is, “resolution of grievances for the sake of mutual beneficences.” How does this resolution of grievances, resentments, complaints, and misunderstandings actually occur in a society when different groups assert their own individual claims, which inevitably generates conflicts among the members of the world? We are experiencing the difficult task of “living together” in the globalized world in which, as we have witnessed in the terrorist attacks and the counter-attacks on the terrorists, our concepts of values and ethics are challenged in the name of self-defense and in which violence toward others is justified in the name of protecting one’s own citizens.

The possibility of the resolution of grievances and mutual beneficences proposed by Daesoonjinri is based on the awareness of the complementary nature of opposites, as demonstrated in two other major concepts of the school: the “unified virtue of yin and yang” (*ŭmyang haptŏk*) and the “harmony of the

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion on Heideggerian concept of truth as *aletheia* and Buddhist concept of truth, see Jin Y. Park, *Buddhist and Postmodernity: Zen, Huayan, the Possibility of Buddhist Postmodern Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), chapter 5.

sacred and humans” (*sin'in chohwa*). The idea of unity and harmony, in this case, needs to be understood with caution if we expect that unity and harmony will function to release one’s rancor and grievances. The simple fact that contrasting opposites, e.g., yin and yang, or the sacred and humans, form a unity means that harmony itself presupposes that conflict is inevitably involved in this unified virtue and harmony, as demonstrated by the diversity of beings that exist in the milieu of mutual dependency. This constant and consistent existence of conflicts within harmony and unity are frequently forgotten when we envision a world of harmony and unity. However, one should keep in mind that a harmony does not and cannot indicate that conflicts do not exist; rather, a harmony is to be understood, first, as an awareness of the existence of conflicts and differences and, second, as a horizon for which one makes endless effort for mutual survival without enslaving others in the name of unity.

The claim that harmony or unity always contains conflicts within it does not indicate that Daesoonjinri’s vision of the realization of the authentic world of *dao* (*tot’ong chin’gyǒng*) is not possible. Instead, the idea clarifies the nature of such a world. Like the world of bodhisattva that is described through the endless pilgrimage of Sudhana in *Huayan jing*, in the world that is understood by Daesoonjinri, conflicts do not reify the privileged. The contrasting and conflicting natures of yin and yang, the sacred and the secular, or divinity and humans remain as conflicts and generate rancor only when the conflicting nature of the two becomes reified. Darkness is possible through the lack of light, and light eliminates darkness; this contrast and even conflict of the two ideas, light and darkness, is not inherently a problem. Only when each demands its right for exclusive existence do the conflicting natures of light and darkness turn into the suppression of the one by the other, which inevitably generates rancor and grievances from those whose difference was suppressed by those who have power. The seventh-century Chinese Chan master, the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, explains this logic as follows: “Darkness is not darkness by itself; because there is light, there is darkness. Darkness is not darkness by itself; with light, darkness changes, and with darkness, light is revealed. Each

mutually causes the other.”<sup>14</sup> The mutual dependency, as emphasized by Huineng in this passage, is the fundamental structure of existence in Buddhism. On the phenomenal level, one finds each entity; when one looks into the reality of its existence from the noumenal level of existence, one finds that the seeming individuality of each existence is not tenable. The phenomenal and noumenal levels are, again, not dual; they are a hermeneutic device that can be used to explain the reality of existence. The noumenal is the world of inexhaustibility, in Fazang’s words, and the phenomenal is the world of diverse entities; but since each phenomenon is limited in its appearance, the truth-seeker Sudhana needs to learn from an endless (and inexhaustible) number of spiritual benefactors.

The nonduality of noumena and phenomena, as envisioned in Buddhism, appears in the way Daesoonjinri defines Buddhism along with two other major religious traditions that the school encompasses in its doctrine. In the *Scripture*, the Lord on High describes the three major religious traditions as follows: “The form-essence of Buddhism, transformation of Daoism, and proprieties of Confucianism” (CG 148). Unlike the clear descriptions of Daoism’s transformation and Confucianism’s social morality, the description of Buddhism as “the form-essence” (*hyŏngch’e*) is rather ambiguous and thus invites different interpretations. Instead of agonizing over finding an exact meaning of this expression, one might understand its implications by considering the different domains that the Lord on High assigned to the three traditions. The propriety of Confucianism refers to the socio-ethical domain of life; the transformation of Daoism refers to the cosmological aspect of the existence of both humans and non-humans; the form-essence of Buddhism, then, can be interpreted as referring to the ontologico-existential reality of life. In his interpretation of this passage, Gyung-won Lee states: “The form-essence (*hyŏngch’e*) is to be understood as

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<sup>14</sup> Huineng, *Nanzong dunjiao zuishang dasheng mahe panruo bolou mijing: Liuzu Huineng dashi yu Shaozhou Dafansi shifa tanjing* (The Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra of the Best Mahāyāna Buddhism of the Sudden Teaching of the Southern School: the Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng of Dafan Temple in Shaozhou), T 48.2007.337a-345b, p.343c.

a condensed expression of the essence of the form (*hyŏng chi ch'e*), not as a synonym of appearance (*hyŏngsang*). In other words, it is an abbreviation of the essence of the form. The form-essence indicates realizing the essence that exists within each appearance, and this can be understood as quietness.”<sup>15</sup> This passage might imply that Lee is offering a dualistic vision of form and essence. Preventing such a possibility, Lee adds this footnote: “In order for Buddhist awakening to take place, the form, which is the phenomenon of arising and ceasing, and suchness, which is the original essence that neither arises nor ceases, need to be combined.”<sup>16</sup> Lee offers Wŏnhyo’s *Taesŭng kisillon so* (Commentary on *The Arising of Mahāyāna Faith*) as an example of the nonduality of arising and ceasing and the true suchness that he discusses in the above passage. To clarify, the form-essence with which the Lord on High identifies the role and meaning of Buddhism in the structure of Daesoonjinri indicates the non-dual aspect of phenomena and noumena in Buddhism, manifesting the existential and ontological reality of a being. The trinity concept of Daoism for cosmic transformation, Buddhism for ontological-existential reality, and Confucianism for social morality can also be applied to the meaning of “widely touring the world” (*daesoon*), as we have tried to demonstrate.

In the essay “The Formation and Meaning of Daesoon Thought,” Yang Moo Mock provides five meanings of the expression *daesoon*:

- (1) “*Daesoon* indicates the exclusive power of the Lord on High in the ninth empyrean, who is the absolute transcendental being, to patrol freely the heaven and the earth”;
- (2) “*Daesoon* means the circle, which is the Ultimate of Non-being (*mu’gŭk*), and the Ultimate of Non-being is the Great Ultimate (*t’ae’gŭk*). *Daesoon* is a comprehensive term that encompasses the circle [completeness], the Ultimate of Non-being, and the Great Ultimate”;
- (3) “*Daesoon* indicates the mysterious laws and transformations that take

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<sup>15</sup> Gyung-won Lee, “Daesoon sasang ūi samgyo’gwanwangron yŏn’gu” (A Study on the Ripeness of Three Religion in Daesoon Thought,” *Sin chonggyo yŏn’gu* (Journal of New Religions), 17 (October 2007): 230-277, p.253.

<sup>16</sup> Gyung-won Lee, “Daesoon sasang ūi samgyo’gwanwangron yŏn’gu,” p.253n.45.

- place in nature according to the circularly movements of the universe”;
- (4) “That *daesoon* is the Ultimate of Non-Being and the Great Ultimate means that it is the concept which combines Daoist thoughts and the yin-yang thoughts.” This means that *daesoon* represents “not the contrast and hostility of [the opposites] but rather, the complementary and supplementary relationship of [the opposites];
- (5) “*Daesoon* indicates the formation and evolution of all the existences through the repetition of the contrasting opposites and the mutually dependent fusion of yin and yang.”<sup>17</sup>

These five definitions progressively expand the realm of *daesoon* until it completely and comprehensively opens the concept into the “formation and evolution” of all existence. On the surface, the five definitive descriptions of *daesoon* seem to contradict one another. In the first definition, *daesoon* is understood as a privileged power of the Lord on High. This idea seemingly separates the action of the “widely touring the world” (*daesoon*) from the reality of the common people. In the second through fourth descriptions, *daesoon* is understood as the fundamental state of the transformation of the universe, and in that context, the complementary nature of binary opposites is emphasized. In the fifth definitive statement, the emphasis of the complementary nature of opposites becomes the ground for mutual survival, which is one of the primary teachings of Daesoonjinri. In the fifth definition, *daesoon* becomes the foundation of all the existence in the world.

In sum, *daesoon* is an exclusive power of the Lord on High, the principle of the universe, and the foundation of all existence. Individual existence cannot be separated from its foundational principle. If we trace the meaning of *daesoon* backward from the fifth definition in the Yang’s list, we find that the meaning of the first definition changes. Daesoon is not the exclusive power of the Lord on High in the sense that only the Lord on High possesses the power and that no one else can possess it; rather, it is the power of the Lord on High in the sense

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<sup>17</sup> Yang Mumok, “Daesoon sasang ūi hyŏngsŏng kwa ūiŭi” (The Formation and Meaning of Daesoon Thoughts), *The Academic Journal of Daesoonjinri* 1 (2007): 67-96, pp.73-75.

that the Lord on High is the one who has fully embodied and who exercises this cosmic principle and the foundation of existence, whereas beings in general have not yet recognized and embodied such a power. This relationship between the Lord on High and common people, with regard to the universal principle and the foundation of existence, is comparable to that of the Buddha and sentient beings. As in the case of the transformation from the sentient being to the Buddha, for common people to fully embrace the truth of *daesoon* requires nothing less than a complete transformation of human beings (*in'gan kaejo*) through a radical change of one's mode of thinking (*ch'ongsin kaejo*). A complete transformation of human beings and a radical change of one's mode of thinking are the two concepts that Daesoonjinri proposes as necessary paths for realizing the school's vision of the world.

How does this radical transformation of one's mode of thinking and thus a transformation of being itself occur? One answer to this question can be drawn from the school's teaching about the three realms. The Lord on High frequently evokes the three realms as he offers his teaching: the heaven (*ch'ön*), the Earth (*chi*), and human (*in*) (CG 47). The three realms constitute main domains in Confucian religious imagination. One especially visible Confucian text that discusses the relation of the three realms is the *Doctrine of the Mean* (Chungyung), in which the three realms create the trinity that contributes to the transformation of the world. Explaining the concept of rancor in relation to these three realms, the Lord on High states: "When the heaven is not generous about rain, there will definitely be complaints from all sides of the world; when the earth is not generous with its water and soil, there will be complaints from all things in the world; when humans are not generous about virtuous behaviors, all activities will definitely be colored by grudge" (CG 48). This passage identifies the lack of generosity, be it of heaven, of nature, or of humans, as one source of grievances or rancor.

It is noteworthy to see how the functions of the heaven, earth, and humans all join together in the function of the mind: "The functions of the heaven, of the earth, and of humans all reside in the mind" (CG 48). Further, it is emphasized, "The core, the gate, the path of one's mind is larger than heaven and earth" (CG 48). The teaching of the Lord on High, at this point, diverges

itself from Confucian philosophy and enters into the world of Buddhism. The mind is the venue where renovation begins and takes place. The Three Essences (*samyō*) of the school identify sincerity (*sōng*), reverence (*kyōng*), and faith (*sin*) as virtues that one needs to practice in order for such a renovation to occur in one's and others' lives.

### III. Good Words for a Snake

How would the cultivation of the moral codes emphasized above actually manifest itself in the daily life of a practitioner? Let us unfold our imagination and consider practical dimension of moral cultivation in Daesoonjinri. In the chapter titled "Dharma Teaching" of the *Scripture*, the Lord on High states, "Even a snake needs to win esteem from humans in order to transform into a dragon. Saying good words for others will earn one one's own virtue" (CG 226). If we understand this teaching in connection with Buddhism, the most relevant would be the Buddhist concept of karma. In Buddhist tradition, one creates karma in three ways: through one's body (physical activities), through one's mind (thinking), and through one's mouth (language). This Sanskrit term, karma, usually is translated in English as "action." Not every action creates karma. Karma in Buddhist tradition refers to actions that one takes with "intention." Despite the dominant understanding of karma as something like a bank account, in the sense that good karma brings in good fortune and bad karma causes disaster, the concept of karma in Buddhism is more complex than such a dualistic idea, and the clear borderline of good and bad karma cannot be drawn easily because of the ambiguity that is involved in the nature of human actions. Also, the ultimate goal of action in Buddhism is not to accumulate good karma but to act without creating karma, as in the case of Buddhas or bodhisattvas. What would this mean in one's relationship with others? In order to answer this question, let us take the example of the story about a snake that is related to the statement by the Lord on High cited earlier.

The story has several different versions in regional folktales in Korea, but I would like to take an example that appeared in the *Daesoon hoebo*, especially the one taken from a legend that exists in Kyōngju. According to a story in this tradition, a snake was cultivating itself in a pond that was the source of

irrigation for rice fields in the village. The region had had drought for several years, which had seriously damaged the farming of the village. Most ponds in the village were dried up. The snake felt sorry for the villagers and had the rain come, and the village had a great harvest. The villagers thought that a divine being residing at the pond had bestowed help on them and sent down rain. Every year after the event, the villagers performed a ritual praying for rain. And the story continues as follows:

Some years later, the time came for the snake to ascend to the sky. In the sky over the village, clouds were gathered, and there emerged a great water-pole from the pond to the sky. However, the snake was merely circling around the pond, unable to ascend to the sky. That was because, in order for the snake to ascend to the sky, it needs to be recognized as a “dragon.” Watching this, the villagers realized that the snake was what they had thought as a sacred being residing in the pond. Immediately, without knowing who started, all the gathered people offered their blessings to the snake, saying, “Look! A dragon is ascending to the sky!” As soon as the snake heard this, it ascended to the sky and transformed itself into a dragon. The dragon did not forget to return its gratitude to the villagers by continuing to send the appropriate amount of rain every farming season.<sup>18</sup>

On the surface, the story exhibits a value system and inter-being relationship with a deceptively simple structure: the snake benefited the villagers by bringing in rain during a drought; in return, the villagers offered their blessings by recognizing the snake as a dragon at the time of its ascendance to the sky, and again, in return, the snake-that-became-a-dragon benefited the villagers with rain that would bring a good harvest every year. At the core of this inter-pretation lies the exchange value that is prevalent in the understanding of the world in our time. A value of an action is determined by its exchange value, and thus all actions are transformed into commodities. However, if we re-read this story with this value system in mind, we realize that what is actually happening in the story is removed from the exchange of benefits between the snake and the villagers.

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<sup>18</sup> Li Sŭngmok, “Yi’mu’gi ūi sŭngch’ŏn” (A Snake Ascends to the Sky), *Daesoon hoebo* 83, (May, Daesoon 138 [2008]): 62-65, p.64.

Instead, the story offers us a possibility of truth as *aletheia*, which we discussed earlier. Just imagine what would be on the minds of the people when they blessed the snake-to-be-a-dragon by saying, “Look! A dragon is ascending to the sky!” This is a moment of transformation, and the villagers are sharing the event as co-participants instead of being merely someone who “returns” the benefits they received from the snake. The appreciation by the villagers of the snake for having benefited them with rain must have played some part in the minds of the villagers as they offered blessings to the snake. However, if that was the sole reason for the villagers to bless the snake-to-be-a-dragon, one cannot move beyond the logic of exchange values, which should be problematic from the perspectives of both Buddhism and Daesoonjinrihoe. From the Buddhist perspective, the logic is not tenable since it assumes a separate identity of the parties involved in the act of exchange, when the structure of existence from the Buddhist perspective is fundamentally inter-connected; hence, in an ultimate sense, the separation of the subject and the object between whom the exchange occurs cannot take place. The same logic holds for Daesoonjinri, because if “*daesoon*”—understood as the repetition of the contrasting opposites and their mutual dependence—is the fundamental principle of all the existences in the world, the division of the subject and object under a pure exchange value system violates the structure of existence envisioned by Daesoonjinri.

The problem of the exchange value system also applies even in the act of benefiting others. The seeming positive moral value involved in the action of “benefiting others,” which is in the context of religious practice strongly encouraged by various different names, sometimes blinds the nature of the exchange value system involved in such acts. The *Diamond Sūtra* of the Buddhist tradition is concerned with this issue in the context of bodhisattva practice. In the *sūtra*, Subhuti, one of the Buddha’s ten major disciples, asks the Buddha for teaching about the bodhisattva path. In response, the Buddha emphasizes that the goal of bodhisattvahood is to help sentient beings liberate themselves. However, as important in the bodhisattva path as guiding sentient beings for their liberation is, the Buddha emphasizes, performing that act of help without resorting to the conventional logic of dualism of the one who helps and the one who is being helped. That is, exercising compassion for the sentient beings

without resorting to the subject-object dualism is fundamental to the Bodhisattva path since the separation of bodhisattvas and sentient beings exists only in the minds of the unenlightened. One of the incidents in the *sūtra*, in which the Buddha emphasizes the non-dual nature of the subject-object relationship in the bodhisattva path, goes as follows:

At that time Subhuti addressed Buddha, saying: World-honored One, if good men and good women would like to raise the mind of perfect enlightenment, by what criteria should they abide and how should they cultivate their mind?

Buddha replied to Subhuti: Good men and good women raising the mind of the perfect wisdom must generate the mind of the following: “I must liberate all the sentient beings; even though all have been liberated, verily any one is liberated.” Why is it so? Subhuti, if a bodhisattva has the idea of an ego-entity, a personality, a being, or a separated individuality, he is not a bodhisattva.<sup>19</sup>

The passage succinctly demonstrates the Buddhist concepts of no-self and emptiness and at the same time shows how such concepts function as the foundation of one’s interaction with others. The non-dual nature of existence is to be practiced even on the level of most precious and seemingly egoless activities of bodhisattvas guiding sentient beings to their liberation. It is not very plausible in the story of the snake’s ascendance to heaven that the villagers were actually as calculative as to offer their blessing as a return to the benefit they had received. By the same token, the virtue of language (*śāṅk*) emphasized by the Lord on High through this story of the snake cannot be understood as an act of earning virtue by offering good words or exchanging good words with good fortune; instead, the teaching emphasizes the act of sharing life with other beings who co-exist in the world. This also is how the concept of releasing rancor and resolving grievances takes place: “When humans are not generous about virtuous behaviors, all activities will definitely be colored by grudge.” The meaning of virtue in this case comes close to the Daoist concept of virtue, that is, each individual being’s capacity for Dao, as opposed to virtue as a social norm in the form of normative ethics.

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<sup>19</sup> *Jingang bore boluomijing* (K. Kūngang panya paramilda kyōng). T 8.235.748c-752c, p. 751a.

As far as one conceives virtue as a static form that exerts a regulatory power in a community, releasing an individual from rancor through virtuous behavior will be an alien thought since virtue as a regulatory power functions by curtailing individuals' freedom and diversity in an effort to create communal order. It always creates the division of inside and outside, those who create the rules of virtue and those who obey the rules. A rather dynamic understanding of virtue is represented by Daesoonjinri's Three Essences of sincerity, reverence, and faith, with their Confucian flavor, and the school's emphasis on the complementarity of opposites generates a concept of virtue that is flowing and flexible, and that comes close to Heidegger's concept of truth as *aletheia*, the emergence or disclosure of truth. In this sense, the ethics that is envisioned by Daesoonjinri shares its idea with what James Hatley considers as "ethics as usual."

Ethics is more often than not understood as being related to "ought" rather than "is." That ethics is something one "ought" to perform and follow inevitably makes ethics a mode of behavior that separates itself from one's daily life. As Hatley puts it, "The very urgency of ethical comportment, that it *ought* to be done, rather than merely *is* to be done, suggest that living an ethical life puts the agent at odds with the usual situation, the normal turn of events, or the course of nature as it would run unimpeded within the given world (emphasis original)."<sup>20</sup> Ethics as usual, which disperses the possibility of the accumulation of grievances, envisions a world of endless effort, as one witnesses in Sudhana's pilgrimage for truth; this is a world in which bodhisattvas exercise their compassion for sentient beings but without raising the idea of a separation between the bodhisattva and sentient beings. The world envisioned by Daesoonjinri through widely touring the world, encountering truths as they emerge in different situations and contexts with the goal of releasing individuals from the accumulated rancor and grievances for the creation of the mutual beneficences of beings in the world, will require nothing less than this new ethical paradigm in which virtuous behavior is not something extraordinary but becomes part of one's daily existence by sharing life with co-participants in this life-world.

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<sup>20</sup> James Hatley, "Introduction: Interrogating Ethics," in *Interrogating Ethics: Embodying the Good in Merleau-Ponty*, eds. James Hatley, Janice McLane & Christian Diehm (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2006), p.1.

# Hoo-cheon-gae-byeok as a Korean Idea of Eschaton

## A Comparative Study of Eschatology between Christianity and *Dae-soon* Thought

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### Introduction

This study examines a distinctive Korean eschatological concept, *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*, in a dialogue with Christian thoughts. In order to clear out the point of discussions, it raises four main questions and clarifies thoughts of both camps with critical comparisons. The first question is cosmological: what is the nature of *eschaton* (the end of the world). The second is sociological: who requests that kind of *eschaton*? Or, which sociological context needs such an idea? The third one is theological: what is the nature of the eschatological faith? This question turns to be political in a sense that the faith quests not for the end of this temporal world as such but for the end of worldly evils in the historical horizon. The fourth one is hermeneutic: how to interpret the eschatological meaning of miracles in religious practices.

Perhaps, all of the comparative works would be limited in that the comparison proceeds with a certain theological and philosophical scope. Therefore, I'd better confess in advance the basic orientation and tone of this work. This study aims to overcome one-sided allegiance to one belief system and to reveal a possible contribution of both of Christian and *Dae-soon* thoughts to the eschatological imagination that could be actualized in concrete historical liberations of the oppressed, not of oppressors, and of the marginalized, not of the dominant. For this conscious attempt toward liberation, this study takes a critical stance to any fidelity for dogmatization, while praising the power of eschatological inspiration

that is enough to draw the actual concern for praxis. Before getting into the dialogue, let us start with a brief survey of the Korean eschatological concept of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*.

### **A Brief Observation of the Idea of *Hoo-cheon-gae-byeok***

The notion of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*, literally meaning ‘the great transformation of the later world,’ appeared in the early twentieth century and yet had been developed from the root of *dong-hak* (eastern learning), one of the most creative religious and socio-political movements in the modern history of Korea. The religious founder of the movement, Soo-ün (1824-64), understood “*gae-byeok* (the great transformation)” in two senses. First, he understood it as an oriental theory of creation of the heaven and earth that has been in the long tradition of Chinese and Korean thoughts. The notion is also expansively used to indicate such significant events as an initiation of a new dynasty and an emergence of a great socio-political accident that are supposed to be equivalent to the creation for people of a certain time. Second, he expressed his awakening as *gae-byeok* with which he hopefully explained his religious belief.<sup>1</sup> For Soo-ün, *gae-byeok* is not only the principle of the heavenly order but also the subjective encounter with an eternal being by which all things can be changed. He used the term, “*da-si-gae-byeok* (the transformation once again),” in order to emphasize the latter element in contrast to the former.

At least for Soo-ün, the idea of *da-si-gae-byeok* implies a very dynamic pantheism that a transcendent being is fully immanent in the temporal so that the finite is totally and newly created by the power of the Infinite One. This new creation is understood and stipulated into the notion of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* by his disciples. However, the notion gradually lost its original dynamics in the canonization of Soo-ün’s teachings and as a result in the development of their new religion called *cheon-do-gyo* (the religion of heavenly tao). The division of “*hoo-cheon* (the later world)” from “*seon-cheon* (the prior world)” stemmed

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<sup>1</sup> Hyung-ghi Kim, *A Study on the Hoocheon Gaebyeok Ideology* [in Korean] (Seoul: Han-wool Academy, 2004), 20-21.

from the legacy of the past several hundred years of the Chinese and Korean philosophical history in which the divisional points were variously calculated though. Applying this tradition to the occasion of Soo-ün's awakening, his disciples began to separate *cheon-do-gyo* as a *hoo-cheon* religion from other religious teachings (such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism) as *seon-cheon* religions.<sup>2</sup> This process of identification of Soo-ün's teaching with the inception of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* provided *cheon-do-gyo* with a solid theological ground for its belief system. However, as the works of *cheon-do-gyo* as such were understood as practices of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*, and as the content of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* was filled with a mere historical movement for a new culture or mentality, so the original dynamism in Soo-ün's religious thought began to attenuate. That is, the meaning of *gae-byeok* became narrower, and Soo-ün's pantheistic religiosity was refashioned only for a social ethic.<sup>3</sup>

In this transitional period, Jüŋ-san (1871-1909) criticized *cheon-do-gyo* and advocated a "true *dong-hak*" by proposing *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* (GJ 1:11).<sup>4</sup> This creative thinker was full of messianic self-consciousness and carried his public missions for the people of misery of that time. In his vigorous religious enthusiasm, Jüŋ-san believed his work was not merely for a reformation of the society but exactly for the total transformation of the entire cosmic structure. For him, the critical doom of the society was conceivably due to distorted cosmic principles, not simply due to the phenomenal problems in socio-political relations. Therefore, what was actually needed for him to do is the *cheon-ji-gong-sa* (the reordering of the universe) through which the old cosmic order of *sang-geuk* (mutual antagonism), which is the mark of the age of *seon-cheon* (the prior world), is changed into the new order of *sang-saeng*

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 80, 83, 85. The first record of acknowledging Soo-ün's monumental works as *hoo-cheon* religion appeared in *the Monthly of Cheon-do-gyo-hoe* in 1911.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 88-94, 102-07.

<sup>4</sup> Jüŋ-san criticizes Byeong-hie Sohn, a great teacher of *Cheon-do-gyo*, as following: "He [Sohn] enticed people with heretical teachings so that people became gravely impoverished." (GJ1:33)

(mutual beneficence of all life), which is the epochal mark of *hoo-cheon* (the later world).<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps, for the people of scientific ages, Jŭng-san's *cheon-ji-gong-sa* looks quixotic, and his self-identification of himself with a divine being sounds nonsensical. How dare we suppose that a historical being could possess the divinely infinite power and knowledge and be a weaver of the cosmic orders and principles? However, we need at this moment "a dimension of cosmic imaginations" in order to comprehend Jŭng-san's immense prognostications for the urgent needs of his time.<sup>6</sup> For him, *cheon-ji-gong-sa* is not a sorcerous performance but an inclusive art for dissolving hatred and rancor generating out of the complex web of historical and cosmic relationships. Therefore, for conceiving his peculiar sayings and deeds, we'd rather know what he meant with the idea of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*.

For Jŭng-san, the idea of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* is a great vision of the ultimate salvation of the cosmos and at the same time an urgent imperative for a comprehensive work of dissolving the hatred and rancor. The dissolution is linked with the change of the cosmic principles because the *hoo-cheon* era is ruled by the principle of good while the *seon-cheon* era produced heroes from its sinful womb of power-relations. Therefore, in order to be realized, *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* requests multi-dimensional collaborative works. *Dae-soon* thought<sup>7</sup> summarizes them in four tenets: first, "*ŭm-yang-hap-deok*," which means 'the aggregation of goodness by virtue of the harmony of the dual cosmic forces of

<sup>5</sup> We can find Jŭng-san's frequent notes on the differential marks of the cosmic ages: in the canon, He used the term '*seon-cheon*' eleven times (HR1:37; GS 1:2,3,63, 2:17; GB 1:62, 2:55; GJ 1:21; YS 6,13,47,77), and '*hoo-cheon*' twenty-three times (HR 1:22,37; GS 1:2,3, 2:16,17,19,24, 3:8; GB 1:68, 2:11,55,58, 3:15,41; GJ 1:21; YS 6,9,13,45,77,80,81).

<sup>6</sup> Ji-ha Kim, *Travels on Thoughts 2: Dreaming of the New Mankind* [in Korean] (Seoul: sil-cheon-moon-hak-sa, 1999), 229-30.

<sup>7</sup> "*Dae-soon*" literally means "the grand pilgrimage" which points out the cosmic work of Jeung-san. Here, *Dae-soon* thought designates all of ideas that succeed to the legacy of Jŭng-san's teachings.

*ŭm* (female principle, *yin* according to the popular Romanization of Chinese pronunciation) and *yang* (male principle).’ Second, “*shin-yin-jo-hwa*,” which means ‘the consonance of God (Spirit or Heaven) and human beings.’ Third, “*hae-won-sang-saeng*,” which means ‘the establishment of the principle of mutual beneficence of all life by/through the dissolution of rancor and enmity.’ Fourth, “*do-tong-jin-gyeong*,” which means ‘living in nirvana by/through spiritual awakenings.’<sup>8</sup> These four tenets sketch the world of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* in which peace and goodness rule over by rehabilitating the marginalized, the poor, the weak, fools, and females.

Now, let us compare the eschatological ideas of Christianity and *Dae-soon* thought in the following four headings: 1) a cosmological question about the nature of *eschaton*, 2) a sociological question about the birthplace of the eschatology, 3) a theological discussion on the nature of the eschatological faith, and 4) a religious inquiry about the eschatological meaning of miracles.

### **Cosmological Ideas on the Nature of *Eschaton***

What is *eschaton*? Christian theology used various symbols such as the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Reign of God, or the Millenarian Kingdom for answering this question. However, its answers varied through times. In the modern history of Christian theology, the interpretations of the eschatological ideas of historical Jesus in his sayings about the Kingdom of God showed various spectrums.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the Christian eschatology in

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<sup>8</sup> Dae-Jin Jung, “*Dae-soon-jin-ri-hoe and Dae-soon Tenets*” [in Korean], in *The Academic Journal of Daesooinjri 1* (March 2007), 22-36.

<sup>9</sup> Gerd TheiBen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* (1997), trans. Sung-hyun Sohn (Seoul: Da-san-gül-bang, (2001) 2005), 355-60. TheiBen and Merz classify six stages of the interpretative history of Jesus’ eschatology: 1) an ethical interpretation of the inner-historical eschatology (Albrecht Ritschl), 2) a futuristic interpretation of the continuing eschatology (Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer), 3) a realized eschatology (C. H. Dodd), 4) a salvational interpretation of the dualistic eschatology (W. G. Kümmel), 5) an existentialist eschatology (R. Bultmann), and 6) a metaphorical interpretation of the non-eschatological Jesus (N. Perrin, J. G. Gager, J. D. Crossan, and M. Borg).

its development has been moderated to avoid two extremities: extreme dualism and simple monism.

First of all, the traditional Christian eschatology was inclined in extreme dualism. It heavily emphasized the transcendence of God and entirely separated the temporal world from the Kingdom of God. In this cosmic scheme, God supernaturally intervenes in history and at the final day consummates the world with a grand judgment according to which people would be dispensed into Heaven or Hell. The Kingdom of God comes only after the termination of the historical time. Therefore, this eschatology presupposes a dualistic structure in which so much dualism is prosperous: for example, historical time is separated from eternity; the holy from the profane; infinity from finitude, mind from body, and so on. Such a dualistic eschatology is still inherited strongly in the neo-apocalyptic thought of the fundamentalist Christianity; however, most of the moderate Christians fully know the fact that the extreme dualism jeopardized Christian thoughts as such.

In contrast to this dualistic eschatology of the traditional Christian supernaturalism, a pantheistic monism appeared thinly in the modern history of western Christianity. In this monistic scheme, the Kingdom of God is no other than something in history itself. This complete immanentism has never possessed a major place in the doctrinal history; however, it fundamentally shook Christianity when it was connected with Marxism. The massive challenge of the historicist utopianism in the Marxist eschatology was enough to replace the traditional other-worldly apocalypse by historical process. As a result, many modern thinkers and activists identified historical liberation with eschatological salvation. Nevertheless, the pantheistic identification of the *eschaton* with temporal history (and the atheistic annihilation of eschatological salvation itself) cannot be a viable model for comprehending a multi-dimensional religious life. Sooner or later, it began to be understood as an overreaction to the traditional dualistic supernaturalism.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed discussion, refer to my work, *Minjung and Process: Minjung Theology in a Dialogue with Process Thought* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 113-24.

Avoiding these two extreme ideas, a very dynamic Christian worldview arose in the name of panentheism.<sup>11</sup> In this panentheistic eschatology, the Kingdom of God is neither separated from nor identified with history; rather, it is internalized into history. Hence, so many dynamic tensions are maintained in eschatological beliefs: eschatological eternity involves in the depth of the temporal; the coming of the future is experienced in the present historical life; individual existence is not separated with the communal hope; and historical enterprises are interwoven into cosmic fabrics. As Jesus says that “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, NIV), the *eschaton* in the contemporary Christian thoughts is understood as the eschatological internalization in the world, but not of the world. Most of the conscious contemporary Christian theologies, such as European political theology, Latin American liberation theology, Korean minjung theology, North American process theology, and eco-feministic theology, support this panentheistic eschatology.

Much close to this developmental stage of Christian theology, *Dae-soon* thought contains similar panentheistic elements in its theological structure. In a sense, it has been influenced from eastern religious philosophies. Generally, Indian and Chinese philosophies have maintained a dynamic philosophical structure in which the infinite and the finite are intertwined to each other.<sup>12</sup> However, in comparison with the Christian panentheistic cosmology, both

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<sup>11</sup> David A. Pailin, “Panentheism,” in *Traditional Theism and Its Modern Alternatives*, ACTA JUTLANDICA LXX: 1, Theology Series 18, edited by Svend Andersen (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1994), 95. The term “panentheism” was coined by Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832) and means that “God contains and unifies the world, while also transcending it.”

<sup>12</sup> Arvind Sharma, *The Philosophy of Religion and Advaita Vedanta* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 1-14. Here, Sharma describes a basic characteristic of Indian philosophy: Brahman has two aspects, *nirguna* and *saguna*. *Nirguna* Brahman is the Absolute, which is the undifferentiated transcendent being, whereas *saguna* Brahman is God with attributes that is relative in relation to the world. But the two aspects are not dualistic.

thoughts often sound like a pantheistic immanentism without an obvious concept of the transcendent divine being who works beyond the limit of the world. In spite of much relevance with the eastern ideas, an apparent divergence of *Dae-soon* thought from them is made at this point. *Dae-soon* idea, with the legacy of *dong-hak*'s belief in *cheon-ju* (Heavenly Lord), has a manifest concept of a transcendent God.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, its concept of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* could keep a theological dynamism with falling into neither the dualistic supernaturalism nor the monistic historicism.

Characteristically, Jūng-san's *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* is not only immanent and self-generating but also transcendent and other-redeeming. The most fundamental concept in his thought is "the organic interrelationship of all cosmic and historical beings."<sup>14</sup> In this universal network, one's work is effective for others as well as for oneself; others' work is also influential to the one. Jūng-san's eschatology outstretches to a cosmic dimension in this sense although it works in direct contact to the everyday painful lives of the people of poverty and sickness. He took care of the miserable life of *minjung* (the people of marginalization) with the miraculous mobilization of the cosmic changes. Speculating the whole process of this care, we can find him to be connected with the heaven, wind, earth, dust, water, produces, human beings, ghosts, and whole cosmic lives. The organic inter-connectedness is the most primordial root of his conceptualization.

Jūng-san's self-identification of his mission reveals this basic nature of cosmic and historical relatedness:

My work is to superintend the authorities of the heaven, the earth, and human history, to correct the perverted laws and principles of the prior world (*seon-cheon*), and therefore to build up a paradise by opening the ultimate good luck of the later world (*hoo-cheon*)... In the *seon-cheon* era, all creatures are ruled by

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<sup>13</sup> Refer to Young-chang Yim's comparative work: "A Search for *Dae-soon* Theism" [in Korean], in *Dae-soon Thought Non-Chong* 1 (Po-cheon: Dae-Jin-Hak-Sool-Won, 1996), 125-58.

<sup>14</sup> Ji-ha Kim, *Travels on Thoughts* 2, 222.

the principle of mutual antagonism so that the world is full of hatred and rancor. As a result, the heaven and earth lost the proper way of orders, and therefore the world fell into wretchedness. Hence, I do arrange the order of heaven and earth, harmonize divine orders, dissolve the lasting hatred and rancor, and save the life of miserable people by constructing the hoo-cheon paradise with the law of mutual beneficence of all life. (GS 1:2-3, YS 9)

For him, the new cosmic construction is realized with right balancing of *yin* and *yang*.<sup>15</sup> In the historical dimension, the right *yin-yang* relation means the mutual nourishment of the powerful and the marginalized, the rich and the poor, the noble and the miserable, men and women, the old and the young, and all other opposite relations. Such right *yin-yang* relation is obtained not of itself; rather, it should be accompanied by the work of dissolving hatred and rancor produced out of old conflicts. That is, the reconciliation must take place in the actual life only by the precondition of restoring the regrets of the falsely accused who worked for the social goodness. And this reconciliation can take true places in the social transformation.

Indeed, we need an immense imagination in order to understand this Jüng-san's eschatological vision. Any idea, any science, any scholarship, and any revolutionary work should be finally bankrupted into a trivial management of a finite time without great and creative imaginations. This necessary condition should be applied for our hermeneutic task to reveal the cosmological dimension of Jüng-san's eschatology. Probably, we cannot expect one final idea in comparison of Christian and *Dae-soon* eschatologies. There are and will be many answers to eschatological searches. However, we can learn some rules for interpreting the eschatological hope and for living the eschatological life. First, the eschatological language is not literal but symbolic. Any literal fidelity weakens the abundant implications of eschatological symbols. Second, an eschatological quest must overcome any dualism and attempt to grasp the totality of such pairs as spirit-body, individual-community, and human history-

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<sup>15</sup> From now on, I follow the Romanization of the Chinese pronunciation, *yin*, instead of the Korean one, *ŷm*, just for reducing a confusion of English readers.

cosmic life. Third, an eschatological hope naturally goes beyond any immediate accomplishment because all things are destined to be relativized in history; nonetheless, the only place for the fulfillment of the hope is no other than in history itself.

### **Sociological Birthplace of *Dae-soon* Eschatology**

Our next issue is to search for a proper sociological birthplace of eschatology. Whereas the previous cosmological question is interested in the ‘content’ of eschatology, this sociological question is concerned with the ‘function’ of it. Historically, an eschatology can serve either for the prolongation of the established ruling power or for the revolutionary urge for a new society. That is, in an actual social context, an eschatology can be a liberating voice and instead be depraved into an ideological manipulation. Christian and *Dae-soon* eschatologies in nature commonly function as liberating. For their original sociological contexts reflect the outcries of the socio-politically weak.

In nature, Christian eschatology was rooted in bare lamentations of social sufferers. Of course, this neat judgment on the nature of Christian eschatology sounds too simple because Christian eschatology in fact has been with many faces and frequently served for the political and religious power. However, this judgment is not a mere reinterpretation of the basic character of Christian eschatology but a right placement of it in relation to its original source, the Bible. Many Christian theologians have attempted to interpret the eschatology in the light of liberative teachings of the Scripture. A world-widely known New Testament scholar, James M. Robinson says in his recent book, “The Kingdom of God is not God’s stamp of approval on the status quo, the powers that be, the ruling class. Rather, it is countercultural, for it gives hope to the hopeless.”<sup>16</sup>

Such a critical understanding of the Christian theology inverses the perversion of the old ideological tradition and directly speaks of the voices of the

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<sup>16</sup> James M. Robinson, *The Gospel of Jesus: in Search of the Original Good News* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 170.

Bible. There are so many passages in it which evince that the biblical eschatology has as a fundamental sociological background social sufferers, a sufferer who really hopes for “a new heaven and a new earth” (Issiah 65:17, 66:22, Revelations 21:21). Especially, the same idea is primarily supported by Jesus’ speaking of his mission in his inauguration sermon: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). Jesus characterizes his ministry, and therefore his answer to the eschatological hope of the Jew, as a primary response to the social sufferers.

Such Jesus’ responses contain critical reflections on the social context in which the traditional Judaic eschatological hope was perverted by the religious manipulation of the socio-religious leaders, Sadducees and Pharisees (Matthew 3:7, 16:6,11). Sadducees, who were in the culminating point of the social hierarchy, did not believe any eschatological future within the contentment of the present wealth and power (Matthew 22:23, Mark 12:18, Luke 20:27). Pharisees who were religious teachers with the normative laws of piety had an eschatological belief, a belief in Resurrection; however, their eschatological belief was totally separated from the hope of the social weak and moreover misled them with false teachings (Matthew 23:13-29). On the contrary, Jesus in the Bible is motivated by the outcry of such biblical people as *ochlos*, the marginalized people in the social system, and his eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God responds to their needs. This primary tradition was inherited to the apostle Paul who has the same voice as does Jesus and says, “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (Corinthians 1:27, NIV).

The *Dae-soon* eschatological thought of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* has a very similar voice to the Christian one. Its root concern stems from Jüng-san’s compassion with the socially miserable people. He says that in the time of *hae-won* (resolution of grievances) “the primary listeners are first of all the humble and the ignoble” (GU 1:32). In contrast, says he, “the rich and the noble are satisfied and self-content and seek fame and more wealth; therefore, they do

not think of me” (GB 2:8). There is a conscious predilection to the poor and the sick in Jǔng-san’s thoughts.<sup>17</sup> This preferential option for the poor and the weak is undergirded by his inclusive religiosity. He took a very comprehensive stance to other religions.<sup>18</sup> The leitmotif of such religious comprehensiveness is the compassion of the weak and the poor. Therefore, when some religions desert the requests of the people, he criticizes their seduction (GJ 1:33, HR 1:19,27). Jǔng-san’s eschatology, the idea of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*, deeply communicated with the hope of the marginalized in the harsh period of Korean modern history.

In our search for the sociological birthplace of *Dae-soon* eschatology, we need carefully to understand the ‘function’ of Jǔng-san’s self-identification of himself with a divine being. He spoke of himself as “*gae-byeok-jang* (GS 1:1),” the commander of the great transformation, “*mi-rŭk* Buddha (HR 2:16),” or “*shin-seon* (HR 5:25),” a Taoist immortal.” How do we understand this self-deification? Literally accepting, a general hermeneutic stream interprets Jǔng-san as an (or the) incarnated God with a religious sense of glorification. Of course, that might be a possible interpretation of him if there is a good concept of incarnation. However, we’d better stimulate another hermeneutic sense for this because Jǔng-san hardly reiterated the religious tradition of *seon-cheon* era in which a religion rules over people with a self-glorification. Therefore, we could instead interpret that, as Jǔng-san had a strong influence of *dong-hak* whose important notion of *yin-nae-cheon* understands human beings as heaven, he also lifted up the poor and the weak as noble beings like heaven. Probably, we should have imaginative hermeneutic eyes for this issue.

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<sup>17</sup> In the *Dae-soon* canon, there are many passages to indicate Jǔng-san’s preference to the poor: his wavering to accept the rich as his disciple (HR 4:48); dishonoring the noble and the wise and woe to the rich (GB 1:24, 3:4); his cordiality to the blind and the poor (GU 1:53, GB 3:1); and selling his properties and giving them to beggars in street (GU 1:15).

<sup>18</sup> Jǔng-san does not exclude any good heritage of other religions such as Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and even Christianity (GU 1:65, GB 3:12, YS 79).

Nonetheless, Jǔng-san's self-deification would be understood not as an attempt to make himself divinely glorified by his followers, but his conscious manifestation that the suffering people of the bottom are the subject of the new coming era (*hoo-cheon*).<sup>19</sup> As if he cured various kinds of personal and social predicaments, presided over the natural order and laws to serve for benign purposes, and become acknowledged as a heavenly being, the people of the bottom could arise as the healer of the social diseases, be the subject of their problems, and act as the performer of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*. When we interpret in this way, we can more closely approach to the essential teaching of Jǔng-san and prepare for the next issue, the theological question about the nature of *Dae-soon* eschatology.

### **A Theological Understanding of the Nature of the Eschatological Belief**

In the previous discussions, we examined the cosmological background of *Dae-soon* eschatology as the panentheistic internalization of *eschaton* in history that avoids both supernaturalistic dualism and pantheistic immanentism. Also, we saw the emergence of the eschatology to have responded to the outcries of social sufferers who hoped to be redeemed out of the threatening of various evils. When we investigate the nature of the eschatological belief in *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*, we should presuppose the teachings of these two ideas. That is, *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* is neither a cosmic event simply beyond history nor a social reformation merely within history. Rather, it comes from beyond the horizon of our history and yet invades into history. In this sense, the eschatological belief is concerned neither with the annihilation of our world as such nor the termination of historical time, but with the end of 'evils' in history.

A genuine Christian eschatology also does not seek a heavenly Kingdom that is totally separated from the historical time but hopes for "the deliverance of us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). The Kingdom of heaven cannot be a hedonistic Kingdom in which all of the celestial citizens just sing Allelujah and enjoy eternally. Rather, "the Kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and

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<sup>19</sup> Ji-ha Kim, *Travels on Thoughts* 2, 226-29.

forceful men lay hold of it” (Matthew 11:12). This Kingdom is not where naïve goodness is entirely isolated from evil but where evil is being constantly overcome by good.<sup>20</sup> The eschatological belief in this Kingdom is not the other-worldly refusal of our world but the ultimate concern of salvation in/beyond this world. Indeed, the Kingdom is “in the world, and yet not of the world.”<sup>21</sup> If the eschatological belief is so, there must be a mutual “indebtedness” between the Kingdom and our temporal world.<sup>22</sup> The Kingdom of heaven is indebted to our historical world in that the Kingdom would be meaningless if the world does not exist; the world is indebted to the Kingdom in that the world would not have a ultimate vision of hope if the Kingdom does not lead. In this sense, the two have mutual interactions in the panentheistic theological context.

The mutual relationship is typical in *Dae-soon* thought. In the *yin-yang* scripture which is proclaimed in 1928, the mutuality is explained as following:

God has no reliance without humans; humans have no lead without God. . . .  
 God waits for humans, and humans wait for God. In this way, *yin* and *yang* consume each other, and God and humans communicate with each other. Then, the heavenly tao is realized, and the earthly tao is fulfilled. This is the way that the divine providence is completed and the human business is accomplished.  
 (GU 2:42)

In the understanding of the human-divine mutuality, *Dae-soon* thought more emphasizes the role of human being for the eschatological advent in comparison to Christianity. Jūng-san spoke of the importance of the human role among the triangular cosmic interrelations of heaven, earth, and human being. He says, “now is the era of humanity because of the greater human authority than those of heaven and earth” (GB 2:56, GU 1:33, YS 30).

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<sup>20</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), reprint (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 155.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>22</sup> Chareles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1967), 123.

Furthermore, says he, “In the previous *seon-cheon* era, a human being makes a plan, but the fulfillment of it pertains to heaven. In the *hoo-cheon* era, however, heaven plans and its realization is by human beings” (GB 3:35).

The fundamental belief in the real *eschaton* of evils, not of the temporal world as such, generates two subsequent understandings: the role of human beings toward the new eschatological epoch of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* and the way/method of the human exertion. First, *Dae-soon* thought negates the miraculous concept of divine omnipotence that does not require any creaturely cooperation for the new eschatological era. Rather, it advocates the specific idea of human cooperation, the work of *hae-won* (resolution of grievances). Jüng-san sought the origin of human hatreds and rancor in a larger historical context and found at the frustration and rancor of the son Dan-joo of the legendary Chinese ruler Yao (堯, 2358-2258 BC).<sup>23</sup> Therefore, he argued for the necessity of *hae-won* of Dan-joo’s rancor (GS 2:3, 3:4). This somewhat mythical, in another sense cosmic, dimension of *hae-won* activities became more concretely historicized in the Korean context when he insisted on the *hae-won* of Bong-joon Cheon, the frustrated and beheaded leader of *dong-hak* peasant war (GS 1:7, 2:19). Furthermore, the work of *hae-won* spreads out to all kinds of human sufferings and agonies such as social hierarchism, gender discrimination, economic exploitation, personal illness, and so on (GS 2:17, GB 1:9,62,68, GJ 1:17). All of these humanly *hae-won* activities are buttressed by the concept of *shin-yin-jo-hwa*, the consonance of God and human being.

In *Dae-soon* thought, the idea of *hae-won* as the human participation in God’s work functions to defeat any determinism and fatalism of human destiny. Also, it refuses to stay within the spiritual self-satisfaction of the blessing-seeking religiosity and instead rushes to transform human-self to be harmonized with divine guides. Of course, the transformation is not said to exclude

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<sup>23</sup> Perhaps, Jüng-san attempted to expand his historical scope as large as possible in order to find the primordial origin of historical hatred. The fact that he found it at the story of Yao’s son Dan-joo shows his intellectual context as in the North-eastern Asia.

any social dimension, yet Jüŋ-san's idea is quite different from the religiosity and political schemes of *dong-hak* that seeks *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* mainly through the change of the socio-political structure, that is, through war and revolution.

Indeed, Jüŋ-san's methodology is more peaceful and more fundamental, if properly understood, than that of *dong-hak*. He negatively considered the revolutionary way of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* with a military method that inevitably entails massive deaths and fatal destructions. Such a consideration must have reflected the social context of his time in which people's life was devastated after the defeat of *dong-hak* peasant revolution. This is why Jüŋ-san says that "the revolutionary way of social change with the unavoidable calamity of people's life is the strategy of grand failure. The whole world has long suffered from it. Therefore, I enliven people's life by the method of mutual nourishment" (GU 1:16). Like Jesus says, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27), Jüŋ-san also says, "Love your enemy like your benefactor" (GB 1:56). This non-revolutionary way seems a spiritless reformism or a reactionary pacifism. However, it is totally a misconception of it.

Jüŋ-san's eschatological belief in *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* is deeply rooted in the conviction that the method toward the world of *hae-won* must never betray the primary aim of *hae-won*. The righteousness of the aim should get its proper authority only through the right way of practice. In this sense, he provided a fundamental condition for a practical religion which is the spiritual discernment for "the way of moderation to avoid extremities."<sup>24</sup> His way of religiosity avoids both extreme ways of the lifeless fatalism and the vigorous revolution. Instead, it grasps a moderate way for mutual enrichment that probably starts from a tiny practice in the very actual life situation and yet grows bigger and bigger in the organic network of the cosmos. Jüŋ-san accentuated the everyday life of the

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<sup>24</sup> Jae-shin Lyu, "The Contemporary Meanings of 'Human Nobility' and 'Mutual Nourishment' in *Dae-soon* Thought" [in Korean], in *The Academic Journal of Daesoonjinri* 1 (March 2007), 215.

suffering people as the central value of religious and social practices through which he provided us with the cosmic vision of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* and the cure of the modern civilization.<sup>25</sup> However, in our contemporary context, his thought should be reinterpreted more concretely, more scientifically, and more responsibly to the actual context of the contemporary social sufferers in order to vivify the suitability of the teachings.

### **An Interpretation of the Eschatological Meaning of Miracles**

In the *Dae-soon* cannon, we can see about one hundred stories of miracles that Jüng-san performed for many reasons. These miracle stories serve for various purposes and can be classified into four types. First, there are miraculous records of his divinely power and wisdom (HR 1:13,15, 3:8,15; GJ 1:32, 2:7,20,23; JS 17). Second, there are natural miracles that directly express his divinity (HR 1:31,36, 2:7,11, 3:25,36; GS 1:18, 3:21; GU 1:21,24; GJ 1:2,3,12,13,23,24,25,27,31, 2:2,4,6,10,11,13,14,15,17; JS 18; YS 53). Third, the same natural miracles are drawn for the purpose of caring the need of human beings and creatures (HR 1:35, 2:15,24, 3:19,29, 4:15,31; GJ 2:16,18, 19,29,32; JS 16,19). Finally, Jüng-san miraculously resurrects a dead person, heals cripples and those who has various illnesses including leprosy and epidemics (HR 3:7, 4:20,36,50; GS 1:20,21; GU 1:24; GJ 2:1,12,28; JS 2,3,5,6, 8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,20,22,23,24,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,35,36,40,41,42). All of these miracle stories imply a religious purpose that attempts to evince Jüng-san's divinity. Here, we are confronted with a question of how to interpret the meaning of miracles not to be contradictory to our modern scientific mind.

Besides the miracle stories, Jüng-san performed sorcerous activities such as incantations, dances, burning of amulets, and so on. He calls these religious activities '*cheon-ji-gong-sa*,' the reordering of the universe, and which is necessary for the advent of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok*. Moreover, he consciously acknowledges their effectiveness of changing the malign principle of the old *seon-cheon*

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<sup>25</sup> Ji-ha Kim, *Travels on Thoughts* 2, 210.

era into the benign principle of the coming *hoo-cheon* era. However, his performance or his belief in their effectiveness is a totally different matter from the task of rationalization about the probability of the miraculous events and of explanation of the necessary and sufficient relationship between the ‘intent’ of the performance and its ‘result’. In order not to deteriorate any possibly good implication in the miracle stories and Jüng-san’s works, we need to ask its real meaning for the contemporary scientific age in which any supernaturalistic explanation already loses the old authority.

For this hermeneutic task, we can get some teachings from the hermeneutic history of Christian investigations of Jesus’ miracle stories. Like *Dae-soon* cannon, the Christian scriptures contain lots of Jesus’ miracle stories. In order to interpret them, many scholars have developed various hermeneutic methods from the late eighteenth century, for instance, 1) rationalistic interpretation (C. F. Bahrdt and H. E. G. Paulus), 2) mythological interpretation (D. F. Strauss), 3) form criticism (R. Bultmann, M. Dibelius, L. Bieler), 4) relativization by redaction criticism (H. J. Held, U. Busse), 5) typology of ancient miracle performers (G. Vermes, M. Smith, D. Trunk), and 6) Sociological investigation of miracle beliefs.<sup>26</sup> All of these hermeneutic struggles faithfully responded to the growing modern scientific and rational conceptualization in which a mere literal belief in miracle stories is understood as self-stultifying.

Perhaps, we need much more space for discussing this issue because of the complex relation between science and religion. Both scientific method and theological belief are critically investigated for their proper use for a more comprehensive study.<sup>27</sup> However, there could be a minimum consensus for the contemporary scholarship that we cannot go back to the premodern literalism. For example, in the *Dae-soon* cannon, there is an episode of one of Jüng-san’s disciples:

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<sup>26</sup> Gerd Theißen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch*, 416-24.

<sup>27</sup> D. Griffin examines this issue in his book, *Two Great Truths: A New Synthesis of Scientific Naturalism and Christian Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

One day, Kim Kyeon-hak dreamed that he came up to heaven and met *sang-je* (God, here Jǔng-san). Jǔng-san asked later that Kim would remember any great dream in his life, and he answered to Jǔng-san by that dream. Then, he saw Jǔng-san and realized that the feature of the *sang-je* is the same as that of Jǔng-san. (GJ 2:8)

If this story is utilized as the literal evidence to prove that the historical Jǔng-san is the exactly same figure as the heavenly God, it can be said not as a hermeneutic success but a clumsy identification that no one seriously listens to. Therefore, with a more imaginative scope of interpretation, we need to approach to the miracle stories in order to find its eschatological implication.

First of all, Jǔng-san's religious performances should be understood as implying an eschatological meaning that the life of finite human beings is organically interwoven with the destiny of the cosmos, and therefore they could change the whole order of the cosmos. All of his activities of spelling incantatory words, burning of amulets and blending them into water, scattering and drinking of the water, and dancing in music symbolize *cheon-ji-gong-sa*, the reformulation of the heavenly order of age-old hatred by the new mutually-beneficiary principle.<sup>28</sup> And they imply that if human beings responsibly practice their true potentialities they could realize *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* in history as Jǔng-san does the cosmic reformulation in the ritual of *cheon-ji-gong-sa*.<sup>29</sup> That is, "the reformation of heavenly works is done so that now you practice!" (GB 3:35, GU 1:33, YS 30)

Indeed, Jǔng-san comprehended that a dust contains a trace of the whole

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<sup>28</sup> There has been a wide range of negative estimations about these shamanistic rituals. A group of critics understand this Korean religiosity as a superficial ethic without historical consciousness, as escapism without social responsibility, and as syncretism without self-reflections. However, these negative interpretations distort the nature of Korean shamanistic religiosity. For more detailed accounts on the nature of Korean white-shamanism in contrast to that of black shamanism, refer to the article: Jin Kim, "Shamanistic Faith and a Theology of Han" [in Korean], *Theological Thought* 67 (Winter 1989): 984-1019.

<sup>29</sup> Ji-ha Kim, *Travels on Thoughts* 2, 220.

cosmic enterprise, that a single human life plays an infinite dance of the boundless universe, and therefore that his cure of the sick in a small room and his care of the poor in a bare street are consonant with the cosmic remedy of cruel principles. His *cheon-ji-gong-sa* cannot be an absurd superstition. When we interpret Jŭng-san's miracle events and their mystical dimension, therefore, we should seek the eschatological meaning in them with a cosmic imagination that our modern civilization urgently requests a reorganization of its brutal structures. What is astonishing in his thought is that the reorganization starts with the sanctification of the poor and the tiny, for whom a bowl of rice is necessary for living, by lifting them up to the infinite holiness. His central concern with the blooming of life is based on a dynamic cosmology of the organic universe that leads us to see the essential significance of "the despised and the lowly" (1 Corinthians 1:28).

## Conclusion

This work studied the Korean eschatological concept of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* in comparison with Christian ideas. The cosmological background of this notion is panentheistic in that it attempts to overcome both one-sidedness of supernaturalistic dualism (transcendentalism) and pantheistic monism (immanentism). The organic and dynamic cosmology is matched with the critical consciousness about lamentations of socially marginalized sufferers. This union produces a very distinctive eschatology that aims the *eschaton* of historical evils, not of history itself, without losing vivid imaginations that concerns with the cosmic dimension beyond immediate historical accomplishments. The eschatological imagination never falls into a fantasy because it seeks to concretize itself in the process of justification of the despised, of sanctification of the lowly, and of glorification of the tiny. The eschatological idea of *hoo-cheon-gae-byeok* provides us a proper religious hope and ethic that could cure the dominance-oriented contemporary culture.

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#### Abbreviations of Dae-soon Scriptures

행록 (Haeng-rok, 行錄): HR

공사 (Gong-sa, 公事): GS

교운 (Gyo-ūn, 教運): GU

교법 (Gyo-beop, 教法): GB

권지 (Gweon-ji, 權智): GJ

제생 (Je-saeng, 濟生): JS

예시 (Ye-shi, 豫示): YS

# Investigating Daesoon Thought :

## A Korean New Religion's Approach to Identifying and Creatively Sublimating the Values of Korea's Traditional Religions

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### Abstract

In late 1960s the term 'new religion' began to be used in Korean academia. Although it had been used only by a small fraction of scholars until the 1960s, the term 'new religion' was adopted as an increasingly popular one among the majority of scholars and thus it became an official term with unanimous approval upon the publication of Encyclopedia on Korean National Cultures (Hanguk minjokmunhwa daesajeon) in 1979. As far as the new religions in Korea are concerned, one thing is clear that they are unique in the sense that they had risen to meet the challenge of a new need for the time and attempted to resolve newly risen problems, spiritual, political or otherwise. They also have new sets of their own worldviews or value systems different from those of existing traditional religions. Meanwhile scholars generally agree that Korean new religions explicitly sought to synthesize and harmonize the three religious traditions which dominated Korea during the previous Joseon period. These three religions—Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism—defined the main

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religious culture(s) of both Korea and the wider East Asian region. Our search continues for a more satisfactory answer to the question - how did Korea's early modern new religious movements embrace the three traditional religions and develop a distinct doctrine of their own? In this paper, I will investigate the creative incorporation of traditional religious values and beliefs in Daesoon thought which was developed in Korea's early modern period.

**Keywords:** New Religion, Daesoon, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism

## Introduction

In the process of creating, developing, and establishing itself, a new religious movement often identifies the limits of established religious traditions while adding its own unique revolutionary insights and contributions. All of the religious traditions which we now call "world religions" - Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, etc. - have, at one point, enacted a revolutionary break with older religion-social practices and antiquated customs and offered new truths for a new era. Throughout history, humanity has always longed for the new and we can observe a number of new religions growing over the course of thousands of years. As may be inferred from the birth of a multitude of new religions, history remains a continuously unfolding process and is never complete. We should also acknowledge that many religions disappear and are extinguished in the flow of history. Thus, for any one individual religion to survive and prosper in our times, it is crucial that that religion establishes its own identity and investigates the solid foundation of its "newness".

Research on new religions in Korea explores and extends this line of inquiry. For the most part, the study of new Korean religions has focused on various "minjung" or people's religions which appeared after the advent of "Eastern Learning" (*donghak*) in the 1860s. Studies of new Korean religions differ depending on scholars' interpretation of the degree of distinctness or originality of these new religious traditions. Scholars generally agree that Korean new religions explicitly sought to synthesize and harmonize the three religious

traditions which dominated Korea during the previous Joseon period. These three religions – Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism – defined the main religious culture(s) of both Korea and the wider East Asian region.<sup>1</sup> Our search continues for a more satisfactory answer to the question - how did Korea's early modern new religious movements embrace the three traditional religions and develop a distinct doctrine of their own? It is difficult for a new Korean religion to create a doctrine which does not hide behind ambiguous abstractions and avoids overly simplistic combinations of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism because the history of these three traditional East Asian religions is strong. Some researchers argue that the new Korean religions of the late Joseon period tended to build themselves around one of the three main religious traditions and subsumed all other religious thought and practice into this one main axis as a solution to the above mentioned question.<sup>2</sup>

Most scholars of Korean new religions agree that new religious synthesis of the three religions (Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism) should not be characterized as mere consolidation or dubbed “religious syncretism.” The term “religious syncretism” most often refers to a transitional phase or process occurring before a particular religion is fully established. Thus the term

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<sup>1</sup> The first recorded reference to the “three teachings” in Korean history is found in material on the Three Kingdoms. Here the “three teachings” is understood as Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. See the *History of the Three Kingdoms* (『三國史記』新羅本紀4, 眞興王-37年. <崔致遠>鸞郎碑序 “...實乃包含三教 Also 卷49, 列傳, 蓋蘇文 “蘇文告王曰: 聞中國三教並行, 而國家道教尚缺...”) There are similar examples from the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*. (『三國遺事』卷3, 興法, 寶藏奉老/普德移庵 “...及寶藏王即位, [貞觀十六年壬寅也] 亦欲併興三教... 金奏曰: “鼎有三足, 國有三教, 臣見國中, 唯有儒釋無道教, 故國危矣.”

<sup>2</sup> According to Kim Hongcheol (1989), Donghak was founded primarily on Confucianism, Jeungsankyo was based mainly on Daoism and Won Buddhism is said to take Buddhism as its central inspiration. (Kim Hongcheol, *Hanguk Shinjonggyo Sasang Yongu*, Jimmundang, pp.124-141; “Donghak·Cheondokyo Sasang ye natana Yu·Bul·Do Samkyo Kyoseop ye Kwanhan Yeongu” *Hanguk jonggyosa Yeongu 6 jip*, Hanguk jonggyosa hakhoi, 1996, p.468)

“syncretism” usually carries negative connotations.<sup>3</sup> It is most important that the synthesis of various traditions elucidates key religious truths regardless of whether such creative endeavors are dubbed triadic unities<sup>4</sup> or amalgamations.<sup>5</sup>

First, I will outline religio-cultural situation in Korea during Korea’s early modern period by focusing primarily on Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. This will help in providing the background necessary to understand the appearance of new religions in early modern Korea. After Korea’s Three Kingdoms Period, Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism (or Daoist thought) grew throughout the Koryo and Joseon periods and came to dominate government philosophy and religious culture. However, due to various developments both within and outside Korea, the end of Korea’s Joseon Dynasty became a time of great social transformation and change in religious beliefs and systems. The primary point of interest here, as it relates to the growth and development of new religions at the time, is the fact that the dominant religions of the late Joseon Period could not satisfy the basic religious needs of the Korean masses or give sufficient meaning to peoples’ lives at the time. The traditional

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<sup>3</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol.14*, edited by Mircea Eliade (1987) Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, pp.218~226. (The origins of the word “syncretism” can be traced back to the ancient Greek historian, Plutarch (46?~120?), who used the word “*sugkrētismos*” in his writings. “*Sugkrētos*” meant “mixed together.” Plutarch used the term to describe the people of the island of Crete who, in ordinary times, formed gangs and fought amongst themselves but when a foreign invader appeared would mix together and join forces. The first time the term (syncretism) was applied to the history of religions, was in *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country* (London, 1853, vol.47, p.294) in an anonymous commentary. Later, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term appeared frequently in Religious Studies writings and works of Historical Theology.)

<sup>4</sup> 『Cheondo-gyo gyeongjeon- ui am seongsa beopseol』 21. 三花一木 「…唯吾天道 儒佛仙三合」

<sup>5</sup> 『Won Bulgyo gyojeon - daejonggyeong』 jegyo ui pum. “In the past, each the three teachings – Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism – focused on proselytizing in their own domains. However, in the future, the world cannot be saved by just one doctrine, thus we will unify all doctrines....”

religions of late Joseon were not prepared to digest and respond to the sudden cultural shock, the mature social consciousness of the Korean masses, and the people's desire to actively engage in a changing world. The fact that late Joseon's new religious movements were popular among the "minjung" masses rather than the ruling classes, suggests that traditional religions were not prepared for the historical task they faced.<sup>6</sup>

At the time, Confucianism served as the ruling ideology of Joseon's caste based (Yangban) society and taught the virtuous norms which governed elite social and political life. The development of Confucian thought reached great heights with the appearance of accomplished scholars like Toegye (Yi Hwang) and Yulgok (Yi I) in the mid Joseon Period. Confucian scholars who followed this school of thought adopted Neo-Confucianism as their ruling creed. Confucianism became even more ingrained during the Joseon Dynasty with the increased emphasis on a Confucian bureaucratic government system. However, after defeating successive waves of Japanese invasion in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the Joseon Dynasty's resources became severely depleted and the

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<sup>6</sup> Yu Byeongdeok classifies new religious movements after *Donghak* in terms of five different veins or strands of Korean "minjung" or people's religion. Here "minjung religion" is described as religions which value and focus on the edification and welfare of the common people. Furthermore, "minjung religion" is described as a fulfilling all of the following three of the functions of religion, namely, the recovery function, the innovation or reformative function, and the uniting or unifying function. Minjung religion appeals to oppressed persons and provides them with a sense of meaning and real worth. It comes after "high" or "elite" religious traditions and is described as the true religion of the coming era (Yu 2000, 262-263). Roh Gilmyeong writes that the minjung or common people who participated in Korean new religious movements were the victims of their society's inherent contradictions. Being involved in new religious movements helped these oppressed common people find meaning in their lives. Thus, from this perspective, Korean new religious movements could be characterized as "Minjung Religious Movements" or "Folk Religious Movements" for they allowed the common people to recover their sense of minjung or folk identity. (Roh 2002, 310)

Korean people were impoverished. Around this time, Confucian studies focusing on practical and material improvements became increasingly prevalent. This emerging trend in Joseon Confucian scholarship suggests that the previous, highly conceptual system of Neo Confucian thought was limited in its application to ordinary people's lives. Towards the end of the Joseon Period, Neo-Confucianism was a costly philosophical extravagance to Joseon farmers who were suffering real material deficiencies.

Buddhism was revered as the official religion of Korea up until the end of the Koryo Period and wielded wide-reaching cultural influence. However, with the beginning of the Joseon Dynasty and the subsequent adoption of a pro-Confucian anti-Buddhist policies, Buddhism's power and influence became increasingly limited. The fact that the Joseon Period Buddhist Sangha, was concentrated in the more remote mountainous areas of the Korean peninsula illustrates how Buddhism as a religion became increasingly estranged from society.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the Joseon Period, the world-renouncing characteristics of Buddhist thought had combined with Buddhism's failure to offer ordinary Korean people religious guidance to aid an active respond to contemporary social changes. Thus, at the time, Buddhism merely managed to survive as a religion largely among women (Kim 1970, 238).

Even long after Daoism was introduced to the Korean peninsula, the Daoist religion did not significantly expand beyond its function of providing more immediate, limited ritual responses to national needs like offering prayers for national security and performing rituals to ameliorate misfortune and natural

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<sup>7</sup> Here, I am referring to the time period when Buddhism was oppressed which begins with the founding of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392 and continues up to the establishment of the Greater Korean Empire in 1897. During this time period, the eleven Buddhist orders were combined and reduced to two Buddhist schools despite any and all objections. Furthermore, monks were not allowed to enter the capital city and classified as belonging to the lowest social status. Buddhism retreated to remote mountainous areas and survived by transmitting the teachings from teacher to student. (Kim Yeongtae 1997, 238-241)

disasters. Daoist spiritual cultivation was, nevertheless, practiced by some Korean elites. These Korean Daoist ascetics – who were called *Doryu* (道流) – focused mostly on conducting Daoist rites. They did not lead popular religious organizations or gain wider influence by addressing ordinary peoples’ religious needs and questions (Cha 1978, 60-61).<sup>8</sup> Instead, Daoism combined with indigenous Korean beliefs and became popular as a magical folk practice. In times of uncertainty, Daoism was widely practiced by individuals seeking good fortune and blessings. In late Joseon, Taoist influenced books of prophetic divination, like the *Jeonggamrok* (鄭鑑錄), became popular among the Korean masses. This kind of prophetic thought - which often criticized the government – was particularly wide-spread in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the contradictions of Joseon’s restrictive status-based society became increasingly acute. The frequent appearance of prophetic writings and anonymous predictions posted in public areas greatly increased the overall revolutionary fervor which contributed to the popular uprisings of the time (Byeon 1986, 398)

The spread of “Western Learning” to the Korean peninsula had a great impact on the cultural and religious context of the late Joseon Period. Indeed, some argue that the impact of “Western Learning” was comparable to the influence of Joseon’s longer standing religious traditions. Western religions, founded on Christian values, presented a new and significant culture shock to late Joseon society which was largely grounded in the traditional cultural values of Confucianism and Buddhism. Coming to the peninsula via the China’s Ming and Ching Dynasties, “Western Learning” was introduced to Joseon Dynasty Korea during the reign of Seonjo. This European Christian cultural system influenced Korean history by prompting changes in Joseon society (Lee 1986, 8). Even though the government suppressed Christian doctrines and ideas which tended to conflict with Joseon’s Confucian value-based social system, Christianity spread widely among certain elite scholars, women and people of the merchant or *chung-in* caste. An enlightened religious

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<sup>8</sup> A Daoist church or religious organization did not exist in Korea.

leader could see that the spread of “Western Learning” would challenge Joseon’s traditional religious value system and open up fresh possibilities for new religious movements which could respond to these challenges.

In light of the above discussion, we can see that Korea’s new religions of the early modern era can be characterized as new religious movements which spontaneously arose out of the Korean common people’s mature understandings of the changing social context of late Joseon. These new religious movements offered an indigenous religious response to challenging and changing social conditions. To understand new religious movements in their historical context, we must first investigate the political, economic and social changes of time as well as consider the overall contemporary religion-cultural situation. Social changes, occurring during a particular historical era, are never the sole leading cause in the formation of new religions. Furthermore, if an established religion encounters limitations during a particular historical era, this is largely a problem of that religion’s political influence. We must also note that the “truth” of religion is transcendent and universal.<sup>9</sup> However if we accept the transcendent and universal aspects of religion, must we also insist that Korea’s early modern new religious movements were completely removed from all historical influences? Our answer is a resounding “no.” Nonetheless, just as we recognize that all religions offer their own inherent truth(s), we should also not disregard the truth(s) of new religious movements. As with all teachings about truth, an individual person’s level of consciousness must match with the level of the teaching for the truth to fully display itself.<sup>10</sup> The new religious movements of

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<sup>9</sup> Here, even though I point out the limitations traditional religions encountered in late Joseon, I would like to guard against the one-sided assertion that new religions appeared just because traditional religions were lacking. In fact, even today, traditional religions remain strong in Korea and there is considerable research, development, and innovation in the doctrinal thought of these religious traditions.

<sup>10</sup> Here it is necessary to recall the concept of the “response body” as it is introduced in the *Lotus Sutra* ( 『Beophwa gyeong』 Kwanseum bosal bomunpum). When the Bodhisattva Kwan-um manifests before sentient beings, s/he appears in a form which best matches the spiritual capacity of those sentient beings.

late Joseon developed in close relationship with the social changes occurring at the time. This was because the level of consciousness of the common people or minjung of late Joseon matched with the new religious movements' teachings. The level of consciousness of the Joseon minjung naturally arose from their collective social and historical experiences. In this sense, the historical background from which new religions arise is not completely separated from a new religion's teachings.

The principle teachings of Daesoon are an systematized expression of the late Joseon holy teacher Kang Jeungsan (姜甌山; 1871-1909)'s thought. Kang Jeungsan believed he was the Lord (or Sangje) of the Ninth Heaven and through Kang's reordering of heaven and earth the common people of Joseon came to possess an absolute belief system. The religious teachings of Daesoon have been transmitted and interpreted and become the systematized doctrinal teachings of a new religious organization called Daesoonjinrihoe. In this paper, I will investigate the creative incorporation of traditional religious values and beliefs in Daesoon thought which was developed in Korea's early modern period.

## **The Value of Traditional Religions in Daesoon Thought**

To fully grasp the religious identity of Daesoon thought, one must first understand its foundation in the preceding Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist traditions. Among all of the many religions, Jeungsan especially selected Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and used these three religions as a religious model. Jeungsan crafted new religious ideas out of his own understanding and creative re-interpretation of each of these three religions' individual contribution to a wider historical context. First, we will consider Jeungsan's view of both the overall and particular characteristics of these three religious traditions, as it is expressed in the following passage:

佛之形體仙之造化儒之凡節

the essence of Buddhism is form

the essence of Daoism is creation

the essence of Confucianism is propriety

道傳於夜天開於子 轍環天下虛靈

the dao is transmitted at night  
heaven opens during *ja* period (11pm to 1am)  
travelling throughout the country  
luminous mysterious and empty

教奉於晨地關於丑 不信看我足知覺

take up the teachings in the early morning  
the earth opens during the *chuk* period (1am to 3am)  
if you don't believe me - look at my feet  
this is knowledge awakening

德布於世人起於寅 腹中八十年神明 (Daesoon 1974, 148)

virtue spreads through the world  
people arise in the *in* period (3am to 5am)  
in the womb for eighty years  
this is spiritual luminescence

受天地之虛無仙之胞胎

receiving emptiness from heaven and earth,  
Daoism is in the Conception Stage

受天地之寂滅佛之養生

receiving tranquil non-arising from heaven and earth,  
Buddhism is in the Gestation Stage

受天地之以詔儒之浴帶 (Daesoon 1974, 189)

receiving instructions from heaven and earth,  
Confucianism is in the Growth Stage

Next, we will consider in greater detail the individual merits of the three traditional religions.

## Creation as the Essence of Daoism (仙之造化)

Daoism has the most ancient origins of the three East Asian religious traditions. In general, when people speak of the three religions - Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism - they are referring to the Chinese Daoist tradition. However, there is a reason why Jeungsan doesn't simply mention "Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism" but rather specifies Confucianism, Buddhism, and *seon* (仙 which is often translated as Daoism) in his sermons. Jeungsan uses the word "*seon*" instead of "Daoism" because he is referring to a particular religious tradition which is distinct from Chinese Daoism; Jeungsan is referring to a "Daoism" based on the Korean tradition. Early on, during the Silla Dynasty, the Korean scholar Choe Chiwon (857 – unknown) wrote the following in the preface to his Nallang Stele (鸞郎碑): "In this country there is a profound *dao* (道) called *pung-ryu* (風流). The origins of the teachings are detailed in the *History of the Dao* and its scope encompasses all of the three teachings."<sup>11</sup> Choe Chiwon's mention of the Dao, when he reference to the three teachings, clearly refers to Chinese Daoism – a folk religion based on the sacred texts of Laotzu and Zhuangi. Around the end of China's Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Ching Dynasty, numerous new religions appeared on the Chinese folk religious scene. Each of these new Chinese religions followed the general trend of the time to unite the three traditional teachings. Hence, in this context, the "three teachings" clearly includes the Chinese Daoist tradition.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the "*seon*"

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<sup>11</sup> This refers to the fact that the stele inscription explains the three teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism 『三國史記』新羅本紀4-眞興王-37年, 鸞郎碑序曰“國有玄妙之道, 曰風流. 設教之源, 備詳仙史, 實乃包含三教, 接化群生. 且如入則孝於家, 出則忠於國, <魯司寇>之旨也; 處無爲之事, 行不言之教, <周柱史>之宗也; 諸惡莫作, 諸善奉行, <竺乾太子>之化也.”

<sup>12</sup> For further information on the formation and characteristics of Chinese folk religions see: Lee Hojae (2006) 『Jungguk Mingan jonggyo ui Hyeonhwang gwa gwaje gurigo Hanguk gwa ui haksul gyoryu jeonmang』 『Journal of the Korean Academy of New Religions, Vol 15.

mentioned in the *History of the Dao*, is thought to refer to an ancient religious tradition arising from the Korean people's indigenous beliefs and practices; it is a tradition clearly distinguished from Chinese Daoism. Even though the Daoist tradition originating in China shares some of the same references and terminology as Korean Daoism, Korean Daoism possesses a conceptual orientation and cultural tradition distinct from its Chinese counterpart.<sup>13</sup>

According to previous research, there is a clear difference in the basic foundation of Korean Daoist and Chinese Daoist thought. Namely, Korean Daoism is a more practical humanistic religious tradition which focuses primarily on an individual's own actions and efforts. In contrast, Chinese Daoism is described as being a more divinity-centered religion which emphasizes the power of various deities and encourages individuals to pray for good fortune and blessings (Min 2006, 157).

Furthermore, when one considers Shamanism and Korean Daoism in their original primitive religious forms, one can see that the ancient Korean idea of the spirits or luminaries of heaven and earth, arose in the confusion of shamanism, which is based on a dualist division of the divine and the human, and Korean Daoism, which is based on a monistic unity of body and mind, the divine and the human. In the formation of the ancient Korean state, the Korean Daoist luminaries were used as a key religious model. In fact, this belief was so important that it became a ruling ideology among the ancient Korean state's elites. In contrast to this, a belief in shamanistic spirits spread widely among the lower classes and continues on up to the present day as an important religious force among the Korean people (Yu 1997, 5-45). I think we should explore Korean Daoism from two different perspectives – that is we should consider how the Daoist “view of humanity” and the Daoist “view of the world”

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<sup>13</sup> Some scholars see Chinese Daoist culture and Korean Daoist culture as emerging from the same source while others believe these two traditions developed from different points of origin. Over the last few years, an institute which encourages research on Korean Daoist culture as an independent phenomenon, and publishes a journal addressing this topic, has appeared. This is a positive development when one considers the possibilities of its future contributions to understanding Korean culture's indigenous identity. However, the history of research on Daoist culture remains short and work focusing on original Korean Daoism is still scarce.

interconnect. Korean Daoism's "view of the world" can be characterized as placing 'an emphasis on mundane secular values which are founded on a transcendent religious consciousness.' Its "view of humanity" can be described as focusing on 'a sense of respect for humankind who is the primary agents of spiritual realization.' The essence of Korean Daoism is to be found in the harmony of these two perspectives (Lee 2010, 26-27). In sum, most references to Daoism in Daesoon thought point to a long-standing Korean religious tradition which is similar to but different from Chinese Taoism. Thus in Daesoon thought, the "three religions" refers to Confucianism, Buddhism and Korean Daoism which has a longer history on the Korean peninsula than Chinese Daoism.

The key values of Korean Daoism - as revealed in the passage above summarizing Jeungsan's Daesoon thought - are emptiness (虛) and *wu* (無). In Daoism, to say that one has received the "emptiness" of heaven and earth is to presuppose a heaven and earth which is the prototypical form and ultimate foundation of all religions. Since this is one of the key phenomenological teachings of Daoism, it is clear that emptiness and *wu* were thought to be very important. In fact, emptiness and *wu* are such important concepts that both are addressed in the key Daoist sacred texts - *Dao De Jing* (道德經) and *Zhuangzi* (莊子).<sup>14</sup> "Conception" (*Potae* 胞胎) refers to the first religious step or phase. This indicates that Korean Daoism was, chronologically speaking, the first teaching or religion to appear of the all the three religions. Creation is said to be the primary religious value of Daoism. Daoist creation is found in the belief that all things are born out of emptiness. The ultimate virtue of Daoism is found in this creation. Creation is creating existence or something out of absence or nothing; it is magnificent and beautiful.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Representative examples from *Dodeokgeong* (『道德經』) are "無，名天地之始" (first chapter) "虛其心，實其腹" (second chapter). Examples from *Jangja* (『莊子』) are "虛而往，實而歸。固有不言之教，無形而心成者邪" (德充符).

<sup>15</sup> 『莊子』大宗師第六「偉哉造化，又將奚以汝為，將奚以汝適…夫造化者必以為不祥之人。今一以天地為大鑪，以造化為大冶，惡乎往而不可哉」

## Form as the Essence of Buddhism (佛之形體)

One of the three East Asian religious traditions, Buddhism spread from India to China and then on to Korea. The official introduction of Buddhism to the Korean peninsula is said to have occurred during the second year of the reign of Goguryeo King Sosurim(C.E.372) when the Chinese Jin Dynasty's King Bukyeon sent a Buddhist monk, sutras, and statues to Korea.<sup>16</sup> Buddhism was introduced next to the Korean kingdoms of Baekje and Silla and it became a driving spiritual force aiding the unification of the Korean peninsula under Unified Silla. With the establishment of the Koryo state, Buddhism - which buttressed the ruling political powers with its state-protecting ritual functions – was split into meditative (*Seon*) and Doctrinal (*Kyo*) schools. While this division prompted the development of Buddhist doctrine aimed at reunifying the tradition, it also contributed to the isolation of meditative *Seon* Buddhist groups in Korea's remote mountainous areas. As time progressed, Buddhism lost its political power and prestige and became a religion practiced mainly by women. Nonetheless, even during this time of decline, Korean Buddhism produced many unique and beautiful cultural artifacts. Furthermore, it penetrated deeply into the Korea people's daily lives with its meditative and ritual practices. However, the powers that established the new Joseon Dynasty built their state around Confucian values and considered Buddhism a vestige of Korea's past. Joseon Dynasty rulers adopted anti-Buddhist policies and - although a number of important and influential Buddhist monks (Bo-u, Hyujeong, Yujeong, etc.) were active during this period - Buddhism retreated further into remote mountain areas under the pressure of Joseon's pro-Confucian anti-Buddhist stance. At the end of the Joseon Period when the Korean people were facing difficult and chaotic times, the common folk took refuge in the Buddhist faith which gave them comfort and courage. In particular, faith in Maitreya, the prophesized future Buddha, became a popular belief among the Korean minjung at the

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<sup>16</sup> 『三國史記』18卷, 高句麗本紀6, 「小獸林王 二年, 夏六月, 秦王苻堅(苻堅), 遣使及浮屠順道, 送佛像 經文. 王遣使廻謝, 以貢方物. 立大學, 教育子弟」

time.

The Buddhist cultural tradition, which continued unbroken from Korea's Three Kingdoms Period up to the Joseon Dynasty, established deep roots in the common people's religious imagination. To the Korean masses, Buddhism was a familiar and comfortable religion which offered the promise of salvation whenever they encountered difficulty and danger during perilous times.

In the teachings of Jeungsan (as seen above), Buddhism is said to have 'received tranquil non-arising (寂滅) of heaven and earth.' Hence, Buddhism can be understood as a religion which emphasizes tranquility and cessation. In fact, "cessation" or "tranquil non-arising" is a word widely invoked in most Buddhist sutras; it refers to the absence of defilements and the achievement of freedom from attachments to all thoughts. A buddha is a person who has extinguished all defilements and fully arrived at a state of tranquil cessation.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the general stages of religious development indicate that the next step after the "conception" stage of Korean Daoism is a process of "gestation" (養生). If you look at this in terms of Korea's religious history, you will see that Buddhism occupied a position of power and influence after an earlier period dominated by Korean Daoism. This can be interpreted as an expression of the process of rising and falling that unfolds as history develops.

In the summary of Jeungsan's thought quoted above, the value of Buddhism is said to reside in its "form (形體)." This must be understood in conjunction with the Buddhist idea of tranquil non-arising. Here, "form" should not be

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<sup>17</sup> Here are some passages which discuss the concept of "tranquil non-arising" found in the Buddhist sutras. ; 『法句經』第19 住法品「…所謂仁明 非口不言 用心不淨 外順而已 謂心無爲 內行清虛 此彼寂滅 是爲仁明」; 『大乘起信論』「…不念彼此究竟寂滅故」; 元曉述『金剛三昧經論』卷上「…以如觀如實 不見觀如相 諸相已寂滅 寂滅即如義」。 There are plenty of other examples of references to "tranquil non-arising" or "cessation" which are found throughout the Buddhist sutras. For the most part, "tranquil non-arising" is used to explain the truth of the Buddha's enlightenment. Truth itself is tranquil non-arising thus tranquil non-arising or cessation is the principle of true suchness.

defined as some pre-existing form of an object or being which Buddhism has become attached to. In fact, to achieve the ultimate Buddhist goal of enlightenment one must overcome all attachments to form and arrive at a level of “true suchness” where all arising forms disappear. Thus the “form” that Jeung-san referred to when he spoke of Buddhism, is not a static or unchanging phenomenal form. Rather, Jeung-san’s term “form” is an abbreviation of what could be called “the essence of form” which should be understood as the “original essence of form(s).”<sup>18</sup> In other words, “form” refers to the original essence that lies immanent in all phenomena. It is the tranquil cessation or non-arising which people awaken to when they achieve enlightenment. Thus, according to Daesoon thought, Buddhism is a religion which seeks this unchanging essence which resides in all things.

### **Propriety as the Essence of Confucianism (儒之凡節)**

Along with Buddhism and Daoism, Confucianism played an important role in the formation and development of Korea’s religious culture and history. Confucianism, like Buddhism, was official introduced to the Korean peninsula during the second year of Goguryeo King Sosurim’s reign in 372. It is recorded that a Confucian Academe was established and scholars were trained.<sup>19</sup> Throughout Korea’s Three Kingdoms, Koryo, and Joseon Periods, Confucianism gained prominence through its educational efforts aimed at cultivating Confucian scholars and edifying society as a whole. At the Goguryeo Confucian Academe of Great Learning, which was the first national university, students studied the *Five Classics* and many other important Confucian texts. The Korean

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<sup>18</sup> This understanding is based in the fact that the word “form” (形體) – which is composed of two Chinese characters - is used to match the phrase’s structure. A Buddhist explanation of enlightenment is possible if shape (形) which arises and disappears continuously combines with true suchness which is an essence (體) which neither arises nor disappears. The well-known Korea Buddhist monk Wonhyo insightfully explains this relationship in his commentaries on *Awaking of Mahayana Faith*.

<sup>19</sup> 『三國史記』18卷, 高句麗本紀6, 小獸林王 二年, 上同.

Kingdom of Baekje established a doctoral system early on and awarded doctorates in the Five Classics, and such. According to official records, Shilla established a national academe in the second year of King Sinmun's reign after Shilla absorbed the Baekje and Goguryeo states. A new system for bestowing official rank was created in 788 (during the fourth year of Silla's King Wonseong's reign) and this was used in the official employment Confucian-trained scholars. In the Koryo Period, *Kukjagam*, a premier national Confucian Academe based on the Tang Dynasty model, was established during the eleventh year of Seongjong's reign. As the Koryo state encountered various national crises, the name of this premier Confucian Academe changed a number of times. During the first year of King Chungneol's reign, *Kukjagam* was renamed *Kukhak*. Then, *Kukhak* was renamed *Seongkyungam* later during the 24<sup>th</sup> year of King Chungneol's reign. Once again, during the last year of King Chungneol's reign, the academe was renamed *Seongkyunkwan*. The academe's original name, *Kukjagam*, was initially revived after King Kongmin ascended to the throne but by the eleventh year of Kongmin's rule (C.E.1362), *Kukjagam* was once again called *Seongkyunkwan*. With the advent of the Joseon Period and the launching of the Joseon state which adopted Confucianism as its national policy, Lee Seongkye, the founder of the Joseon Dynasty, raised future national leaders at the *Seongkyunkwan* Confucian Academe located in Kaeseong's Jahamun area in 1392. Benefiting from this solid foundation of Confucian education, Joseon Dynasty's Neo Confucian scholars were able to develop Confucian scholarship in profound new directions which equaled if not surpassed the work of Chinese scholars at the time. Furthermore, the Confucian scholarship of the late Joseon Dynasty pursued an increasingly practical bent and this more applied scholarship dubbed "Practical Learning" or *Silhak* is seen as an important development in late Joseon Confucianism. In sum, Confucianism or Confucian learning<sup>20</sup> was a

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<sup>20</sup> The term "Confucian learning" places greater emphasis and value on the scholarly aspects of the tradition of Confucius's teachings than the term "Confucianism" which highlights its more religious aspects. There has been much controversy in

basic subject of study in Korea beginning in ancient times and continuing on through the Joseon Dynasty. Confucian academes and educational practices were used to shape individuals' moral characters and produce socially engaged Confucian scholars; this can be contrasted with the 'life of faith' emphasized in more monotheistic traditions.

Next, I will explore how Confucianism is understood and evaluated in Daesoon thought. First of all, Confucianism is said to have received instructions from heaven and belongs in the 'growth' (Yokdae 浴帶) historical stage. In Confucian literature one often encounters the phrase "to teach by means of..."<sup>21</sup> The religious culture of the Confucian tradition stresses the importance education for the betterment society. With its emphasis on the relationship between ruler and subject, parent and child, teacher and student, Confucianism seeks to pass down its teachings to future generations by establishing exemplary models to follow. At its base, Confucianism stresses the importance of human relationships. To fully perform his/her duty in his/her own human relationships<sup>22</sup>, a person must pass down the traditional teachings which contain important Confucian principles. Furthermore, the source of the original traditional

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modern times over how to categorize Confucianism and extended debate over whether Confucianism should be called a "religion." The reasons for this controversy stem, in part, from the fact that Confucianism does strongly emphasize other-worldly or monotheistic teachings. In fact, there are as many opinions about how to categorize Confucianism as there are definitions of religion. In this paper, I will approach Confucianism from the perspective that it is one of East Asia's three traditional religions and use terms like "religion", "teachings" and "learning" more or less interchangeably.

<sup>21</sup> 『周禮』王權, 司會「以周知四國之治, 以詔王及冢宰廢置」; 『宋子大全』 Vol 150, 箴, 主一齋箴, 「論以主一 以詔來裔...」; 許筠『惺所覆瓿叢』文部13, 碑, 勅建顯靈關王廟碑「臣效雙狂 作為頌章 以詔無窮」; 崔漢綺『氣測體義』序「參酌乎古今. 損益乎質文. 明其道. 正其誼. 以詔後世」; 朴世堂『思辨錄』三, 論語, 戊辰先生六十歲 第四里仁, 凡二十六章「此天下之要道聖人之大法, 故曰吾道一以貫之, 曾子既能深喻而又以詔夫後學...」

<sup>22</sup> 丁茶山 論語古今注 卷6, 3ab「案, 仁者, 人也. 二人為仁, 父子而盡其分, 則仁也. 君臣而盡其分, 則仁也. 夫婦而盡其分, 則仁也. 仁之名必生於二人之間, 近而五教, 遠而至於天下萬姓, 凡人與人盡其分, 斯謂之仁。」

teachings is said to be heaven.<sup>23</sup> Then, we may ask, what do the teachings actually say? The answer to this question can be found in all the Confucian rites and rules of etiquette.

A concrete example of the importance of rites and rules of etiquette to Confucianism can be seen in the passage summarizing Jeungsan's thought above. The passage asserts that 'the value of Confucianism is in propriety(凡節).' Here 'propriety' refers to rites and rules of etiquette. Propriety requires both attention to and an understanding of proper order and procedure.<sup>24</sup> Here proper procedure and the rules of etiquette are said to have been established by a long line of accomplished saints. These rules and procedures are the only specific instructions given to humankind to teach us the way of heaven.<sup>25</sup> In the preface to *Family Rituals* (家禮), Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi) writes:

In practicing propriety, there is both the fundamental root and the form. To implement this propriety in the household is to fundamentally uphold just morality, and arouse respect and veneration. The four ceremonies (coming of age rites, weddings, funerals, and ancestral rites) and *ui-jang-do-su* (儀章度數) are all considered ritual form.<sup>26</sup>

As Chu Hsi explains, the performance of all ritual procedures is a specific expression of one's moral and spiritual foundation. That foundation shares the same fundamental source of heaven and earth which contains ideas of respect, veneration, and just morality. Furthermore, Chu Hsi notes that ritual procedures and rules of etiquette cannot be taught and perfected in a single day

<sup>23</sup> *Doctrine of the Golden Mean* (『中庸』) chapter 1 「天命之謂性 率性之謂道 脩道之謂教」

<sup>24</sup> 『朱子家禮』司馬氏居家雜儀「凡節序及非時家宴 上壽於家長 卑幼盛服…」；『慎獨齋先生遺稿』卷之七，書，答宋明甫書「凡節者 已然之謂也…」

<sup>25</sup> 『禮記』集說 序「前聖繼天立極之道 莫大於禮，後聖垂世立教之書，亦莫先於禮…」

<sup>26</sup> 『朱子家禮』序「凡禮有本有文 自其施於家者言之 則名分之守 愛敬之實 其本也 冠昏喪祭儀章度數者 其文也」

- they are transmitted in the *Book of Rites* which was compiled during China's Three Kingdom's Period.<sup>27</sup> As you can see, rites and rules of etiquette are a concrete expression of Confucian thought; they are a treasure of teachings that have been passed down from ancient times. In this way, the Confucian idea of traditional instructions from heaven and the Confucian sense of propriety can be understood in the same context.

As explained above, Confucianism, up until the Joseon Dynasty, was primarily employed as an educational approach which emphasized the cultivation of moral character and training in the mastery of rites and the rules of etiquette. The new religious idea that Jeung-san pursued with Daesoon thought, would include the Confucian perspective but also harmonize all three East Asian religious traditions to create a new religion for a new epoch. Jeung-san found this new religious idea in a concept which is called the 'Maturity of the Three Religions.'

### **Maturity of the Three Religions and Resolving Grievances for the Mutual Beneficence of all Life.**

As stated above, the separate values or merits of each of the three religious traditions (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Korean Daoism) have been synthesized together in Daesoon thought. Moreover, Jeung-san worked to create and establish Daesoon thought as a unique and fully integrated religious ideology. This is illustrated in Jeung-san's explanation seen below:

受天地之虛無仙之胞胎  
 受天地之寂滅佛之養生  
 受天地之以詔儒之浴帶  
 冠旺  
 兜率虛無寂滅以詔 (Daesoon 1974, 189)

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<sup>27</sup> 『朱子家禮』序「其本者 有家日用之常體 固不可以一日而不修 其文又皆所以紀綱人道之始終 雖其行之有時 施之有所 然非講之素明習之素熟 則其臨事之際 亦無以合宜而應節 是亦不可一日而不講且習焉者也 三代之際 禮經備矣」

receiving emptiness from heaven and earth,  
Daoism is in the Conception Stage  
receiving tranquil non-arising from heaven and earth,  
Buddhism is in the Gestation Stage  
receiving instructions from heaven and earth,  
Confucianism is in the Growth Stage

Maturity embraces and commands  
emptiness, tranquil non-arising and the instruction of heaven and earth.

As seen above, Jeungsan employs the words “Kwanwang or maturity (冠旺)” and “Dyusol (兜率)” to describe the integration of the three religions into Daesoon thought and create new religious interpretations. “Maturity (冠旺)” refers to one stage or level in the developmental ladder; it is the final and highest level signifying the height of development. As explained in the *Jeongeong* scripture, there are twelve different stages or levels of development which are said to be a function of heaven and earth. As a function of heaven and earth, these twelve stages describe the principles which underlie the appearance and disappearance of all things. The twelve stages are as follows:

Po(胞)→Tae(胎)→Yang(養)→Saeng(生)→Yok(浴)→Dae(帶)→Kwan(冠)→  
Wang(旺)→Soi(衰)→Beong(病)→Sa(死)→Jang(葬) (Daesoon 1974, 310).<sup>28</sup>

The human lifecycle - conception, birth, growth, aging and death - is a part of these twelve stages. The first two stages ‘Po-tae or Conception (胞胎)’ describes the process by which emptiness or *wu* becomes transformed into existence or presence. For example, a new person is created during this stage with the formation of an embryo. This can also be described as “creation.”

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<sup>28</sup> 「…天地之用 胞胎養生浴帶冠旺衰病死葬而已，養則收藏處 藏則出用處 觀其收藏出用之物 以致出也…」 The twelve stages have been used traditionally in East Asian divination practices. Particularly in the divination of human longevity, the twelve stages are employed to determine and explain the levels of fortune and misfortune in life.

During the stage of ‘Yangsaeng or Gestation (養生)’, specific individual bodies form and develop a distinct shape. When this process of gestation produces a complete body, a living being will be born. This is the development of form and even in the basic form of one embryo the possibilities of growth and specialization are already present. In the growth (Yokdae 浴帶) stage, a newborn baby begins to develop relationships with other people and gradually learns to perform his or her role in society. During this process, a sense of ‘propriety’ becomes necessary. Thus during the growth stage, one should master the various procedures and rules of etiquette and learn how to establish responsible human relationships. At the next stage or “mature” (Kwanwang 冠旺) level, a fully developed adult with strong moral character excels in performing his/her role as it relates to his/her social status and position. ‘Soibeong sajang (衰病死葬)’ stage is when everything has been completed and a person becomes weak, falls ill, and dies in the process of returning to the original root or source of heaven and earth.

Using the above explanation as a foundation, I will consider the relationship between the ‘mature’(Kwanwang) level and the previous stages of ‘conception’ (Po-tae), ‘gestation’(Yangsaeng), and ‘growth’(Yokdae.) First, it is necessary to note that all of the above stages or processes describe the development of individual persons – a process which changes and shapes the individual. Although the essential nature of humanity remains the same, individuals can vary widely depending on their degree of intellectual maturity and the way they conduct themselves in the world. To achieve his or her complete and full potential, a person must reach the mature level. A person can attain this level only by passing through all the preceding stages or levels. This principle or process also applies to the relationships between the three individual religions in the following way. As creation, Korean Daoism belongs to the conception stage. Buddhism is affiliated with the gestation stage and Confucianism, as ‘propriety’ fits into the growth stage. Religion of the higher mature stage is not cut off and disconnected from Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism but rather contains all of these three separate religions within itself as part of its development process. As it is growing, a soon-to-be mature or ‘Kwanwang’

stage religion approaches a new developed form.<sup>29</sup> Here the word “new” does not simply signify something different or distinct. “New” refers to the development or appearance of practices and ideas which respond to new questions and problems arising out of changing circumstances and situations.

Next, I will consider the meaning of the word “Dyusol (兜率)” as it relates our understanding of ‘maturity (Kwanwang).’ According to a Chinese character dictionary, the verb “Dyu(兜)” means ① to wrap or embrace ② to encircle or surround ③ to grab everything or monopolize ④ take charge of, etc.<sup>30</sup> “Dyu(兜)” in combination with “Sol(率)” - which means ‘to take care of or command’ - can be interpreted as ‘to embrace and command.’ The Chinese characters used in the term “Dyusol” can alternatively be pronounced as “Dosol” - a word used in the Buddhist tradition as an abbreviation for the proper noun “Dosolcheon.” Here ‘Dosol’ refers to the Sanskrit word “Tusita” (it is a sound-based translation which borrows Chinese characters to match the Sanskrit term’s original pronunciation) which refers to Tusita Heaven - the Pure Land where the Buddha Maitreya is thought to reside.<sup>31</sup> Hence, “Tusita” used as a proper noun in Buddhism cannot, practically speaking, be fully translated. However, the word “Dyusol” as employed by Jeungsan in the above passage is used as part of a predicate phrase with “emptiness, tranquil non-arising, and instructions of heaven (虛無寂滅以詔)” and can be translated if one understands the grammar

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<sup>29</sup> This can be related to Alfred Whitehead’s process philosophy. In Whitehead’s philosophy, process is creative development from “the many” to “the one.” Here “the one” is a new being separate from “the many” from which it arose. “The many”, which continues to form anew, also continues to produce new singularities (“the one”). Process is the regular cyclical transformations of “the many” and “the one.” (Oh trans, Whitehead, 1991, 613).

<sup>30</sup> 『Cunghansajeon』 koryodae minjok munhwa yeonguwon, 2006; In a Korean Chinese character dictionary, one finds the following definitions ① metal helmet ② hat ③ confusion or bewilderment. It is difficult to grasp the original meaning by following these Korean Chinese definitions.

<sup>31</sup> The Chinese characters used in this case are 兜 or 都 and thus the word becomes ‘兜率’ or ‘都率’.

of Classical Chinese. Thus the phrase reads, ‘... embraces and commands all emptiness, tranquil non-arising and instructions of heaven.’ This predicate phrase joins with the subject of the sentence, namely, ‘maturity’(Kwanwang) and hence serves as an explanation of the religion at the mature level.

In summary, the mature stage is the creative summation (and sublimation) of the conception, gestation, and growth stages. A religious thought at the mature stage embraces, controls, and synthesizes Korean Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The religious ideas and practices of Daesoon thought harmonize Korean Daoist creation, with Buddhist form and Confucian propriety. These three components can be likened to the three legs of the great tripod vessel of Daesoon thought which sought to overcome the challenges of a new historical era. This is illustrated in Jeungsan’s words as seen below:

All the tribes of the world created different cultures based on the transmission of particular ideas arising from each tribe’s own particular experiences. When these different cultures appeared, larger disputes followed. Thus, the Lord (Sangje) gathered together all the essences of all the peoples’ different cultures and decided on a foundation for the civilization of the coming new world (Daesoon 1974, 254).

Even after the above explanations, we may still ask ourselves - what is the specific wisdom or practical truth explained in Daesoon thought that makes the maturity of the three religions possible?

The answer is found in the phrase ‘the resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of life.’ This is the essential point of Jeungsan’s teachings and a key concept in Daesoon thought. The “resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence” is practical wisdom which encourages human beings to act fully as subjects. Furthermore, it is also the key to describing the genuine maturity of the three religions. The meaning of “the resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of life” as explained in Jeungsan’s teachings is illustrated below in a passage from *Jeongeong* :

The Lord (Sangje) told Kim Hyeongneol the following: "In the Prior World, all people and things were governed by antagonism and competing selfish desires. Grievances and resentment accumulated in the world and filled the three realms. Heaven and earth lost their proper paths and various calamities and disasters appeared. The world became cruel. Hence, I will restore order to heaven and earth, harmonize the spirits, and resolve the grievances which have built up over the eons. I will establish a paradise in the Later World through the teachings of mutual beneficence and save all the living beings of this world. Regardless of how large or how small, I will resolve all grievances beginning with the spirit realm. When I have restored order and harmony, this will be the framework on which the affairs of humankind can be automatically achieved. This is the reordering of the three realms. Then, he began with the reordering of the place (*Myeongbu* 冥府) where the deceased are sent to be judged (Daesoon 1974, 98).

The passage above explains various aspects of "the resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of life." The "resolution of grievances" indicates that all the resentment and animosity which has accumulated in the Prior World and which now fills heaven and earth will be dissipated. "Grievances" or *won* (冤) refers to all the resentment, bitterness, and anger which people and other living beings possess. Grievances and feelings of resentment are by no means limited to human beings; other beings, objects and even spirits in the spirit realm can feel resentment and harbor grievances.<sup>32</sup> In other words, grievances have a cosmic scope. When grievances which have filled the entire cosmos - including the spirit world - have been resolved, the framework for a

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<sup>32</sup> In 『Seolmunhaeja』 the character “冤” is defined as “bent” or “crooked.” It is constructed out of the combination of “宀” plus rabbit “冤.” Since a rabbit is underneath a hutch “宀” it can’t run and becomes more crooked and bent. It is explained by the following: (屈也 從宀兔 兔在宀下不得走 益屈折也). Thus the character “冤” indicates a rabbit caught in a hutch and symbolizes the rabbit’s state of being trapped. This broadens the object and subject of “grievances” to include natural phenomena. In *Jeongeong*, explanations about spirits inform us that grievances also accumulate in the spirit realm. (Jeonmyeongsuk, Jinmuk, Choi suun, Donghak sinmyeong, danju etc. are the resolution of grievances.)

new ideal world (the Later World) can be prepared. It must be noted that antagonism prompted the initial appearance of grievances in the Prior World. Antagonism refers to the competition between evil intentions and desires. Antagonism appears when someone strives to satisfy his/her own selfish desires and doesn't take the sacrifice or suffering of others into account. Antagonism can appear in people's relationships with other people. It can be produced in people's relationship with the natural environment. It may also be created in spirits interaction with other spirits. As a result, all of heaven and earth loses its order, disasters and calamities arise and the world becomes increasingly cruel. Since antagonism dominated the Prior World, the formation of numerous grievances was inevitable. To bring about a fundamental transformation in the world, the governing principle of antagonism must be replaced with the logic of mutual beneficence.

What, then, does "mutual beneficence" actually mean? The beginning of an answer to this question can be found in the passage below:

Our task is to figure out how to help others succeed. When others have succeeded, we can enjoy what remains. Jeon Myeongsuk rebelled because he wanted to help people of common birth attain high status (Yangban status) - he wanted to help vulgar folk become nobles. Thus when he died he became the Guardian of Joseon *Myeongbu* - the place where the deceased of Joseon go to be judged (Daesoon 1974, 221).

Here, "mutual beneficence" is described as helping others succeed. This contrasts with antagonism which arises when people demand the sacrifice and suffering of others in the pursuit of their own self-centered interests. People who practice mutual beneficence think about others before they think about themselves and, in the end, succeed through the success of others. A peaceful paradise - which includes people, natural phenomena and the spirits in the spiritual realm - can be established through relationships of mutual beneficence since grievances and resentment does not arise. In his teachings, Jeungsan explains that "the resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of life" is both an absolute principle and the primary method of renewing and restoring order to heaven and earth. All of the

evil practices and calamities recorded in history are a product of the accumulation of grievances. Hence, these grievances must first be resolved to begin the process of constructing a new world. An earthly paradise – one where no new grievances arise - can be created with the resolution of the accumulated grievances of the past and the practice of mutual beneficence. In sum, “the resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of life” can be understood as practical instructions for the achievement of a religious ideal.

Daesoon thought pursues the attainment of the “Maturity of the Three Religions” which is, in fact, the end result or product of practicing “the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence.” Through the practice of “the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence”, Korean Daoism’s “creation”, Buddhism’s “form”, and Confucianism’s “propriety” all unite to become one. Presenting a unified worldview created by harmonizing these three traditional religious teachings is a crucial part of Jeungsan’s reordering of the world. Jeungsan said, “Confucius taught seventy-two people perfect propriety. The Buddha, Sakyamuni helped five-hundred people attain enlightenment. Nonetheless, those who did not achieve such great spiritual insight, harbored grievances and resentment. I will help enlighten everyone who attempts to cultivate their mind” (Daesoon 1974, 169). Jeungsan offered a path which anyone could take to achieve self-realization. Daesoon thought offers genuine religious truth through its creative synthesis and sublimation of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism; it achieves its sublime synthesis of these three traditional teachings through the religious practice of “the resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of all life.”

## **Conclusion**

Above, I have investigated how the merits of Korea’s traditional religions have been identified and evaluated in Daesoon thought. I have also considered the ways in which Daesoon thought performs a creative summation, synthesis, and transcendence of these other faiths. Previous scholarship characterizing early modern Korean new religious thought as a consolidated or syncretized mix of Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist concepts has blurred the boundaries of new

religious thought and made the distinctive identities of new Korean religions unnecessarily ambiguous. Furthermore, it has been difficult for Korean new religions to free themselves from the hegemonic hold of these three traditional religions for Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism have seeped in and nearly saturated Korean soil over the centuries. Some say that ever since Korea's early modern period, Christian thought which was introduced to the peninsula from the West, has become increasingly dominant. Nonetheless, the importance of establishing a nation's cultural and religious identity becomes increasingly clear in our current "global village" world. The visionary teachings of Kang Jeungsan, who was a great religious leader during Korea's early modern times, have become the foundation of an important religious faith in today's Korea. Thus an examination of the religious merits and truths of Jeungsan's thought is both instructive and necessary. Jeungsan mobilized East Asia's three great religious traditions in the creation of his own religious vision. Unique terms and expressions like "Maturity of the Three Religions" and "resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of life" were created help to explain the cosmic truth of Jeungsan's thought. This paper has argued that the wisdom of "resolving grievances for mutual beneficence" was discovered within Jeungsan's unified religious vision. Furthermore, Jeungsan's Daesoon thought illustrates the important contribution of Korean new religions with its creation of a new religious worldview which embraces and fully digests the three traditional Korean religions.

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## Kang Jeungsan's Taoistic Tendency and the Taoism Elements of Mugeukdo \*

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### Abstract

Cho Jeongsan(1895-1958) achieves spiritual enlightenment from Kang Jeungsan(1871-1909) in 1917. So, Cho Jeongsan's thought is originated from Kang Jeungsan's thought revealed by His Cheonjigongsa(Work of Reordering of the Universe). Kang Jeungsan's thought has Taoistic tendencies, which are shown in His teachings including Taoistic way of achieving human perfection and daily practice of Taoistic life. Kang Jeungsan's Taoistic thought is based on Shindo(Divine Law, 神道), which was founded upon the thought of Fu Xi about the Book of Changes.

In addition, Kang Jeungsan's Taoistic thought has its origin to the Shindo of Yellow Emperor in ancient times, which is characterized by Nonaction. These concepts of Shindo and Nonaction make unique Taoistic features of Kang Jeungsan's thought in relation to His Work of Reordering of the Universe.

However, the Shindo of Kang Jeungsan is different from previous Taoistic Shindo because in Mugeukdo, which was founded by Jeungsan's successor Cho Jeongsan in 1925, the object of worship is Kang Jeungsan as the God of the Ninth Heaven, who exists as the Supreme God among other great celestial deities in systematic order.

This writing discusses that Taoistic features of Mugeukdo are shown in

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three parts: the universal time its foundation, the religious object of worship and the objective. The foundation time of Mugeukdo is related to his announcement of Jeonggyo(Cycles of Teachings). It was when the new universal year called Won(元, 4617 years) began. The Supreme being of Worship in Mugeukdo is Kang Jeungsan as the God of the Ninth Heaven, which is the word came from Taoism. The Objective of Mugeukdo is to realize Earthly Immortality and Earthly Paradise, which are also another features of Taoism.

## I . Foreword

Cho Jeongsan(1895-1958) received the divine revelation from Kang Jeungsan (1871-1909), the incarnation of the God of the Ninth Heaven, and was awakened of Sangje's Daesoon Truth at Bongcheon, Manchuria of China in 1917. His enlightenment happened according to the plan called "50 years of *Gongbu*<sup>1</sup> for spreading the Daesoon Truth" set by the Work of Kang Jeungsan's "Reordering of the Universe" carried out during the period 1901-1909.

Cho Jeongsan was chosen as the successor of the religious orthodox after Kang Jeungsan passed into the Ninth Heaven. Cho Jeongsan's religious activities were unfolded in accordance with the teachings that continuously came down as revelations from Kang Jeungsan Sangje, the God of the Ninth Heaven. In Cho Jeongsan's religious order Mugeukdo, Kang Jeungsan was positioned in the godship named *Gucheon Eungwon Noeseong Bohwa Cheonjon Kangseong Sangje*<sup>2</sup> as the religious object of worship.

Kang Jeungsan reconstructed the divine world, through the Work of

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<sup>1</sup> 50 Years of Gongbu: The work Doju Cho Jeongsan carried out to establish the systematic spiritual practice and realize Sangje's Work of Reordering of the Universe.

<sup>2</sup> The God of Ninth Heaven or Sangje is the Supreme God who commands all phenomena, including heavenly bodies, to come into beings; controls the becoming and changing of everything in Creation with lightening and thunder; forwards great love to make everything exist into beings tangible or intangible; and exists as the highest majesty of all creation, in the honored name of the omniscient and omnipotent Kangseong Sangje (Holy Kang the God).

Reordering of the Universe, with the principle of *Haewon*(*Resolving all grudges*) and *Boeun*(*Reciprocating all the love offered*), which are operated by the Law of Unity between Humans and the Divinity. This is the foundation of the Shindo(神道, Divine Law) Kang Jeungsan has claimed.

This study reveals first the Taoistic elements shown in the thoughts of Kang Jeungsan, and then looks into the Taoistic elements of Mugeukdo expressed in its foundational background, the religious object of worship and the Objective.

Previous studies related to the Taoistic features of Kang Jeungsan's thoughts can be classified into two parts; One is to find Taoistic elements in the thoughts of Kang Jeungsan. The other is to study how the Korean folk Taoism and the new religion called Jeungsangyo affected each other.

However, the previous studies have a tendency to have focused only on the Taoism words such as 'Taoist', 'Heaven' and 'Opening of a new world'. With this in mind, this study not only looked into the words of Taoism, but also adapted the basic elements of Taoism partly from previous studies and, at the same time, discovered the unique Taoistic features shown in Mugeukdo, such as the religious object of worship of Mugeukdo, based on the references about many branches of Jeungsangyo and the Jeungsangyo as a folk Taoism in the late Joseon Dynasty.

## **II. Taoistic Features of Jeungsan's Thoughts**

This chapter looks into the Taoistic features of Kang Jeungsan in three aspects: the Taoistic way to Human Perfection, Nonaction, and Shindo(Divine Law). Although the Taoistic tendency in Jeungsan's thought leads to the foundation of Mugeukdo, his thoughts cannot be limited to only Taoism. So, this chapter will focus on what features of Taoism is revealed in Jeungsan's thought.

First, in the following statement, Kang Jeungsan explains how humans can reach the Human Perfection in the view of Taoism;

In the Former World, the Heaven did not provide the circumstance for humans' *Dotong*<sup>3</sup>, so the trainees of Taoism had failed to overcome the maligning forces and achieve the state of *Dotong* despite their arduous effort. But, in the future, since the Heaven will provide the conditions for humans' *Dotong*, those who try to hinder someone's achieving *Dotong* will rather damage themselves.<sup>4</sup>

In the above, Jeungsan's saying that "there will be people from Taoism who achieve the state of *Dotong*" indicates his view of *Dotong* based on Taoism. Jeungsan said that, in old days, people could not reach the level of *Dotong* because of others' obstruction. But, now, in the religious system of His teachings, those who try to block others from achieving *Dotong* will rather harm themselves and those who work hard will reach the state of *Dotong*. This signifies that the goal of His religious teachings is to realize the Human Perfection as described in Taoism.

Jeungsan proclaimed the True Donghak when Choi Suwun failed to reveal the true meaning of the Great Dao he received through divine revelation from Kang Jeungsan due to his limited perspective built upon the archaic custom of Confucianism.

Jeungsan claims that it is His work to produce human beings aligned with the Dao. In this claim, he uses quotation from the Song of Gungeul and the words such as "the advent of human beings aligned with the Dao", which is the expression of Taoistic context of the True Donghak. Those enlightened humans who achieved the state of Human Perfection in the circle of Taoism are considered as the beings who will improve and advance the universal works of Kang Jeungsan. This signifies that a series of His sacred religious achievements are completed in Taoistic way of spiritual practice toward Human Perfection. In addition, Jeungsan emphasizes that the Taoistic way of spiritual practice should be realized in daily lives.

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<sup>3</sup> *Dotong*: being in perfect alignment with the Dao

<sup>4</sup> 『Jeongyeong』, 『Passing on of Teachings』, 1:40

Second, Jeungsan's Taoistic tendency shows in His idea of Shindo(Divine Law) related to "Nonaction". Jeungsan adapted the concept of "Nonaction" of Taoism in His Shindo, which is originated from the previous idea of Shindo<sup>5</sup>. In Jeungsan's Shindo(Divine Law), there is a systematic order of celestial deities including Jeungsan as the Supreme God. And the way of Shindo's operation is related to "Nonaction". Jeungsan said that the existing laws and practices were not enough to solve the current problems and claimed the thought of Divine Law as the new solution. His solution took all the essences of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism to fix the problem from the universal perspective. This is possible only by the Divine Law, which is the principle that establishes the fortune of Earthly Paradise. to be unfolded by the new Heavenly Program(度數, Dosu). Jeungsan called his Dao "Shindo" that operates in the way of Nonaction. Nonaction is the main idea of Taoism and Jeungsan gives an additional explanation about it in the following;

I use the Four Principles of Birth, Growth, Harvest and Reserve, which is called Nonaction.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of Nonaction is used as the same meaning of the Birth, Growth, Harvest and Reserve, which is the principle of Heaven applies to all life. Also, this is the same as the Four Seasons that operates under the Universal Law of Won Hyeong Li Jeong(元形利貞, Origin, Formation, Harvest and settling down). This principle is eventually led by Kang Jeungsan when He descended to human world from the position as God of the Ninth Heaven. It means that Nonaction thought of Taoism was adapted and developed by Kang

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<sup>5</sup> The word Shindo(神道) is stated in 「Gwandae」, 『the Book of Change』 (Bogyong Publication, 1994, page229) cf. “觀天下神道 而四時不忒 聖人以神道說教 而天下服矣 Seeing the Divine Law of Heaven and Earth, which never changes throughout the Four Seasons, The sages teach the people with this Divine Law, and with the Divine Law, all creations of Heave and Earth become and move”. This is interpreted as “天道至神 故曰 神道 Heavenly Law reaches to the Divine(神, God or deities), therefore, it is called the Divine Law”.

<sup>6</sup> 「Law of Teachings」, 『Jeongyeong』, 3:27

Jeungsan with additional explanation of Shindo and the Four Principles of Birth, Growth, Harvest and Reserve.

In Jeungsan's thought, the Taoistic tendency is combined with the idea of Shindo to adduce the dynamics of the Work of Reordering of the Universe. In other words, he not only accepted the previous thoughts of Taoism but also improved and transformed them into a new thought based on his will to build the unprecedented order with the principle of Opening of a New World and Transformation.

The Shindo in Jeungsan's thought is related to the Book of Changes developed by Fu Xi in the era of Gods or Shindo in old China. It is known historical fact that Fu Xi introduced the Book of Changes. So, it is clear that the elements of Book of Changes are included in the religious thoughts of Jeungsan. The concept of Nonaction mentioned in the above is stated in 『十八史略(History Book of Ancient China)』 as following saying about the Era of Heaven:

天皇氏 以木德王 歲起攝提 無爲而化

Emperor of Heaven was a king with the virtue of tree and never let the year starts from the time of tiger, No action but brings every being into harmonious creation <sup>7</sup>

This states that the Emperor of Heaven ruled the world with Nonaction. Although the meaning of Nonaction in Taoism was not different from the original one in the Era of Heaven, its practice became less affective in the circle of Taoism with the time and caused the arising of Taoistic concept of Nonaction. In the systematic thoughts of Jeungsan, a lot of thoughts such as Nonaction, Shindo, Fu Xi's Book of Changes are adapted based on the idea of Wonsibanbon(Going back to the origin where it started). This new integrated thought created a new world which became the foundation of Mugeukdo.

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<sup>7</sup> 『Interpretation of History Book of Ancient China』, Yeogang Publication, 1986, page 9 cf.

Thirdly, Jeungsan's thought of Shindo in relationship with Taoism is considered as the Law of the Divine, by which the great celestial deities including Kang Jeungsan as the Supreme God takes care of all human affairs as well as all universal events. His idea of Shindo emphasized the need to restore the Divine Law and Shamanism, and to understand the guide of divine beings over human beings.

### **III. Taoistic Tendency of Mugeukdo from the Perspective of Jeungsan's Taoistic Thoughts**

All sectors originated from Jeungsangyo such as Taeulgyo, Early Bocheon-gyo, Early Seondogyo, Jeungsangyo Headquarters, Jeungsanbeopjong-gyo, Soocheondo, Maitreya Buddhism, Indogyo, Korean Buddhism Yonghwa-jong, and 50 other sectors have Taoistic features in their thoughts, religious systems and rituals. Since the Daesoon Thought is based on the Work of Reordering of the Universe by Kang Jeungsan, religious activities of Cho Jeungsan and Park Wudang are realized in accordance with the Heavenly Programs set by the Work of Reordering of the Universe. Jeungsan predicted that, after passing into Heaven, His teachings will be unfolded through the 50 years of Gongbu of one who received the religious orthodox from Him. Therefore, religious and philosophical features of Mugeukdo are greatly affected by Jeungsan's thought.

As seen in the previous chapter, the religious system of Mugeukdo was founded upon Jeungsan's thought with Taoistic tendency. The three major Taoistic tendencies of Mugeukdo are the universal timing when it was founded, the Supreme being of worship, and Realization of Earthly Immortality and Earthly Paradise. The other Taoistic features need to be studied later.

First, regarding the universal timing, Cho Jeungsan proclaimed the statement called <Cycles of Teachings(傳教)> in 1923 before the foundation of Mugeukdo. The statement clarified who and what religions appeared in the cycle of every 513 years during the most recent universal year of 1 won(元) or 4671 years. The year 1923 was when the one universal year is ended to open a new cycle.

Although Cho Jeungsan established the major religious teachings of

Mugeukdo based on his understanding of the universal cycle as in the <Cycles of Teachings>, it is not yet clear who and what religions will come forth in human world for 9 times in every 513 years during the new universal year in the same way as it did in the past 4617 years, because its foundational root, the Kang Jeungsan's thought about Opening of a New World realized through the Work of Reordering of the Universe is unprecedented and thus unpredictable.

However, from the view of the idea of Wonsibanbon(Going back to the origin where it started), it is possible to see that, as the divine sages such as the Yellow Emperor taught human beings to be civilized at the beginning of the past universal year, Cho Jeungsan founded Mugeukdo as the first religious order that started delivering the unprecedented teachings of Kang Jeungsan to human beings in systematic religious thoughts and practice. This contention is made upon Kang Jeungsan's idea of Wonsibanbon, the thoughts of Fu Xi's Book of Changes and the idea of Shindo reestablished by Kang Jeungsan.

Secondly, regarding the Taoistic features of Mugeukdo shown in its religious object of worship, Cho Jeungsan placed Kang Jeungsan as the godship of "*Guchen Eungwon Nwyeseong Bohwa Cheonjon Kangseong Sangje*" when he founded the religious order Mugeukdo in 1925 after he was enlightened of Kang Jeungsan's Daesoon Truth in 1917. It was realized in accordance with the 50 years of Gongu program set by Kang Jeungsan. The word "Guchen Sangje(God of the Ninth Heaven)" was borrowed from Taoism, but Mugeukdo revised the systematic order of celestial deities with Kang Jeungsan as the Gucheon Sangje, the Supreme God.

Third, the objective of Mugeukdo, the "Realization of Earthly Immortality and Earthly Paradise" is the idea of Taoism. This writing will look into the Taoistic elements shown in Kang Jeungsan's view about Earthly Immortality and the way to realize it based on His thought of the Era of Human beings.

Respecting Human beings is more important than respecting the Heaven and Earth, so now is the Era of Human beings. You shall diligently work on clarifying your mind.<sup>8</sup>

The Era of Human beings is when human beings become noble. This is

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<sup>8</sup> 『Jeongyeong』, 『Law of Teachings』, 2:56

the time when the Era of Heaven and Era of Earth is closed and the humans become more important because it is changed into the stage where Heaven proposes and Man disposes. This era has come as the universal cycle, which was opened by the work of God of the Ninth heaven during His incarnation as Kang Jeungsan and unfolded by succession of religious orthodox to Cho Jeongsan for the purpose of producing human beings aligned to the Dao with the help of divine beings in charge of religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. In accordance with the principle of YinYang-Hapdeok(陰陽合德, Harmonious integration of Yin and Yang), the divine beings as the energy of Yin and humans as Yang are destined to be united as one. This is another principle called the “Harmonious union of human beings and the divine beings”, which founded a thought that realizes the Era of Humans and builds a new morality<sup>9</sup>. This new circumstance can be created when the world biased to materialism is rectified and the Eternal Law that made human affairs occur in accordance with the Heavenly Law is restored. In other words, the world has to have a new basis for the Era of Humans with Shindo that builds the Later World with Kang Jeungsan as the Supreme being and make human beings reach the state of perfect alignment with the Dao.

Now, based on this unique idea of Kang Jeungsan's Era of Humans, the way of realizing Earthly Immortality is different from previous Taoist immortality. The special feature of Jeungsan's thought is that He himself will manifest as an Earthly Immortality in human world. This thought of Jeungsan shows that He was determined to realize Taoistic human perfection through the idea of Earthly Immortality. And this is directly contained in the thought of Mugeukdo.

“Take a good look at My face. You will hardly be able to look at Me later when I make Myself appear in the world. From old times, no one actually saw the immortality but only heard of it. Only you will see the immortality. I will

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<sup>9</sup> Yoon Jegeun, 「Religious and Ideological tendencies and the advent of Daesoon Thought in Modern Korea」, 『Daedong Philosophy v.23』, 2003, page 573

come in the body of four meters”.<sup>10</sup>

In this statement, Kang Jeungsan differentiates Himself from previous concept of Immortality existed in the knowledge of human history. The Earthly Immortality in the above indicates Kang Jeungsan Himself, who will appear in the future with the body so big and so blindly bright.

However, the Earthly Immortality put as the objective of Mugeukdo is the being transformed into Immortality mentioned in True Donghak through the process of Nonaction. This is the human being with the mind opened to be aligned with the mind of Universe. Humans can achieve it through one's own effort as an independent and creative being. Also, the Earthly Immortality is realized within the transcendent power of Kang Jeungsan who said He will come back in the body of four meters.

The Taoistic features of Mugeukdo are shown in realizing Earthly Immortality through Kang Jeungsan's appearing in the body of Immortality and the transformation of human beings by the Kang Jeungsan's mystical power as God of the Ninth Heaven. Although the idea of Earthly Immortality lies in the same context with Kang Jeungsan's immortality, Earthly Immortality realized in human world is a more human or earthly than Immortality as the word “Earthly” shows. Human beings can be transformed into Earthly Immortality in the process of their evolution into a higher level, with the help of celestial deities following the Heavenly Program and Work called “Great Leaders(Designation of His successors)” set by Kang Jeungsan.

Earthly Immortality as an expression of Taoist thought can be considered in relation with the Taoistic Ideal World. And this ultimately becomes the ground of realizing Earthly Immortality of Kang Jeungsan's. Earthly Immortalities are used as the word “*Dotong Gunjas*(Humans aligned with the Dao)” according to the principle of Heaven proposes and Humans disposes. The origin of Earthly Immortality belongs to Kang Jeungsan who will come back as an Immortality. In addition, the idea of Earthly Immortality came up

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<sup>10</sup> 『Jeongyeong』, 『Life of Kang Jeungsan』, 2:25

with Kang Jeungsan's vision of completing the Three Realms of World, which shows His strong will to solve the practical problems of the world through the thought of Noble Human. The Earthly Immortality in the same context of *Dotong Gunjas* is manifested into three levels according to the size of mind of each human.

The utopia Kang Jeungsan is trying to build is the Earthly Paradise where human life is free from aging, sickness, death and burial to enjoy eternal life, and the world is in peace and harmony without disasters from flood, fire and wind. These aspects of utopia is in connection with the idea of Taoism. However, Kang Jeungsan's saying, "the Heaven is lowered for humans to go up and down easily between the Heaven and Earth" means that the Paradise, Heaven or the Divine world is getting closer to Human world, so that the wish of humans such as "fly up the mountain" is realized. It indicates the idealistic world of Taoism is created in human world in addition to new human beings enlightened in full wisdom to see through past, present and future and all directions. This is an unique expression of utopia from the view of Kang Jeungsan and at the same time, in the context originated from Taoism.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The religions including Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in the late Joseon Dynasty become apart from people and formed a new movement in the turmoil of falling government at the hard time of history. This was the time of great change with inflow of western religions, prophecies such as *Dochamseol*, *Chamwiseol*, book of Jeonggam and geomancy or Feng Shui such as Ten Wining Regions, which formed New Religions.

Taoistic tendencies appear in its objective of Realization of Earthly Immortality and Earthly Paradise and the words such as Immortality and Heaven or Paradise. Immortality and Paradise, in particular, are the ideal status of humans and the world in Taoism, the former is the ultimate stage of human perfection and the latter is the expression of ideal society. These Taoistic features are passed on the foundational ideas of Mugeukdo. However, Kang Jeungsan's Taoistic features are unique because Kang Jeungsan, after passing

into heaven, was enshrined as the God of the Ninth Heaven or the Supreme God among other great celestial deities in systematic order in Mugeukdo. The word “God of the Ninth Heaven(Gucheon Eungwon Nwyseong Bohwa Cheonjon Sangje)” is the name of the Supreme being in Taoism. Also, the founder of Mugeukdo, Cho Jeongsan himself had the godship of “Okhwang Sangje”, which is another Taoistic factor in Mugeukdo.

The idea of Shindo(Divine Law) is the key to understand the Dao of Kang Jeungsan. Jeungsan described the Dao of Fu Xi as the Origin of Religion(祖宗), and the Fu Xi’s Book of Changes became one of the main factors of Kang Jeungsan’s thought.

The Taoistic features of Mugeukdo were formed upon the basis of Kang Jeungsan’s thought and they can be found in three elements of Mugeukdo: the religious object of worship named “Gucheon Eungwon Nwyseong Bohwa Cheonjon Sangje”, the universal time of its foundation shown in Cho Jeongsan’s announcement of <Jeonggyo(Cycle of Teachings)> in 1923, and the objectives of Mugeukdo, “Realization of Earthly Immortality” and “Building an Earthly Paradise”. The name of the religious object of worship in Mugeukdo, which is Gucheon Sangje, is the same as the one in Taoism. Cho Jeongsan’s <Jeonggyo> is related to the idea of Shindo based on Kang Jeungsan’s thought of Wonsibanbon(Going back to the origin where it started), and Jeungsan’s Shindo was developed in the context of Taoism. And the objectives of Mugeukdo have the words and ideas originated from Taoism.

Kang Jeungsan’s Shindo is the foundation of Mugeukdo to realize the Earthly Paradise and reach the state of human perfection. This will become a building structure for the Era of Human beings. Mugeukdo shows Taoistic view of the world in its objectives because the advent of Dotong Gunjas is based on the idea of Taoistic human perfection that occur in tandem with the new Era of Humans. And the idea that the Earthly Paradise will be realized in the system closely related to the deities in the Divine world also shows Taoistic view.

# The History and Theology of Daesoonjinrihoe

Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture

## **I . Introduction**

Daesoonjinrihoe (the Fellowship of Daesoon Truth) is one of the religions of Korean people. The religion of ‘Korean people’ might refer to the one which is contrary to global religion, but it does not mean the one confined to the specific area. In other words, Daesoonjinrihoe is a religion of the universal concept, rooted in Korean history and culture.

According to a report conducted in 2015, Daesoonjinrihoe has grown into one of the five major religions in Korea: Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Won Buddhism. Among many of the new religions which have appeared in Korea over the past 150 years, it is no exaggeration to say that this religion alone has seen the largest growth in such a short period of time.

There are five temple complexes including the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex in Daesoonjinrihoe. Most of the first-time visitors to the temple complex are astonished at the solemn and splendid Korean-style structures in it. Daesoonjinrihoe also has over 120 fellowship buildings, over 200 meeting halls as well as over 2,000 missionary offices throughout South Korea.

Additionally, the religious community has been active in promoting public service. They have established schools (Daejin University and six high schools) and a general hospital (the Jesaeng Hospital, located in Bundang, Gyeonggi Province) with a capacity of 650 beds. Two additional hospitals (with 1,500 and 600 beds each) are, furthermore, under construction in Dongducheon, Gyeonggi Province, and in Goseong, Gangwon Province. In 2009, the Daesoon Social Welfare Foundation began to operate the largest and best senior medical center (the Daesoonjinrihoe Senior Care Institution, located in Yeosu, Gyeonggi

Province) with the high-tech equipment and advanced managing system, which is considered to have embarked on a new chapter for the senior welfare of Korea. These accomplishments manifest the progress of Daesoonjinrihoe although not easily seen in statistics.

Schools or social welfare facilities founded by Korean religious organizations are usually built and operated with a considerable help of governmental subsidies. On the contrary, almost all the social facilities of Daesoonjinrihoe has been established and being operated by the funds raised from the contributions of their members. In case of receiving government financial support, the aid is limited to the very small amount, which is not very common in Korea.

Every month, the members of Daesoonjinrihoe make a monetary contribution, which is all sent to the head office. Over 70% of the money then goes to the three major activities: relief and charity, social welfare, and education. The total of over 660 billion won (about 560 million USD) was used for those fields for 39 years between 1975 and 2013. Considering the rate of inflation, its real value might be considerably larger. This is not easily found in other religious organizations. Daesoonjinrihoe is a practical religion which actively puts its doctrines into action, and its activities are more influential and contributive than any other religions in Korea, from the viewpoint of its scale.

To realize the historical context of Daesoonjinrihoe, it is required to understand its religious lineage (Chapter II). The predecessor of Daesoonjinrihoe is known as Taegeukdo, which was called Mugeukdo before, but An Introduction to Daesoonjinrihoe describes its history, in terms of not the transition of the religious bodies but that of the religious lineage from *Sangje*<sup>1</sup> Kang Jeungsan(1871-1909), *Doju*<sup>2</sup> Jo Jeongsan(1895-1958) to *Dojeon*<sup>3</sup> Park Wudang

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<sup>1</sup> *Sangje* (Supreme God) is an ancient name for the supreme deity in East Asian religious traditions. *Sangje* is a Korean pronunciation of Chinese Shandi. *Sangje* was incarnated as a human, Kang Il-Sun, who later took on the honorific name of Jeungsan. The appellation for *Sangje* Kang is also expressed as Gucheon *Sangje* or Kangseong *Sangje*.

<sup>2</sup> *Do* is a Korean word for the concept of Dao; *ju* refers to owner or master.

<sup>3</sup> *Do* means “lead”; *jeon* signifies “law, principle or canon.”

(1917-1996). In this light, Daesoonjinrihoe is characterized that its religious lineage has the orthodox absoluteness.

The theology of Daesoonjinrihoe can be understood in its fundamental doctrines, such as the tenets, creeds, and objectives (Chapter III). Furthermore, Especially, etiology in the mythical history discourse that pervades Daesoonjinrihoe should also be closely looked into in order to understand the religion. It is because myths as a first language of religion provide validation for theology, which is a secondary one, and lead to more understanding on it. In conclusion, this paper is written to introduce Daesoonjinrihoe from the comprehensive view of its history and doctrines while collating the existing documents on this religion.

## **II. The History of Daesoonjinrihoe**

Daesoonjinrihoe believes that the Lord of Ninth Heaven or Sangje (Jeungsan), Doju (Jeongsan), and Dojeon (Wudang) each played a certain role. That is, Sangje declared the Great Dao of mutual beneficence and set a stepping stone for the Later World by practicing the gongsa (the reordering of the universe); Doju solidified the religious orthodoxy and created the principles of Dao to open the Later World; Dojeon propagated the principles that Doju had built.

Based on this belief, Daesoonjinrihoe calls Sangje's teaching as the Will, Doju's teaching as the Principle, Dojeon's teaching and activities as the Instruction and Mission respectively. In this chapter, the history of Daesoonjinrihoe will be looked into by examining the doings of Sangje, Doju and Dojeon. All the dates are written according to the lunar calendar.

### **1. Sangje's Reordering of the Universe**

The supreme scripture of Daesoonjinrihoe, Jeon-gyeong, says that when the world was on the verge of annihilation, the divine sages, Buddhas, and bodhisattvas, who were not able to resolve the situation, gathered and made a petition to Sangje, the Most High God, living in the highest Ninth Heaven.

Accepting their petition, Sangje identified every detail of the problems while looking around heaven and earth Himself. This is called Daesoon (the Great Itineration).

After completing the Great Iteration, Sangje decided to descend Himself to the earth to save every divine being and humankind of the universe who was sunk in calamity caused by the obstruction of the communication. And He was incarnated into a human body at Gaekmang-ri, Wudeok-myeon of Gobu-gun in Jeolla Province on September 19, 1871. His full name was Kang Il-Sun and the honorific name Jeungsan.

Sangje made a trip throughout the Korean Peninsula for three years from 1897 in order to look around the world and the people living in it. He began to practice the ‘gongbu’ at the Daewon Temple on the foot of the Moak Mountain in the mid-May of 1901 and continued it without any food or rest for 49 days. Then, He judged the divine beings of heaven and earth and declared the Great Dao of the Ultimateness for resolving grievance and mutual beneficence. Gongbu refers to studying or learning in comtemporary Korean, but in the past, the word actually meant not only studying or learning skills but also time and efforts to achieve something. Sangje’s gongbu signifies the latter; it includes all the activities to re-organize the structure and operation of heaven and earth, not learning or studying. After finishing the gongbu at the Daewon Temple, Sangje undertook the gongsa of heaven and earth in earnest. In Korea in the past, when the head of the public organization held a meeting to decide on public work, he would say, “I’ll do gongsa.”

In this context, summoning divine beings, Sangje resolved all the grievances in the universe and changed mutual conflict into mutual beneficence by rectifying the principles of the operation of the universe, while having His disciples participate in the task. He then called the great work to newly establish the system and structure of the divine world, the human world, the heaven, and the earth as the gongsa of heaven and earth (Cheonji Gongsa in Korean).

Sangje, who had completed the reordering of the universe, predicted that His successor and the true dharma would come into existence. In His prediction, it was also included that the dharma would make human beings attain the Dao, by

which they would reach the state of comprehensive knowledge and omnipotence, and an earthly paradise of the Later World would, finally, be started. And without accurately telling anyone who His successor would be, He, whose age was 39, passed into heaven on June 24, 1909.

A few years after Sangje's passing into heaven, they started to gather around Madame Goh (the Head of the Ladies)<sup>4</sup> and Cha Gyeong-Seok, and a rudimentary form of religious organization was eventually made. But since there was not a designated successor in the organization, a power struggle occurred automatically. At last, the disciples were divided into a lot of groups, which founded their own organizations. It is said that the number of the organizations was over one hundred.

## **2. Doju Jo's Succession to the Religious Orthodoxy**

Doju Jo Jeongsan was a successor to Sangje in the history of Daeseonjinrihoe. He was born at Hoemun-ri in Chilseo-myeon of Haman, Gyeongsang Province on December 4, 1895. His full name was Jo Cheolje and his honorific name Jeongsan. According to some disciples of Sangje's, He looked for His successor once. One day in 1903, Sangje said with a sigh, "Why is My work taking so long?" Kim Bo-Gyeong, who was attending to Sangje, just asked Him why He had said so. Then Sangje answered, "I had divine spirits seek for the successor, but he turned out to be only nine years old now. My work is being slow to accomplish." It is believed that this anecdote showed a sign that Doju Jo would succeed to Sangje. It is because the year of 1903 in which Sangje first sought for His successor was the one when Doju became nine years old.

Six years later, on April 28, 1909, right before His passing into heaven, Sangje practiced some symbolic gongsas to transfer His authority to Doju. At that time, Doju, aged 15, was going to Manchuria to escape from the grip

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<sup>4</sup> One of the Head of the Ladies chosen in the course of the reordering of the universe. She was called Madame Goh because her name was Goh Pan-lye. Kim Hyeong-ryeol's youngest daughter was also one of the head of the Ladies.

of Japanese Imperialism. It was on the day when he began to obey the heavenly mandate.

This day, Doju and his family took a train to Sinuiju from Changwon Station to leave the country. At the similar time, Sangje was, mysteriously, hovering on the Sintanjin field of Daejeon with Kim Bo-Gyeong and some disciples, saying, “It is time to arrive now....” Sangje then found Doju’s train passing by and said, “Now My work has been accomplished. There is a saying that a boy should wear an identity tag when he becomes fifteen years old. There is nothing he cannot do.”

Doju was dedicated to the independence movement with his family in Fengtian Province, Manchuria. He soon noticed that not only was Korea deprived of its sovereignty but also the entire world was stuck in chaos. So he entered a mountain to cultivate himself in the hope of saving the world with Dao. On February 10, 1917, after years passed, he finally came to realize Daesoon Truth through a revelation of Sangje.

After that, depending on Sangje’s revelation to go back to Korea and find Him, Doju, leading his family, came down along the West Sea on a ship and arrived in Taean, South Chungcheong Province. And he moved to Anmyeon Island, from which he went to Taein to seek for Sangje’s family some time later. The date was January 15, in 1919. It is said that ten years earlier, Sangje had already told His younger sister Lady of Seondol that His successor would visit her on that day.

The Lady of Seondol said to Doju, “My brother told me that a man born in the year of Eulmi (1895) would pay a visit on the full moon of January.” And she handed over a sealed envelop which Sangje had told her to give. From then, Doju began to establish Sangje’s teachings and perform the true dharma.

As the number of the followers increased day by day, Doju constituted a temple in Gutaein, North Jeolla Province in 1925 and founded the religious order of Mugeukdo. In those days, for the purpose of obliterating the Korean spirit, the Japanese colonial authorities oppressed all the activities related to the Korean religions because they embraced the culture and value of the

nation. Mugeukdo could not also escape from Japan's severe persecution. Nevertheless, there was even a newspaper report saying that Mugeukdo grew rapidly in a short time, amounting to the number of one-million followers.

Especially, just right after the foundation of Mugeukdo, Doju began to reclaim land and salt farms from the sea on Wonsan Island and Anmyeon Island, and the task was continued for 10 years. The project played a role in saving the world from trouble and relieving the people from despair, which consequently heralded the charity work of Daesoonjinrihoe. Because of worrying about the anti-Japanese spirit of Mugeukdo, Japan started to suppress it around 1936 and banned its religious activities in 1941, when the country brought about the Pacific War. And finally Mugeukdo ended up being dissolved.

In 1945, when Korea was liberated, Doju resumed his religious activity. He established the headquarters of the religious order at Bosu-dong in Busan in 1948 and changed the name of Mugeukdo to Taegeukdo in 1950. Doju built a new temple complex at Gamcheon in Busan in 1956, and he finished making the rules for training and cultivation of followers at the end of 1957. And he ordered Dojeon Park to carry on his work and passed into heaven at the age of 64 on March 6, 1958. Doju has been enshrined now as Okhwang Sangje (Great Jade Emperor).

### **3. Dojeon Park Wudang's Succession to the Religious Orthodoxy**

Dojeon was born at Mungang-ri in Sangmo-myeon of Goesan-gun, North Chungcheong Province on November 30, 1917. His full name was Park Han-Gyeong and his honorific name Wudang. He graduated from Suanbo School and had a teaching career in his hometown. Dojeon, at the age of 27, was conscripted to Aomori in Japan by the colonial government in 1943.

On July 8, 1945 (Aug. 15 in the solar calendar), when Korea was liberated from Japan, Dojeon came back to his hometown after many twists and turns. He, at the age of 30, joined Taegeukdo in 1946 and dedicated himself to cultivating himself mainly in the Goesan area of North Chungcheong Province.

Around 1954, he began to closely serve Doju. It has been informed that while meeting Dojeon, Doju once said to some top officials, “I was deeply concerned that I would not be able to find the successor, but I have found him at last. You can now have faith in Dao without worry.”

In late February, 1958, Doju summoned all the top officials and declared that he would appoint Park Wudang as Dojeon, the chief executive. A few days later, on March 6, Doju, who was in the room with Dojeon alone, had the officials gather outside. And then he ordered that Dojeon succeed to him and be in charge of managing Taegeukdo.

Since Dojeon’s succession was indicated in Doju’s will, the disciples readily admitted him and kept their cultivating on. Dojeon, maintaining the rules for gongbu that Doju had established, tried to improve people’s well-being by founding a lot of organizations, such as schools and hospitals, and running them for free.

However, a few of the top officials stirred up disturbance in 1967, which threw the religious order into confusion. In June, 1968, realizing that the temple in Gamcheon of Busan ran out of luck, Dojeon left for a new place to continue the religion while keeping Sangje’s teachings and Doju’s order. After a few months, Dojeon practiced gongbu at the Suri Buddhist Temple on the foot of the Suri Mountain in Gunpo, Gyeonggi Province for 49 days in the fall of 1968.

On finishing the gongbu, Dojeon left the Suri Buddhist Temple. In 1969, he built a new temple complex at Junggok-dong in Seoul and changed the title of the religious order to Daesoonjinrihoe, along with the reorganization of the internal structure. Since then, Daesoonjinrihoe has kept on developing so amazingly that it is a true wonder to the public. A large-scale temple complex was built in Yeosu in 1986, Jeju in 1989, Pocheon in 1992, and Goseong in 1995. On December 4, 1995 (Jan. 23, 1996 in the solar calendar), Dojeon could be no longer found in this world by passing into heaven.

### **III. The Theology of Daesoonjinrihoe**

Jeung-san said that He would practice the reordering of the universe Himself with great authority of the Three Realms. The entity who can reorder the principles of heaven and earth with holding the great authority must be the Most High God of the universe. For that reason, Daesoonjinrihoe has faith in Jeung-san as Sangje or the Most High God. In other words, the faith of Daesoonjinrihoe starts from believing in a human Jeung-san as the Most High God, based on the reordering of the universe, which is His unique religious theology.

Accordingly, analyzing the concept of the reordering of the universe is crucial to understand the doctrines and religious system of Daesoonjinrihoe. Yet, since the concept is full of esoteric religious symbols, it is very hard to deduce the doctrines from that. Despite the fact, as Doju founded Mugeukdo in 1925, he revealed Sangje's godship and systemized His teachings. Especially, the tenets are said to be an essential summary of Sangje's reordering work. In this context, what the doctrines are should be explained.

#### **1. The Tenets**

The first one of the four tenets, which are the core doctrines of Daesoonjinrihoe, is "the harmony of yin and yang." Daesoonjinrihoe considers that yin and yang are involved in mutual conflict, not in harmony, from which many contradictions and maladies have been originated. Thus, yin and yang should be harmonized with each other in mutual beneficence as one-yin and one-yang, that is, "the harmony of yin and yang."

It has a limitless range that can be applied to, including gender equality, resolution of the social polarization, racial or international reconciliation, harmony between mankind and nature or human beings and divine beings, balance between material and spiritual civilization, consistency of speech and action, harmony of tunes, etc. However, these ideals cannot be completely realized unless the world is re-created. The tenet can be interpreted to ultimately manifest the fundamental principle of 'the recreated new world', namely, the earthly

paradise that humanity will see in the future.

The second tenet is “the harmonious union of divine beings and human beings.” It refers to a new model of relationship between human and divine beings. Since the civilization was weighted towards materialism, it has fostered arrogance among people. And they have become so insolent that they even have an ambition to conquer nature. This leads to undermining the authority of gods, who are, eventually, neglected and excluded by human beings. Daesoonjinrihoe believes that this is a serious problem which crucially causes the confusion of the fundamental principle, order or operation of the universe. Therefore, Daesoonjinrihoe emphasizes on recovering the relationship between human and divine beings. Of course, it means the harmony between humans and gods, not the blind obedience or negligence to gods.

The harmonious union has two meanings of harmony and creation or harmony and communication; the harmonious union of divine and human beings refers to reaching oneness of two beings. Regarding to this, Doju stated that after the unity and communication of humans and divine beings is accomplished, Dao of heaven and earth shall be reorganized.

Oneness of divine beings and humans, or harmonious union of divine beings and human beings, means that if a man recovers his own clear identity and nature and reaches absolute sincerity by cultivating himself, the man shall be tantamount to a god. Then, he shall be united with a suitable god into one according to his level of enlightenment and be given the ability and authority of the god. In other words, the harmonious union of the two signifies that the man becomes a being of divinity to be omnipotent.

The harmonious union of divine beings and human beings gives a distinct explanation for the reason that humans should cultivate themselves. Sangje said, “The mind is a hinge, door and road for gods.” According to Him, it is the mind that is a link between people and spiritual beings. To correspond to human beings, divine beings have to depend on the mind of the humans. Therefore, what kind of mind a man has decides the divine being to be united with him. Since divine beings only correspond to the position they fit in, humans have no choice to make the mind great, fine and splendid in order to

be united with a great divine being.

The union certainly brings an elevation of the status of humans, which Daesoonjinrihoe expresses as ‘grand humanity’. In ancient times called the era of grand heaven, divine beings, who were enshrined in heaven, practiced power and authority in there. Heaven was respected the most in that time. And in the era of grand earth, divine beings are enshrined in the earth, they wielded their power and authority and were honored. Now, the era of grand humanity has begun. In this era, divine beings are enshrined in humans and perform their power through them.

But it should be pointed out that the concept of grand humanity does not imply that human beings are higher than divine beings but that the two beings are equally great. This explanation can be deduced from the fact that in the eras of grand heaven and grand earth, heaven and earth were not revered at the exclusion of divine beings.

Since divine beings, not heaven and earth, were the main power source of moving the eras, they always retained their own value. Furthermore, Sangje showed that it was wrong for some humans in arrogance to ostracize divine beings. Therefore, it cannot be explained, in any ways, that humans alone are focused with divine beings secluded.

Grand humanity is based on the harmonious union of divine beings and human beings, but the harmony is not premised on the vertical relationship between master and servant. For this reason, grand humanity does not mean that humans are higher than divine beings even if the latter permeate into the former. In addition, on the basis that the power of divine beings is, in the era of grand humanity, spread through the free performance of human beings, we do not say that in the absence of humanity, humans fall into the possession or inspiration of divines. This merely highlights the will of divine beings. Eventually, grand humanity embedded in the concept of the harmonious union cannot be illustrated with any established thoughts and it is a unique idea found only in Daesoonjinrihoe.

The third tenet is “the resolution of grievances into mutual beneficence.” It can be viewed from two perspectives. First, at the perspective of cosmology,

it refers to a great change of the universe, in which all the grievances cumulated from the ancient times shall be resolved into mutual beneficence in the Later World due to Sangje's reordering work of the universe. Secondly, at the perspective of practical cultivation, the tenet signifies that each individual must resolve the accumulated, old grievances and advance to mutual beneficence.

Humans must carry out the new way of living, the resolution of grievances into mutual beneficence, according to the preordained program of the universe. Daesoonjinrihoe says that while many saints and sages have emphasized altruism and affection up to now, they could not be fulfilled because of the grievances caused by mutual conflict.

Consequently, the grievances should be resolved before anything else. There are negative and positive ways: the one is revenge, retaliation, curse, or so forth, and the other is mutual beneficence. Daesoonjinrihoe teaches that returning evil for evil is the same as washing off blood with blood. It also stresses that if you forgive your enemy and love the one like your benefactor, it shall become virtue, which will bring bliss to you. That is, to resolve grievance requires to be virtuous to the enemy.

The resolution of grievance in Daesoonjinrihoe is a new religious term which is different from that in other religions. To understand this religion correctly, you need to first recognize 'the difference'. The other ideas on the term aim for the dead whereas that of Daesoonjinrihoe goes towards living people, races, nations, animals, divine beings, and every thing in the universe, as well as dead people.

Next, the ideas are limited to the solution of epidemics or natural disasters at a specific time and place, but Daesoonjinrihoe goes beyond it to the post-historical and post-geographical dimension to cease every chaos of the universe. Namely, the resolution in Daesoonjinrihoe aims to ultimately establish an earthly paradise in the Later World, in which mutual beneficence is just seen beyond the existing solutions prone to consoling spirits of grievance and comfort of this world.

Also, unlike other religions, this one acknowledges a structural contradiction that causes grievances and, on the premise of its solution, widens the

concept of the resolution up to ideals of ethics, peaceful coexistence, and gratitude. In short, the objects for the resolution and the time-space sectors are expanded; the religious ideal world, an earthly paradise, is pursued; the resolution of the structural contradiction, the practice of morality, the mutual beneficence, and gratitude are all combined. In this regard, the idea of resolution of grievance in Daesoonjinrihoe has a wider and deeper range, compared to those of the other religions. In addition, the mutual beneficence contains ‘mutual life-giving’, or ‘mutual betterment’. So it is needed to remark that this is different from a cosmological term of mutual living in that just the two of the Five Elements affect each other.

The mutual beneficence differs from coexistence as well. Coexistence is often used as an ethical concept in recent times, but it is originated from symbiosis in biology. The concept in biology has the limited relationship given only to certain organisms. But the relationship is not permanent because it can turn to parasitism in the change of the environment and the organisms can sometimes do harm to each other. It won’t also be very different from the viewpoint of ethics. Contrarily, the mutual beneficence is a concept in a universal relationship that is applied to all creatures and has the permanence not to be affected by temporal and environmental changes.

The fourth tenet is the stage of unification with Dao. It refers that an individual becomes a perfect being and reaches the state of omniscience and omnipotence by oneness of the individual and the Dao. The stage of unification of Dao can be achieved by anyone, regardless of race, social class, or the number of people. When a person wins it, the Later World shall begin by opening a door to an entirely new world. And every being in the ecosystem shall acquire a new life and destiny, and the sick earth shall be transformed into a new one. This is all attributed to the reordering of the universe that Sangje practiced. In conclusion, the stage of unification with Dao is a concept that indicates the perfect state of both human beings and the world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from the Jeong-gyeong

## 2. The Discourse of Mythical History

To further understand Daesoonjinrihoe, it is necessary to consider the myths under the background of its theology. Since it is, unfortunately, impossible to introduce all of them, three mythical histories will be mainly looked into. The first one is, from the viewpoint of etiology, about the reason why Sangje descended to the earth as a human being.

“The Westerner Matteo Ricci came to the East to build an earthly paradise but he failed to achieve his goal because he could not reform the deplorable practices which had been caused by Confucianism for a long time. But he opened the border between heaven and earth so that the divine beings who were not able to cross each other’s territory, staying at their own, could come and go freely. After his death, he opened a new age of cultural enlightenment by leading the gods of civilization of the East to the West. From then, the gods of earth followed all the wondrous arts in heaven and spread them throughout the human world.” All the products of the Western civilization were modeled after those of heaven. Since the civilization was weighted towards materialism, it rather fostered arrogance of humankind. And it incessantly committed all kinds of sin from the attempts to shake the principle of heaven and conquer nature, which undermined the authority of the gods, distorted the way of heaven and the way of humans, threw the Three Realms into disorder, and finally broke the root of Dao. As a result, all the divine sages, Buddhas, and bodhisattvas who had existed since the origin of heaven and earth gathered and petitioned Me in the Ninth Heaven to save the human world and the spiritual world from their predicaments. Thus, I descended Myself to the Cheongye Tower of Daebeopguk in the West, and on my Great Itineration (Daesoon), at last, I reached this land in the East. After staying in the golden statue of Maitreya at the three-story hall in the Geumsan-sa of the Moak Mountain for thirty years, I revealed to Choi Je-Wu the Great Dao to redeem the world. Yet, he did not bring the true meaning of the Great Dao to light beyond the framework of Confucianism. Therefore, in the Gapja Year of 1864, I withdrew the heavenly mandate and the divine teaching from him and finally came as a man in the Sinmi Year of 1871.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from the Jeon-gyeong

This mythical story is divided into two parts. In the first part, after Mateo Ricci died, he led the gods of the Eastern civilization to the West and opened a new civilization, but the explosive growth of materialism brought crisis to people and the world. In the early 1900s, Korea was busy absorbing the modern products of the Western civilization in the ignorance of global currents. It is amazing that Sangje, who lived in a remote rural region, made an accurate remark on the problems of the Western civilization. Moreover, something like His preaching about the root of the civilization had never been found among other Korean intellectuals who were painting a shabby self-portrait in front of the advanced civilization.

In the latter part of the myth, it is mentioned that the divine beings who were not able to afford a crisis of the universe, made a plea to Sangje of the Ninth Heaven. Sangje diagnosed the problems of the world while going on the Great Itineration. He revealed His message of 'the Great Dao to redeem the world' to Choi Je-Wu in 1860, but Choi did not serve Sangje's will right. So, in 1864, He withdrew the heavenly mandate from him and finally came to this world in a human body. At this, the Most High God as a hidden being, Deus otiosus, was transformed into the tangible God of a human body who actively participated in the real world. Therefore, unlike other religions in Korea, Daesoonjinrihoe suggests God as a friendly, dynamic being with a human body, rather than a god who people should accept abstractly in their mind.

Now, let's take a look at another myth about the grievance of Danzhu, son of Emperor Yao. This myth works as another etiology to help explain the doctrine.

"I will practice a Gongsu to resolve the grievances which have been accumulated since ancient times; it shall get rid of all the calamities caused by grievances and achieve eternal peace. When you pull your head, your body naturally moves. Like this, if the grievance of Danzhu, son of Emperor Yao, who opened the first chapter of the history of grievance in human record, is resolved, the knots of grievances that have been congested for thousands of years from then on shall be untied. Considering Danzhu an unworthy son, Emperor Yao turned over his throne to Shun, to whom his two daughters had

been married. This made Danzhu have grievances, and at last he led to the demise of Shun at Cangwu. As a result, the two queens were drowned into the Xiaoxiang River. These things caused grievances to be deeply rooted in heaven and earth, and with the change of times, the seeds of the grievances have spread over and over. Now heaven and earth is filled with those seeds, by which human beings are on the verge of falling to ruin. Therefore, to save the humankind from the destruction, I have to practice the Gongsa for the resolution of grievances.<sup>77</sup>

Because Sangje's reordering of the universe is focused on the resolution of grievance, a notion of grievance in Daesoonjinrihoe accounts for a considerable proportion of the theology. Sangje pointed out Danshu's as the root and seed of all grievances in the world in order to resolve them. However, it should be noted that Danzhu was not the first man who had grievance.

Sangje only stated that Danzhu's grievance was the oldest among the grievances recorded in the history. It is unknown why He particularly paid attention to his grievance. There are just many interpretations: Danzhu's grievance has historical significance since it was the first record in history; As the period which Danzhu belonged to was accidentally in the extreme change of the cosmological environment, grievances started to be accumulated, not resolved at all, from then on; Danzhu's grievance represents the persistent resistance against the violence of ruling power.

Finally, there is a myth about Grand Duke Kang, who enshrined the spirits of the dead as gods according to the heavenly mandate. As mentioned earlier, the second tenet of Daesoonjinrihoe is the harmonious union of divine beings and human beings. This signifies that divines beings are enshrined in humans. Daesoonjinrihoe considers the present as the time before the re-creation of the world, that is, the era of divine beings enshrined in the earth, which is related to the myth of Grand Duke Kang. While being passed down as a kind of folk belief or folklore, this myth was written as a novel, *The Investiture of the Gods*, in the Ming dynasty.

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from the Jeon-gyeong

The story is mainly about the transitional process of the Shang dynasty in ancient China and Grand Duke Kang's investiture of the spirits of 365 people who were victimized in its chaotic period as gods. The Investiture of the Gods represents more than just a novel because it was written based on the legend of those days as an epic. Particularly, it is important that Daesoonjinrihoe has taken up the story as one of the doctrinal backgrounds. Therefore, the constant researches on this are required to make. In addition to these myths, many other mythological legends and histories play a major role in forming the world view of Daesoonjinrihoe. Naturally, in this religion, such stories are accepted as historical facts, not mythical history.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The history and theology of Daesoonjinrihoe, which is one of the largest religious order among Korean religions, has been surveyed so far. It is evident that the indigenous thought and foreign religious traditions like Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism all dwell in the background of its theology. Among them, Daoism has the most similarities with Daesoonjinrihoe, and this paper will close the discussion by explaining its relationship with Daoism and suggesting what to be cautious in understanding the religious order.

Up to now, the academic circle has usually tried to prove that Jeungsan's thought is tinted by Daoist features. There is even a view that Daoism, which had never existed as a religious order in Korea, eventually started to result in the emergence of religious orders among Jeungsan sects. In fact, as there was no Daoist religious order in the past, it is worth taking notice that some orders with distinct Daoist colors have spread throughout modern Korea.

Daesoonjinrihoe has some of Daoist aspects too, but it retains a unique identity that cannot be completely absorbed into the frame of Daoism. For instance, it emphasizes the faith in the Most High God, who was incarnated as a human being, the reordering of the universe which rectifies heaven and earth, and mutual beneficence through resolution of grievance at the cosmological dimension. These new ideas have never been seen in other religions except

Daesoonjinrihoe. Even though some of the Daoist terms or things appear in it, the use or meaning can be considerably different. A talisman provides a good example.

As for Daoism, talismans are believed to drive away evil spirits and disaster and help acquire divine power, so some people carry, swallow, or post them on a certain spot. For Daesoonjinrihoe, Sangje made symbols and drawings similar to talismans and burned them in order to proclaim His intention into heaven and earth. In other words, the talisman was used not for borrowing a god's power or displaying some marvelous efficacy but for a kind of decree to inform divine beings of His will. Accordingly, the talismans of Daesoonjinrihoe should not be considered the same as those of traditional Daoism.

In conclusion, the comparative studies with other religions are necessary to understand Daesoonjinrihoe more accurately. Whether the religion is different or similar in what sense is also worth studying on. Of course, the historical and socio-cultural background and context that Daesoonjinrihoe and other religions face have to be considered simultaneously.

# Profile

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## 9 The History and Theology of Daesoonjinrihoe

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