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Religious Conflict and Coexistence

The Korean Context and Beyond

Edited by

Yohan Yoo and Song-Chong Lee

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Editors

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Contents

About the Editors	vii
Yohan Yoo and Song-Chong Lee Introduction to “Religious Conflict and Coexistence: The Korean Context and Beyond” Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 340, doi:10.3390/rel11070340	1
James W. Watts Biblical Rhetoric of Separatism and Universalism and Its Intolerant Consequences Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 176, doi:10.3390/rel11040176	5
Jin Young Kim Understanding the Letter to the Romans in the Sect-Cult Development of Early Churches Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 257, doi:10.3390/rel11050257	15
Samira K. Mehta Christmas in the Room: Gender, Conflict, and Compromise in Multi-Religious Domestic Space Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 281, doi:10.3390/rel11060281	31
Song-Chong Lee An Aristotelian Interpretation of Bojo Jinul and an Enhanced Moral Grounding Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 193, doi:10.3390/rel11040193	43
Sem Vermeersch Syncretism, Harmonization, and Mutual Appropriation between Buddhism and Confucianism in Pre-Joseon Korea Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 231, doi:10.3390/rel11050231	57
Haeyoung Seong The Basis for Coexistence Found from within: The Mystic Universality and Ethicality of Donghak (東學, Eastern Learning) Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 265, doi:10.3390/rel11050265	71
Yohan Yoo Similar but Superior: Rhetoric of Coexistence Employed by Religions in Jeju Island, Korea † Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 198, doi:10.3390/rel11040198	85
Jihyun Kim Enlightenment on the Spirit-Altar: Eschatology and Restoration of Morality at the King Kwan Shrine in <i>Fin de siècle</i> Seoul Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 273, doi:10.3390/rel11060273	103
Debernierre Torrey Confucian Exemplars and Catholic Saints as Models for Women in Nineteenth-Century Korea Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 151, doi:10.3390/rel11030151	137
Minah Kim Seeking Solidarity between Protestant and Catholic Churches for Social Justice in Korea: The Case of the Korea Christian Action Organization for Urban Industrial Mission (<i>Saseon</i>) (1976–1989) Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2020, 11, 278, doi:10.3390/rel11060278	149

About the Editors

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Editorial

Introduction to “Religious Conflict and Coexistence: The Korean Context and Beyond”

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This Special Issue is composed of the articles that were presented at the first World Religion Forum held 7–8 October 2019 by the World Religious Peace Committee (세계종교평화협의회, hereafter WRPC).¹ A few additional scholars who were interested in the conference theme, *Religious Conflict and Coexistence: the Korean Context and Beyond*, joined our project and helped enrich our conversation. This Special Issue is intended to foster meaningful discussions on religious peace. Before we proceed further, it seems worth giving readers a brief background of this Special Issue, which covers the religious and historic status of Jellabuk-do Province, particularly the city of Jeonju, where the conference took place, and the contribution of the WRPC to this project. Then, we will provide highlights of our papers in three different foci.

Due to its rich religious life and deep spirituality, we believe that the Republic of Korea provides a suitable environment for this timely issue. Whether religious or non-religious, the traditional thoughts and behavioral patterns of Confucianism and Shamanism influence most Koreans. At the same time, South Korea is the only Asian country in which Christianity has taken deep root and flourished.² Moreover, it presents a rare case of religious peace and coexistence, as shown particularly in the interaction of two major traditions, Christianity and Buddhism, checking and balancing each other while maintaining a significant presence in society. It is also a place where a variety of religions have played a pivotal role in society, constantly offering people new worldviews for new challenges.

Of the many regions in Korea, Jellabuk-do Province is arguably the best place to study religion. You can find several religious traditions flourishing in the major milestone of Korean history. You can find the creation of noteworthy new religious movements. You can also find the historical phenomenon that various religious communities have employed to seek peaceful coexistence, even though conflicts occasionally arise with each other. There are several points to support this claim. First, this province boasts the splendid Buddhist culture from the Baekje Kingdom (18 BCE–660 ACE), during which the famous Geumsansa (Geumsan Temple) in the city of Gimje was built. Iksan Mireuksa (Mireuk Temple), which was established by King Mu and is well known for the Mireuksaji Stone Pagoda, the country's oldest and largest stone pagoda, is also an artifact of Baekje. Second, Jellabuk-do Province is significant in the history and terrain of Korean Christianity. It was the Jeondong Cathedral in Jeonju in which the first Korean Catholic martyr shed blood. Jeonju Seomun Church was the first Protestant church in the Honam region. Jellabuk-do also has numerous Protestant churches, which have taken deep root in local communities for over a hundred years. Third, many of the notable new religious movements during the early modern era started in Jeollabuk-do. In particular, the city of Iksan is the place where the Buddhadharma Study Society (佛法研究會) was founded and where it plays a central role for Won Buddhism, having its headquarters there. Various religious communities derived from the teachings

¹ The World Religion Forum was held at Jeonbuk National University in the city of Jeonju.

² (Kim 2006, p. 117).

of Jeungsan take the area of Mt. Moak of Jellabuk-do as their holy land. In addition, Jellabuk-do is the area where the followers of the Donghak Movement rooted in Cheondoism shed their blood, fighting a fierce battle with foreign invaders to realize on earth the Heavenly Will. The sixth of October 2019, the day before the conference, was when Dongryeon Church in Hwangdeung in the city of Iksan celebrated its 119th anniversary. Although a small church in a farming village, Dongryeon Church has been well-known for its active commitment to the welfare for senior citizens. It was founded in 1900 by Elder Baek Nak-gyu, who is the great-grandfather of Professor Yoo, co-editor of this Special Issue. Church history tells us that he participated in the Ugeumchi Battle as a leader of the Donghak Movement, but the failure of the revolution eventually led him to flee to Hwangdeung, where he converted to Christianity and built the church. What is noteworthy is the legacy of the church that an elder pointed out at the ceremony. He proudly spoke about the church's identity inheriting the spirit of the Donghak Movement, which was an indigenous new religious movement. He meant that even if the legacy is the spirit of a different religion, if it is an outcome of a genuine effort for justice and equality, we can proudly embrace it. This is something that cannot be easily imagined by most Protestant churches in Korea.

More importantly for this Special Issue, Jellabuk-do is where the World Religion Peace Committee (WRPC) is located. The WRPC has shown a model case of building cooperation in Jollabuk-do among four major religious communities, including Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Won Buddhism. In particular, the WRPC has tried to promote peaceful relationships by helping them to expand their mutual understanding and collaborate to play a positive role in society. Enmity and hostility against other religions are usually caused by ignorance. Scholars of religious studies can contribute to fostering mature, civic relations among religions. However, it is not easy to produce the type of knowledge that is worth contributing to the peaceful coexistence of religions. Thus, our objective is not just to reiterate the moral imperative of religious coexistence, but to yield high-quality research outcomes, which could draw the attention of a larger audience beyond the city of Jeonju and Korea.

This goal can be pursued in two different directions. One is to promote the knowledge, which the public is not well aware of, and to equip them with new perspectives on religion and culture, based on objective information and critical thinking. The public lecture of the 2018 conference with the theme *Understanding Religion As Much As We Know*, which was given at the Jeondong Cathedral, was indeed aligned with this objective. Invited as the keynote speaker at the World Religious Culture Festival, Professor Yoo called attention to the positive role of the WRPC in carrying out this important task. At this conference, Professor Yoo accepted the leadership role in organizing a larger international forum, which would become the foundation of the 2019 World Religion Forum to which this Special Issue is dedicated. The other direction is to produce high-quality research outcomes, whose values can be recognized by not only Korean academia but also by a larger international scholarly body.

The 2019 World Religion Forum at the World Religious Culture Festival was a product of the city of Jeonju-sponsored-WRPC's continuous effort to promote religious peace. All papers in this Special Issue are dedicated to the WRPC's noble vision, categorized under three different foci: (1) creative, critical reading of the text and new theoretical frameworks to understand religious tension and conflict; (2) philosophical and spiritual solutions to inter-denominational and interreligious conflict; and (3) the instrumentality of religion to deal with social challenges and its power to bring hope and reconciliation. The first category features papers bringing in historical, analytical, and theoretical discussions on religious conflict. Watt's "Biblical Rhetoric of Separatism and Universalism and Its Intolerant Consequences" discusses the negative consequences of the sacred narratives of the two Abrahamic traditions, Judaism and Christianity. The anti-Canaanites' pollution rhetoric of Judaism and the challenge of the early Christian community to that ideal of purity and its development, as a counter-narrative, into the universal rhetoric are his historical showcase to warn of the abuse and distortion of religious messages that every religious community can experience. According to his analysis, the problem occurs because we have the tendency to "set our traditions and texts against each other". He suggests that we should not try to make "negative comparisons" to define and build

the religious identity and communal solidarity. Jin Young Kim's article, "Understanding the Letter to the Romans in the Sect-Cult Development of Early Churches" attempts a new theoretical framework to better understand Paul's apologetic and missionary approach to the traditional Jewish community and particularly the Roman church. Her creative interpretation of the Romans with the cult-sect framework, which is modified by L. Michael White, sheds new light on the early church's perception of the other. Deviating from the traditional, Weber-Troeltsch's 'church-sect' typology, she argues that her new framework more clearly shows Paul's compassionate attitude toward the gentile churches with "the Greco-Roman virtue of self-mastery" and unbelieving Jews, seeking "the unified people of God". Mehta's "Christmas in the Room: Gender, Conflict, and Compromise in Multi-Religious Domestic Space" complicates and expands the scope of conversation on interfaith tension and conflict. She explores a new territory in which interfaith interactions, conflicts, and compromise occur. It is the domestic space, the home; its emotional stakes are much higher than that of the public square, often leading to a zero sum game. Not only does her article enrich the general conversation on our interfaith sensitivity and intelligence but it also gives us an important, timely task to investigate the religious conflict happening in the most personal and private domain.

The second category brings in philosophical conversation on the theme of interreligious harmony through three Korean examples: Jinul's eclecticism, syncretistic attempts by pre-Joseon Buddhism and Confucianism, and Suun Choe Je-u's pluralistic utilization of the Heavenly Will. In his paper "An Aristotelian Interpretation of Bojo Jinul and An Enhanced Moral Grounding", Lee revisits Jinul's historic contribution of harmonizing the divergent views of enlightenment in his Buddhist community. He utilizes Aristotle's hylomorphism to better explain Jinul's points on the mutual necessity and concurrence of sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation. The Aristotelian ideal, actuality, which is Buddha or Buddhahood in his case, precedes potentiality, which is the manifestation of the spiritual ideal. They are separate phenomena in the conventional time but a single experience in the ultimate time. Thus, Jinul promotes the mutual recognition and value of the Seon and Kyo schools: the former for essential transformation and the latter for the realization of the essence. Vermeersch's paper, titled "Syncretism, Harmonization, and Mutual Appropriation between Buddhism and Confucianism in Pre-Joseon Korea", offers a new explanation of interfaith perception and interaction between Buddhism and Confucianism in pre-Joseon Korea. He questions the traditional characterization, which is hoetong (會通) and harmony. He argues that these terms cannot properly reflect their active and creative engagement in embracing each other's values. Vermeersch utilizes the paradigm of syncretism, whose Korean meaning is somewhat negative but still useful to unravel the complexity of these two traditions' mutual perception. According to his reading of historical materials, each tradition shows syncretic characteristics, including ecumenism, inclusivism, compartmentalism, and eclecticism, in its various apologetic and political projects. Seong's paper, "The Basis for Coexistence Found from within: The Mystic Universality and Ethicality of Donghak", discusses Suun Choe Je-u's mystical, pluralistic philosophy. As already shown in numerous historical cases of syncretism and eclecticism by Korean religious communities, the effort to reconcile with the counter-religious tradition can be also found in the Donghak Movement (東學, Eastern Learning). Seong focuses on the mystical experiences and rituals in understanding Suun's apologetics. Differences and contradictions are dissolved by the larger cosmic principle of the Heavenly Will. According to Seong's analysis, Suun's objective was not to completely denounce the wisdom of Western Learning (西學), but reprimand its moral laxity caused by the lack of understanding and of the will to actualize the universal Heavenly Will in historical reality.

While the first two categories offer textual, philosophical, and ethnographic analysis of the root cause of religious conflict and solutions, the third category presents important historical cases, revealing the powerful role of religion in dealing with sufferings of life, including religious persecution, social chaos, social injustice, and interfaith power dynamic. Yoo's research on interfaith relationship in Jeju Island, titled "Similar but Superior: Rhetoric of Coexistence Employed by Religions in Jeju Island, Korea", presents an excellent case to demonstrate the general tendency of the Jejuians to get along with people of different religions. His expertise in comparative religion and ethnographic research,

including personal interviews with indigenous shamans, *simbang*, establishes a pattern of interaction, particularly of four faith communities: shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity. Their interactions have been, at times, defensive and even hostile to each other, but most often inclusive and utilitarian in highlighting their superiority and embracing ideas and rituals of others to look more attractive. According to Yoo, the *similar-but-superior* paradigm is not simply an artifice to dominate but a justified embrace of the heterogeneous, which has long been effective. Jihyun Kim's paper, "Enlightenment on the Spirit-Altar: Eschatology and Restoration of Morality at the King Kwan Shrine in *Fin de siècle* Seoul", presents extensive research on the idea of enlightenment, prevalent in the elite circle of the late Joseon dynasty. She argues that the dominant understanding of *kae hwa* (開化) overlooks an important usage. Her textual study, particularly her scrupulous attention to the details of the Corpus of Enlightenment, uncovers the purpose of the spirit-written texts, which was calling for moral recovery and transformation. Her proposition challenges the traditional demarcation between the pre-modern and modern ideas of enlightenment. At the center of the discourse on civilizational progress and moral recovery was religion, which was the worship of Thearch Kwan in her case. Similarly, the papers of Torrey and Minah Kim show a powerful role of religion in dealing with life crisis at both the personal and social levels. Torrey's research, "Confucian Exemplars and Catholic Saints as Models for Women in Nineteenth-Century Korea", not only discovers parallels between virtuous actions of women in Confucian and Catholic communities, but also highlights later their qualitative escalation into something that she calls "self-asserting heroism." Her parallel and comparative points lead to the proposition that the saints' stories offered Joseon women a new lifestyle choice and timely inspiration to overcome both domestic and social oppression. Minah Kim's paper, "Seeking Solidarity Between Protestant and Catholic Churches for Social Justice in Korea: The Case of the Korea Christian Action Organization for Urban Industrial Mission (Saseon)", gives special insight into the driving force, which Korean religious communities have been struggling to find, to have a strong sense of connection with and respect for each other. Saseon is an excellent and rare historical case of interfaith/intra-faith dialogue and collaboration in modern Korea. Clergy members, students, and community leaders from both Catholic and Protestant communities united under the common cause of social justice, particularly democratization and labor and farmers' movements. The key factor for their success was their focus on helping the powerless and hopeless, which is the universal mission of almost all religions, rather than projecting their theological claims on each other.

We, the guest editors, believe that our papers cover important topics with various methodologies, such as textual studies, historical analysis, philosophical inquiries, and ethnographic/anthropological studies. They enrich our conversation on religious conflict and coexistence not only for the Korean context, but also for other contexts in the world. Concluding our remarks, we want to express our deep appreciation to our contributors. Their creative works are invaluable in helping our intellectual journey to seek the coexistence and coprosperity of religion. We also thank Ms. Macy Zong, managing editor, for her support on every occasion. We hope that you enjoy our research. We look forward to receiving your feedback and continuing our conversation.

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Article

Biblical Rhetoric of Separatism and Universalism and Its Intolerant Consequences

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Abstract: The long history of the Jewish and Christian use of separatist rhetoric and universal ideals reveals their negative consequences. The Hebrew Bible's rhetoric about Israel as a people separated from the Egyptians and Canaanites is connected to Israel's purity practices in Leviticus 18 and 20. Later communities wielding greater political power, however, employed this same anti-Canaanite pollution rhetoric in their efforts to colonize many different parts of the world. Separatist rhetoric was used to protect small Jewish communities in the early Second Temple period. The Christian New Testament rejected many of these purity practices in order to make its mission more inclusive and universal. However, its denigration of concerns for purification as typically "Jewish" fueled intolerance of Jews in the form of Christian anti-Semitism. The violent history of both separatist and universalist rhetoric provides a cautionary tale about the consequences of using cultural and religious comparisons for community formation.

Keywords: particularism; universalism; intolerance; purity; Leviticus; colonialism; anti-Semitism

1. Introduction

Most of the articles in this special issue on religious conflicts and coexistence focus on contemporary religious communities or relatively recent history. That makes sense, because the great advantage of studying contemporary religions and cultures is that they are well documented, and we can check our interpretations by asking participants about them, perhaps even by becoming participants ourselves. By contrast, students of ancient history suffer the disadvantage of interpreting fragmentary remains that leave large gaps in our understanding. We often do not know why people wrote what they did and how it actually affected their religious lives and institutions. Studies of the distant past, however, have one big advantage over studies of contemporary cultures: history allows us to trace the effects of religious rhetoric and practices over centuries and millennia to reveal not only their influence, but also their unintended consequences.

My focus here is on interactions between two religions that span history from their ancient origins to the modern day. Just like new religious movements today, many ancient religions began with particular reactions to other religious traditions around them. The specific reactions I will describe here, separatism (or particularism) and universalism, have both generated intolerant violence, often within the same religious tradition. Though religious universalists tend to depict separatism as the opposite of their universalism to distinguish themselves from other religious groups, that claim has obscured the use of separatism by their own traditions, as well as the universalistic tendencies of the religious traditions that they oppose.

This history has been told many times before, and in much more detail than I can provide here. The role of separatist and universalist ideals in people's religious identities are inevitably more complicated than any broad survey can show, especially one as short as this article. However, I believe that this history, that juxtaposes some of the deleterious effects of both separatism and universalism, needs to be repeated to show how moral judgments on others' religious practices can generate even

worse abuses. Separatism and universalism have been frequently cited by one religious tradition, Christianity, to distinguish itself from another, Judaism, but the history surveyed here shows that this distinction and the values attributed to it do not hold. Despite their apparent opposition, both separatist and universalist elements in biblical texts have frequently been used by the same religious groups to attack and oppress others. I offer this review as a cautionary tale of how opposite religious ideals embraced at the origins of two traditions can go unexpectedly and badly wrong.

First, a comment about terminology. The meaning of the terms, universalism and particularism, has been widely debated, as has their appropriate application (e.g., [Billet 2007](#); [Donnelly 2007](#)). This essay uses them as they have traditionally appeared in Judaism and Christianity and in the polemics between them, and only gestures to their wider application. I use “separatism” more often than “particularism” because biblical mandates (see below) call on Israel literally “to separate” itself from other nations. Religious universalism—the claim that every human faces, or at least should be offered, the same religious choices—has been a staple of Christian self-descriptions since ancient times ([Ruether 1974](#), pp. 34–36, 141, 151; [Schott 2013](#)). This use of “universalism” to describe religious thought resembles its use in the social sciences to distinguish between universalistic and particularistic cultures ([de Blasio et al. 2019](#)). On the other hand, eschatological universalism, the belief that everybody will be saved, is not under discussion in this article.

2. Biblical Separatist Rhetoric

Around two-thousand-five-hundred years ago, Judah was a small kingdom, and then an imperial province, threatened by the territorial ambitions of neighboring rulers and of distant empires. The first five books of the Bible, called the Torah or Pentateuch, and later the whole Hebrew Bible, also called the Tanak or Old Testament, were among the tools used by Judah’s priestly class to weld together ethnic identity and national aspirations into a religious identity as Jews ([Nasuti 1986](#), p. 12; [Sanders 2009](#), pp. 157–71; [Collins 2017](#), pp. 15, 44–61). The Bible does this by narrating Israel’s origins in ancestors, from Abraham through Moses, who migrated to this territory one thousand years earlier. It also establishes the people’s identity through the covenant that they made with their god, YHWH, at Mount Sinai.

The Hebrew Bible has wielded enormous influence in subsequent forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and over the cultures worldwide in which these religions have spread. Its famous contributions have included ethical monotheism and scripture-focused piety, among other things. The Bible has also been criticized for reinforcing cultural patriarchy and for justifying the institutions of chattel slavery, among other things. The overall influence of a religious tradition or its scripture is too broad and diffuse to allow for a convincing evaluation (though some have tried; for opposite examples, see [Stark 2004](#); [Avalos 2013](#)). Instead, I will focus here on one strand of the biblical tradition, rooted in just a few verses, that has promoted intolerance in the name of religious separatism and also provoked a critical response in the form of religious universalism.

Among the stipulations of Israel’s covenant are commandments to behave in certain distinctive ways to mark their identity as God’s people, the people of Israel. These practices are rooted in the Torah’s demand that the Israelites maintain their purity in order to distinguish themselves from other peoples. The association of purity with religious identity is made especially clear by a sequence of three passages in Leviticus 18 and 20 (see [Table 1](#)).

These commands appear in the story of the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai. They are set in time between the Israelites’ exodus out of Egypt and their settlement of the land of Canaan, the land that God has promised to give them. These verses call on the Israelites to obey the laws of the covenant in order to distinguish themselves from the Egyptians and from the Canaanites (18:3–4). The failure to follow these rules, which in the immediate context concern mostly sexual behavior, leads to the pollution of the people and of the land. Here, the biblical text provides an explicit justification for displacing the Canaanites from their land: they have polluted it by behaving in ways prohibited by YHWH’s laws (18:24–28; [Frevel 2019](#)).

Table 1. Rhetoric of Separation in Leviticus.

Leviticus 18:3–4	What is done in the land of Egypt where you lived—you must not do, and what is done in the land of Canaan into which I am bringing you—you must not do, and their mandates—you must not obey. But my judgments you must do, and my mandates you must observe to obey them—I am YHWH your God.
Leviticus 18:24–28	Do not pollute yourselves with all of these things, because the nations that I am expelling before you are polluted with all of these so that the land is polluted. I will hold it liable for it, and the land will vomit out its inhabitants. You especially must observe my mandates and my judgments and not do any of these disgusting things, . . . Because all of these disgusting things were done by the people of the land who were before you, and the land was polluted. So that the land does not vomit you out when you pollute it, like it vomited out the nations before you.
Leviticus 20:24–26	I said to you: you will possess their ground. I will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing milk and honey. I am YHWH your God who separated you from the peoples. You must separate pure quadrupeds from the polluted, and polluted flyers from the pure, so you do not nauseate yourselves with quadrupeds, flyers and everything with which the ground crawls that I have separated as polluted for you. You are holy to me because I, YHWH, am holy. I have separated you from the peoples to be mine. ¹

These texts draw an explicit analogy between the Israelites' daily separation of pure meat from polluted and God's separation of the people of Israel as belonging to YHWH. The act of separation (Hebrew: *badal*) also typified God's activity in creating the world in Genesis 1. Thus, Leviticus 20 calls on its listeners and readers to distinguish among food animals to show their status as the people distinguished by God and in imitation of God's acts in creating the world, all activities defined as "separation" (Milgrom 2000, pp. 1761–62). This rhetoric aims to create communal identity by drawing explicit contrasts with other groups (Olyan 2000, pp. 63–102). These other people are labeled by the names of Israel's ancient enemies, Egypt and Canaan (18:3–4), but the text of Leviticus already extends that identification to peoples (*ammim*) generally, in all places and all times (20:24–26).

Such rhetoric is not limited to Leviticus. The intention to dispossess the Canaanites of their lands appears as early as the promises to the ancestors in Genesis (15:18–21; 17:8) and motivates the story of the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 3:8; 6:4, 8) and the conquest of the land (Numbers 33:51–53; Deuteronomy 7:1–3; Joshua 11:23). The divine command to separate themselves from the Canaanites motivates the execution of captives during these wars (Numbers 31:14–18; 33:55; Deuteronomy 7:16; 20:12–13, 16–18; 25:17–19; Joshua 6:17–21; 8:18–29; 10:22–12:24; 1 Samuel 15) or their reduction to forced labor (Deuteronomy 20:10–11; Joshua 9:26–27).

3. Uses of Biblical Separatist Rhetoric in the Americas

The influence of the Bible's rhetoric of separation from the Canaanites and other peoples has been especially evident in the cultures of the American continents over the last five centuries (Warrior 1989; Hidalgo 2018, pp. 63–67). During the Spanish and Portuguese conquests of the Americas, the rights of the native peoples were hotly debated on both sides of the Atlantic (Prior 1997, pp. 48–70; Newcomb 2008, pp. 43–50; Staubli 2011, p. 375). In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued a papal bull, "Inter Caetera," that granted non-Christians' lands in the Americas to the Spaniards so they could convert the inhabitants to Christianity, a precedent called the Doctrine of Discovery. Defenders of the Spanish and Portuguese conquests used biblical narratives and laws to justify them. Fray Toribio de Motolinia blamed the depopulation of Indian communities on diseases and plagues in punishment for their sins (Prior 1997, p. 61). Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1545 cited Leviticus and Deuteronomy to justify the conquest of the Americas because of the Indians' crimes and unbelief (Prior 1997, pp. 56, 68).

¹ English translations by the author.

Pedro de Santander in 1557 urged King Philip II of Spain to treat Florida like Canaan: “This is the Land of Promise, possessed by idolaters, the Amorite, Amelekite, Moabite, Canaanite. This is the land promised by the Eternal Father to the Faithful, since we are commanded by God in the Holy Scriptures to take it from them, being idolators, and, by reason of their idolatry and sin, to put them all to the knife, leaving no living thing save maidens and children, their cities robbed and sacked, their walls and houses leveled to the earth” (de Pital and Salvá 1855; Parkman 1996, p. 18; Newcomb 2008, p. 50).

The depredations of the conquistadores led to impassioned defenses of Indian rights by some Spaniards who witnessed them. Most notably, Bartolomé de Las Casas wrote a critical history of the conquest and defended the Indians before a royal commission in 1550. Other defenders of the Indians used biblical language to identify themselves as “in Babylon,” i.e., in exile, and “in Ninevah” like the prophet Jonah, in preaching to the Spanish conquerors. They compared the Indians’ fate to that of the Israelites in Egypt (Prior 1997, pp. 59–62). In 1557, Francisco de Vitoria wrote an influential treatise that denied the application of the Doctrine of Discovery to the Americas, since the land was already occupied: “the barbarians were the true owners, both from the public and from the private standpoint” (Newcomb 2008, p. 163). Wilkens (2014) has claimed that Vitoria’s point of view dominated most legal interactions with Native Americans in the following centuries, which therefore took the form of treaties between recognized nations. However, people continued to claim that the conquest of inferior and immoral native peoples established rights to land and dominion in the Americas.

The biblical model of the conquest of Canaan motivated many English settlers of North America (Staubli 2011, pp. 376–77). In 1583, Sir George Peckham justified accepting a large grant of lands in New England by referring to God’s grant of Canaan to Israel (Cave 1988, p. 282). Seventeenth-century preachers compared the Native Americans to the Canaanites and also to the builders of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) and to the descendants of Ham suffering Canaan’s curse (Genesis 9:25; this verse was also employed to justify the African slave trade, but that is another story; see Haynes 2002; Goldenberg 2009). They argued that the Indians’ idolatry condemned them to death under biblical law (Deuteronomy 17:2–7; Cave 1988, pp. 183–86). In Virginia, warfare with Native Americans was interpreted by Samuel Purchas through the language of Leviticus, as Paul Stevens has pointed out: “The Algonquian uprising of 1622, led by Pocahontas’s uncle, Opecancanough, is read by Purchas through the mediating glass of Leviticus 18, and the Indian rebellion is represented as sexual transgression: ‘When Virginia was violently ravished by her owne ruder Natives, yea her virgin cheekes dyed with the bloud of three colonies . . . Temperance could not temper her selfe, yea the stupid Earth seems distempered with such bloody potions and cries that shee is ready to spue out her inhabitants.’” (Stevens 1993, p. 455).

As was the case earlier among Spaniards, many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English voices denied that Europeans had any divine grant to American lands (Cave 1988, pp. 280–81, 286–87, 289–90). The Puritans also did not think that Christians should dispossess Native Americans, but they argued that God had already emptied the land of eastern Massachusetts by plague before they arrived (Cave 1988, p. 290). Nevertheless, the belief in the providential right to take Indian land remained popular among English colonists, to the extent that Roger Williams was expelled from Massachusetts over his disagreement about this and other matters. In 1689, the influential minister, Cotton Mather, charged the colonies’ soldiers to think of themselves as Israel in the wilderness battling Amalek: “pure Israel was obliged to ‘cast out [the Indians] as dirt in the streets’, and eliminate and exterminate them” (Prior 1997, p. 263).

These ideas continue to influence American politics and legal decisions. In 1823, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Johnson v. McIntosh* revived the Doctrine of Discovery as an element in United States law. This decision recognized that Indians originally occupied and possessed American lands but argued that property rights now depend upon the precedents established by European nations’ right of conquest (Newcomb 2008, pp. 73–104; Wilkens 2014). This precedent echoes the biblical conquest story and continues to influence legal decisions about Native American land claims in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

4. Uses of Biblical Separatist Rhetoric Elsewhere

Such biblical rhetoric was used earlier and frequently in Europe to justify missionary expeditions and military conquests. Christian missionaries in the early Middle Ages destroyed altars and sacred trees in imitation of the biblical prophet, Elijah (Staubli 2011, p. 374). Europe's medieval crusades to conquer "the holy land" were justified by accusations that Muslims polluted sacred sites (Cole 1993; Angenendt 2009). Monastic crusaders like the Knight Templers were inspired by hearing readings from Joshua and 1 Maccabees (Prior 1997, pp. 35–36).

In the sixteenth century, Protestant Reformers like Martin Luther depicted themselves as "purifying" churches of "Canaanite" pollution introduced by the Roman Catholic Church (Staubli 2011, p. 374; Elliott 2012, p. 194). John Calvin observed that the law in Leviticus 20:26 "has the rationale of maintaining a separation of God's people from the nations and their pollutions" (Elliott 2012, p. 212), a view echoed in the twentieth century by Northern Irish Protestants in their political struggles to stay separate from Catholic Ireland (Stevens 1993, p. 442). In the seventeenth century, the English poet, John Milton, denounced Catholic bishops as "the Canaanites and Philistines to this Kingdom" and castigated Irish rebels as sexually polluted, while Oliver Cromwell, who dethroned the British monarchs, claimed for himself the zeal of Phineas (Numbers 25:6–15) in keeping Israel clean (Stevens 1993, pp. 455–57).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, South African Boers compared their eviction from Cape Town to the Exodus and used Deuteronomy, Ezra and Nehemiah to justify the separation of the races in the system of apartheid (Prior 1997, pp. 71–105; Staubli 2011, p. 378). Arab legends identified the Berbers negatively with the Canaanites (Staubli 2011, p. 378), though the rise of the modern state of Israel has led many Muslims to celebrate the Canaanites as predecessors of the Palestinians, both of whom suffer from Israelite/Israeli conquest (Staubli 2011, p. 379). Jewish Zionists initially preferred to use the stories of Israel's heroes in Joshua and the Maccabees rather than biblical law for their cause, but that has changed with the increasing influence in Israel of Orthodox Zionists in the later twentieth-century (Prior 1997, pp. 106–69). The biblical condemnation of the Canaanites continues to echo in the twenty-first-century rhetoric of Israeli settlers and of Christian Zionists, who cite the biblical conquest story (Richardson and Pihlaja 2018). Apart from Middle Eastern politics, it also continues to be cited in condemnations of atheism and non-hetero-normative sexual identities (e.g., in the 2005 papal encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, s. 31, quoted by (Elliott 2012, p. 212)).

5. Separatism and Universalism in Ancient Judaism

The origins of this rhetoric of ethnic and religious separation are best explained by the historical context of Judea in the fifth to fourth centuries B.C.E. when the Torah first began to be ritualized as a scripture (Collins 2017, pp. 44–61; Watts 2017, pp. 13–17). Judea was then a small province in the Persian Empire trying to defend its boundaries and interests against neighboring rivals. Judeans also struggled to gain unity over internal divisions. Local "people of the land" (*'am ha'arets*) were poor in contrast to the wealthier Judean diaspora in Egypt and Babylon. Some members of this diaspora returned to Judea and installed themselves as a ruling class in Jerusalem. They were represented most prominently in the fifth century by the prince, Zerubbabel, and the high priest, Joshua ben Jehozadak (Ezra 3:2), and in the fourth century by the priest and scribe, Ezra, and the Persian governor, Nehemiah (Ezra 7:1–6; Nehemiah 2:1–20). The population of the province of Judea also included immigrants (*gerim*) who, unlike native Judeans, could not claim ancestral ties to Israel. Jerusalem's status as the religious center of the cult of YHWH, the god of Israel, had to compete with rival claims by Samaritans to YHWH worship on Mount Gerizim, to the north.

Judea's religious and secular leaders responded to the internal and external threats to the community's cohesion by evoking the Torah's rhetoric of identification with ancient Israel and of separation from other peoples. They developed it further, castigating foreigners as inherently polluted (Nehemiah 13:9, 28–30) and intermarriage as polluting the holy people of God (Ezra 9:10–11). This is a common strategy adopted by many small minority groups for community preservation. Though later

Jews have not usually been as strict as Ezra and Nehemiah, the strategy of tying Jewish identity to venerating the Torah's laws, especially a distinctive diet, purification rituals and male circumcision, did help to preserve Jewish identity through millennia of minority status under Christian and Muslim rulers.

The Hebrew Bible, however, does not consistently advocate separation from foreigners. It also contains universalistic ideals, starting with creation and flood stories that show the ancestors of all humans receiving divine commands and blessings (Genesis 1:28; 9:1–7). Legal texts in the Torah emphasize the safety and rights of immigrants (*gerim*) living in Israel (Leviticus 19:33–34; Deuteronomy 10:18–19). Some prophets and psalms hope for all nations to worship God together in Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:18–24; Zechariah 14:16–21; Psalm 96). The books of Ruth and Daniel affirm the ability of non-Israelites to recognize and worship the one, true God.

Universalistic ideas continued to appear in the Jewish literature of the Second Temple period (515 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.). Malka Simkovich reviewed this material and concluded that “many Jews embraced universalist ideas, particularly during the last two centuries of the Second Temple era” (Simkovich 2017, p. 141). Later rabbinic literature of the first six centuries C.E. both reproduced the biblical bias against the Canaanites and also voiced universalistic impulses. For example, the Talmud reports that God prohibited the angels from celebrating the victory over Egypt at the Reed Sea (Exodus 14–15) out of sorrow over all the Egyptian dead (*b. Megillah* 10b; *b. Sanhedrin* 39b; Niditch 1993, pp. 150–51).

6. Intolerant Christian Universalism

Christian theology picked up these universalistic elements in the Jewish tradition and claimed them for itself. Various New Testament texts embrace the prophets' universalistic proclamations. The Gospels show Jesus quoting the commands to love neighbors and immigrants from Leviticus 19:18, 34, and extending that love even to enemies (Matthew 5:44). Christians are directed to preach the Gospel message “to all nations” (Matthew 28:19; Romans 1:16).

In order to implement this universal mission, the apostle Paul rejected practices like dietary rules and circumcision (1 Corinthians 10:23–33; Galatians 5:2) that had come to define Jewish identity as a separate people. Many New Testament texts characterize concern for food purity as a “Jewish” concern (Mark 7:3; Acts 10:28) in order to highlight and distinguish Christian universalism. Universalism became a self-described marker for distinguishing Christians from Jews. Christians identified separatist particularism as a defining fault of Judaism. Worries about “judaizing” tendencies among fellow Christians then continued to be voiced throughout subsequent history (Chrysostom 2010; Murphy 2007; Mattox 2008).

The Christian scriptures of Old and New Testaments thus canonized the identity politics of early Christians by describing the separatist practices from the Pentateuch as “Jewish” and rejecting them in favor of Christian universalism in the New Testament (Ruether 1974, pp. 226–34). This formula obscured the universalistic tendencies in ancient Judaism (Simkovich 2017), as well as the fact that the New Testament actually preserves a variety of views about purity, and especially the diet rules (Acts 15). Jon Levenson summarized the situation in the different biblical canons this way: “The material in the Hebrew Bible which touches on non-Israelite religion, like the material in the New Testament which touches on Judaism, is born in the white heat of polemic. In both cases, the sarcastic, reductionistic literature of polemic has come to be regarded as sacred Scripture” (Levenson 1985, pp. 254–55).

After Christianity received Roman imperial approval and then sponsorship in the fourth century, many Christian theologians fused the universal mission of the church with the empire's political universalism that celebrated the dominant culture and relegated all others to barbarism. Even before the rise of Christianity, Greco-Roman critics had labeled Jews as misanthropic because of their social separation from other peoples to avoid pollution (Schäfer 1997, pp. 21–22, 67). That charge continued to echo in Christian polemics against Jews, though often overshadowed by theological complaints about Jewish legalism and a failure to recognize the true Christ (for a historical survey of anti-Semitism, see Levy and Lindemann 2010). The Christian Roman Empire restricted Jewish legal and civil rights.

The laws of Justinian (fifth century C.E.) banned the Mishnah and insisted that Jews should not be allowed to read the Bible in Hebrew (Ben-Sasson 1976, p. 359). Rosemary Radford Ruether reviewed the results: “Christianity . . . took the universalism of the messianic hope and fused it with the ideological universalism of the ecumenical empire. . . . One God, one faith, and one Church for all mankind invalidated the rights of other people to exist in other ways before God. . . . Historically, from this time on, the missionary and the conquistador went hand in hand” (Ruether 1974, pp. 141–43, 233–34).

Roman precedent and law, as codified by Christians, shaped the treatment of Jews by later churches and nations. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council proclaimed the supremacy of the Catholic Church over all Christian realms and, simultaneously, the universal marginalization of Jews. It required, among other things, that Jews wear distinctive badges to identify their outsider status (Carroll 2001, pp. 282–83). Later Christian prejudices about Jews emphasized economic conspiracy theories and secret rituals (such as the blood libel; Levy and Lindemann 2010, pp. 74–75) that fed on the stereotype of Jewish separatism. The Hebrew Bible’s pollution rhetoric could also be turned into anti-Semitic rhetoric: for example, Catholics in the Counter-Reformation quoted the description of Israel’s pollutions in Ezekiel to attack Jews (Staubli 2011, p. 375). These precedents influenced later European states, even through Jewish emancipation in the nineteenth century. In America, too, many Christians regarded a Jew as “the quintessential alien” (Dinnerstein 1994, p. 245). The twentieth-century revival of virulent anti-Semitic prejudices led to the Holocaust, the Nazi’s “final solution of the Jewish problem”.

Thus, the criticism of Jewish separatism as intolerant of other peoples led to a Christian universalism that has frequently demonized Jews and led to their violent persecution. Nevertheless, Christian universalism has often proven very attractive as the religion spread to new cultures. R. S. Sugirtharajah observed that many people in India and elsewhere in Asia responded positively to the New Testament, but found the Hebrew Bible perplexing and off-putting. As a result, missionaries had difficulty preaching from Old Testament texts (Sugirtharajah 2005, pp. 145–46, 163). Some missionaries adopted evolutionary models that identified Israelite and post-exilic Jewish religions with stages of religions in India, all leading to the ultimate Christian revelation (Sugirtharajah 2005, pp. 151–53). Some colonized peoples, however, embraced the Hebrew Bible’s purity rules and conquest story as a means to criticize their colonizers based on their own scriptures. In nineteenth-century South India, for example, A. N. Suttampillai founded the Hindu Christian Church and, quoting Leviticus 18, “warned the British that if they did not reform their ways, they would be ousted, as had once happened to the nations of Palestine: ‘Reform at once (Eph. 5.1-12). “That the land spue not you out also, as is spued out the nations that” were once in Palestine (Lev. 18.28)’” (Sugirtharajah 2005, p. 185, quoting Suttampillai 1890, p. 30).

7. The Ambiguous Heritage of Separatist and Universal Rhetoric

The effects of these conflicts between and within religious communities have not been confined to these communities. Christian ideas, often from the Bible, set the stage for the development of Western political theories in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Nelson 2010; Hammill 2012). A great accomplishment of such political and ethical universalism was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United Nations adopted in 1948. However, the religious arguments between separatism and universalism reappeared in a new guise in the late-twentieth century, in international debates between the advocates of universal human rights and the defenders of cultural particularism (Donnelly 2007; Billet 2007). The problem of particularism versus universalism has haunted recent philosophers working in both Jewish and secular contexts (see the essays in Caputo and Alcoff 2007; also Hughes 2014).

What can we learn from the fact that, for more than two thousand years, biblical rhetoric of both religious separatism and of religious universalism has frequently been used to motivate and justify intolerance and violence? This history makes clear that setting traditions and their texts against each other can perpetuate great injustice, regardless of how subtle their ethical reasoning or how good their moral intentions may be. This conclusion is not an argument against modern efforts at inter-religious dialogue. Understanding between people of different religious traditions can only come about by

learning from each other's practices and beliefs, and by interacting with each other personally. It is, however, an argument against the much older tendency, which is still prevalent today, of religious groups defining themselves by negative comparisons with other groups.

Daniel Boyarin concluded about the apostle Paul's universalism and ancient rabbinic particularism: "Both poles of this dialectic, the universalist thesis and the particularist antithesis, or, the particularist thesis and the universalist antithesis, present what seem to me to be both enormous ethical and political problems as well as enormous promise, each for reasons quite naturally directly opposite from the other" (Boyarin 1997, p. 201). That conclusion fits the entire history surveyed here, which raises the practical question of what to do about it. Some time ago, Rosemary Radford Ruether suggested that any and all universal claims should be "based on particularisms which accept their own distinctiveness and so leave room for the distinctiveness of others" and so "come to terms with [themselves] as a particularism among other particularisms, one language among other languages" (Ruether 1974, pp. 235, 237). Enacting Ruether's ideal would require religious communities to focus on themselves more than on comparisons with other groups. It recommends a stance of religious modesty that makes claims only for oneself and on behalf of one's own group. It recognizes the implicit imperialism of universalistic claims and the moral dangers that they pose.

I suggest that religious and cultural comparisons should lead us back to our own traditions to cultivate those parts that contribute to justice, wellbeing and peace, and to criticize and neutralize those parts that fuel injustice. Though cultural comparisons often fuel these efforts, this moral work can be done effectively only by those who, in one way or another, identify themselves and would likely be identified by others as belonging within the tradition, or in other words, by those who can reasonably claim the scriptures of the tradition as their own.² To us falls the responsibility for describing the ideals of our traditions on their own terms, and for eliminating negative comparisons with other traditions that so easily turn into prejudice and oppression.

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² For one example of what a creative critique of traditional texts can look like, see [Watts \(2019\)](#).

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Article

Understanding the Letter to the Romans in the Sect-Cult Development of Early Churches

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Abstract: This article examines how the model of sect-cult development in antiquity helps us understand Paul's discussion of Jewish traditions in the Letter to the Romans. In the traditional Augustinian–Lutheran scholarship, Romans has often been interpreted within the binary framework of Judaism and Christianity, as Paul showcasing one of the earliest examples of Christian opposition to Judaism. Based on the recent studies on Second Temple Judaism and the modified model of sect-cult reflecting the ancient context, I argue that Romans reveals internal conflicts between cultic and sectarian tendencies present among early churches of the first century C.E. The cultic tendency is reflected in Roman gentile believers' assimilation of the Jewish tradition with the Greco–Roman virtue of self-mastery and their growing separation from Judaism. Paul, on the other hand, tries to establish the unity between believing gentiles and Israel as exhibiting his sectarian understanding of the gospel and the gentile mission. By placing Romans in the trajectory of sect-cult development of an early church, we stop reading it as a text that justifies the Christian antagonism to Judaism, but as a text that shows an early apostle's passionate effort to create a unified people of God in the hope for the final salvation.

Keywords: New Testament; the letter to Romans; Paul; sect; cult; anti-Jewish discourses; Jews and gentiles; unity; second temple Judaism; Roman empire

1. Introduction

One of the problems that Paul addresses in his letter to the Romans is the act of passing judgment on others. In Rom 2:1, Paul says: “Therefore you have no excuse, O man, anyone who judges others, for in judging others you condemn yourself, since you, as a judge, are doing the same things”.¹ Paul's criticism is serious as he equates the act of judging with the sin of idolatry (1:18–32). According to Paul, judging others is the same as disregarding God, who is the sole judge of the world.

Concerning the identity of this “judge” in Rom 2:1, the traditional Augustinian–Lutheran interpretation has been that he is the Jew mentioned in Rom 2:17, who “rely on the law and boast in God” (ἐπιαναπαύη νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ; Oswald 1972, pp. 15–16).² According to this view, Paul is criticizing his Jewish contemporaries who stood hypocritical and arrogant over gentile believers, boasting in their possession and practices of the law (Cranfield 1975, vol. 1, p. 175; Watson 1986, p. 113; Dunn 1988, pp. 77–92; Fitzmyer 1993, p. 297; Jewett 2007, pp. 241–42). Paul is also seen here as invalidating the law and rejecting Judaism in its essence, considering it to have been superseded by the faith in Jesus Christ. This interpretation was further supported by the scholarship that understood Pauline churches within the Weberian ‘church-sect’ typology, which saw Paul as establishing a religiosity that is distinctive from Judaism (Lüdemann 2010, pp. 213–18). Paul, in other

¹ Unless otherwise specified, all New Testament translations are my own.

² Augustine, *On The Spirit and the Letter* 14. For the chapter divisions of *On The Spirit and the Letter*, I follow (Schaff 1887).

words, succeeded in transforming the initially sectarian Jesus movement into a new 'religion' of the Roman World, beginning the history of the Christian 'church'. In this interpretation, Romans becomes the locus where we find the early church's opposition to Judaism and the text that provides the historical–theological ground for legitimatizing subsequent anti-Semitic discourses in the history of Christianity (Parkes 1969, p. 52; Radford Ruether 1984, pp. 103–4; Gaston 1979; Gager 1985, pp. 197–212).

In the last couple of decades, however, studies on Second Temple Judaism and Paul began to challenge the traditional understanding of Romans as Paul's treatise on the antithesis of Jewish law and Christian faith. For instance, E. P. Sanders (1977), in his book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, revised the assumption that first-century Judaism was a legalistic religion lacking the genuine faith in God. Through his analysis of the literary corpus from the Second Temple and early rabbinic periods, Sanders argued that Jews thought that they could be justified only by God's mercy and faithfulness, not by works of the law. For Jews, keeping the law was not to earn salvation through human works but to express their faithfulness to God and remain in the covenantal relationship. Based on Sanders' observation, scholars could see that Paul's idea of justification by faith in Romans is not standing in contrast to the Jewish tradition but is, in fact, in line with it (Stendahl 1963; Stowers 1994; Gager 2002; Eisenbaum 2009).³ In other words, Paul was not the 'founder' of the Christian 'religion' or 'church', but a Jew whose understanding of Jesus, gospel, and the gentile mission falls within the spectrum of ideas presented by other Jewish sects and groups of his time.

Studies on Romans also presented new ways of understanding the letter's seemingly anti-Jewish elements. Stanley K. Stowers (1994), for instance, pointed out that Paul is not addressing an ethnic Jew in Rom 2:17 but a hypothetical interlocutor to refute an erroneous understanding of the law. Runar M. Thorsteinsson (2003) further argued that this interlocutor is a hypothetical gentile who wrongly understood the law. These studies show that we cannot simply assume Paul as criticizing Jews or Judaism in Romans. They also suggest that we should not read Romans as reflecting the tension between two religions—Christianity and Judaism—as the former being represented by a boastful, stereotypical Jew and the latter by Paul, who has detached himself from Judaism.⁴

In this paper, I analyze the problem reflected in Romans by utilizing the sociological model of 'sect-cult' presented by Stark and Bainbridge (1979), but especially the one modified by L. Michael White (1988) by reflecting the ancient usage of the terms 'sect' and 'cult'. While many scholars adopted Weber-Troeltsch's 'church-sect' typology to understand the origin of Christianity and the relationship between Judaism and early Jesus movements, not many have attempted reading Romans in consideration of the 'sect-cult' model. By locating the letter in the trajectory of ancient sect-cult development, we begin to see the coherence between Paul's criticism of those who judge others and his extensive discussions of Jewish traditions in the letter.

Based on my analysis, I argue that the conflict we see in Romans is one that arose in the context where the Roman church was assimilating to the Greco–Roman cultural context and separating itself further from the Jewish root. This tendency was especially problematic for Paul, who, with his intrinsically sectarian understanding of the gospel, saw the danger of the gentile church drifting away from Judaism and becoming a separate entity. For Paul, who was looking forward to the salvation of "all Israel (Rom 11:26)" through Israel's elect and the offering of gentiles, the Roman church's cultic tendency towards separation from Judaism was particularly detrimental. In Romans, we see Paul's

³ Sanders himself did not arrive at this conclusion but maintained the view that Paul, through his experience of the risen Christ, realized the invalidity of the law as the way of salvation in the messianic era (Sanders 1977, p. 552).

⁴ For assuming the existence of some type of conflicts in the Roman church based on the letter, see (Gager 1985, pp. 230–31). Even if there was no particular conflict, it still is probable that Paul saw enough of the danger in the Roman church that could develop into a problematic situation.

endeavor to bring two parting communities together, the gentile churches and Israel, in the hope of the imminent eschaton.⁵

2. Paul's Letters and the Model of Sect-Cult in the Ancient World

Sociological types of 'church' and 'sect' developed by (Weber 1922; Troeltsch 1912) have been used extensively in understanding different types of religious organizations and their developments.⁶ While many scholars further modified the Weberian 'church-sect' model and presented different definitions of the terms, 'church' is generally defined as an institutionalized organization that has priesthood and recruits its members from society through socialization. 'Sect', on the other hand, is defined as a small revitalizing group that exhibits a radical stance towards the state and society and recruits its members by voluntary conversion (Beaman 1990, pp. 19–20; Dawson 2009, p. 527).

This typology of 'church-sect' was adopted by the New Testament scholarship in analyzing the formation of early Christianity in the ancient Mediterranean world. By utilizing this model, scholars explained that Christianity originated not as a medieval and modern 'church'-like 'religion' but as a 'sect', i.e., a Jewish renewal movement centered around the charismatic leader Jesus (Daniélou 1969; Frend 1984, p. 12; Esler 1987, pp. 30–45; Elliott 1990, p. 74; Meeks 1986, pp. 99–103). This Palestinian sectarian movement then was gradually institutionalized in the Roman empire, losing its original radical features and becoming a 'religion' that we now call Christianity (Bryant 1993).

This view, however, was not without problems. In the last couple of decades, scholars began to question the application of the binary Weberian model of 'church-sect' to Judaism and the Jesus movement. For instance, many pointed out that first-century Judaism was not a static, monolithic, and institutionalized entity functioning like a 'church' (Smith 1971; Aune 1976; Sanders 1977, pp. 12–88; Neusner 1984, pp. 35–44; Grabbe 1977; Holmberg 1990, p. 91; White 1988, pp. 10–14; Schäfer 1998). What we call 'Judaism' in the ancient Mediterranean world was a loose network of diverse groups and sectarian movements proposing different explications about Jewish identity. The Jesus movement was not the only 'sect' that rose against the petrified 'church' of Judaism but one among numerous Jewish groups that had a range of reformative ideas and practices (Blenkinsopp 1981; Horsley and Hanson 1985). Jewish sects, while they shared the general sectarian tendency, also greatly diverged in their degrees of tension with the dominant religio-social culture and in formulating the group's boundaries.

Scholars also pointed out that the 'church-sect' typology does not take into account remarkably free movements of religious groups in the Greco-Roman world. Dynamic exchanges of ideas and practices resulted in varying mutations and developments of the original elements throughout different regions of the empire (Collar 2007, 2011, 2013; Price 2012; Woolf 2016, p. 480). A. D. Nock, for instance, in his study of religious conversion in the Greco-Roman antiquity, has shown that people had no qualms about accepting new religious ideas and practices in addition to their existing forms of piety (Nock 1933, pp. 1–16). When a particular religious body settled down in a place outside of its birthplace, it went through a process of assimilation to the hosting culture and separation from its root, often resulting in the loss of the group's initial sectarian identity.

Here, the study of Stark and Bainbridge on 'cult' becomes useful.⁷ In their article "Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements (Stark and Bainbridge 1979)", they presented the three categories of 'church', 'sect', and 'cult' to understand religious movements. Furthering Benton Johnson (1963)'s stress on a group's state of tension with its social environment, Stark and Bainbridge defined 'church' as a religious group that moves towards less tension

⁵ Scholars debate on the primary purpose of Romans, while not excluding the possibility of multiple interrelated goals being accomplished by the letter. For studies on different purposes of Romans, such as ambassadorial, apologetic, or protreptic, etc., see (Jewett 1982; Crafton 1990; Stuhlmacher 1991; Guerra 2005; Foster 2014).

⁶ For studies on the critiques and developments of the 'church-sect' typology, see (Berger 1958; Swatos 1976; Johnson 1971; Chalcraft 2007, pp. 26–51).

⁷ For sociological discussions on 'cult', see (Wilson 1967, pp. 27–28; Campbell 1978; Dawson 1997; Richardson 1993).

with the socio-cultural context and 'sect' as a deviant, schismatic group that rejects its surrounding environment (p. 124). They, however, also observed that there exists another kind of religious movement that begins not by breaking off from existing religious bodies but independently through religious innovation or importation. They called this type a 'cult'. A cult is deviant to its hosting culture like a sect, but as having no ties to a prior organization but presenting fundamentally different beliefs and practices, it is inherently alien to the society in question. One significant advantage of Stark and Bainbridge's distinction of sect and cult is that we begin to see the different tendencies a particular group takes in a specific context. For instance, Stark and Bainbridge could state that "the Catholic Church in the United States is more sectlike than is the Catholic Church in Ireland (Stark and Bainbridge 1985, p. 124)".

The study of Stark and Bainbridge was successfully taken into the field of early Christianity by White, who linked these sociological concepts with the categories used in Greco-Roman antiquity.⁸ In his article "Shifting Sectarian Boundaries in Early Christianity (White 1988)", White points out that the terms 'sect' and 'cult' were used in the ancient world, and their uses overlap with the definitions proposed by Stark and Bainbridge. The term 'sect' corresponds to the Greek term *αἵρεσις* (*haireisis*; Latin *secta*), which referred to a particular school of thought or a group of shared beliefs and practices (Runia 1999, pp. 118–19; Rüpke 2007, p. 72). For instance, the first-century Jewish historian Josephus uses *haireisis* to describe Jewish groups such as Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. 'Cult', on the other hand, corresponds to the Latin word *cultus*, which was used to refer to a sacred rite for a particular deity and especially a set of practices of foreign ethnic groups introduced to the Roman empire (White 2004, p. 129; Cf. Ando 2009, p. 6). Thus, foreign mysteries imported from Egypt and Anatolia, as well as the Jewish traditions, were considered as *cultus*.

Extending the study of Stark and Bainbridge with the notion of symbolic worldview (Berger and Luckmann 1966, pp. 95–98), White then defined 'sect' in the ancient Mediterranean world as "a separatist (or schismatic) revitalization movement that arises out of an established, religiously defined cultural system, with which it shares its symbolic worldview" and cult as "an integrative, often syncretistic, movement that is effectively imported (by mobilization or mutation) into another religiously defined cultural system, to which it seeks to synthesize a basically foreign (or novel) symbolic worldview (1990, p. 17)". According to this redefinition of 'sect' and 'cult', the same religious movement can be both called and analyzed as a 'sect' and a 'cult' depending on the particular strategies a group takes in drawing and maintaining its boundary in a given socio-cultural context. White further observed that cult rhetoric tends to highlight the similarities with the dominant culture, whereas sect rhetoric shows the tendency of stressing the differences (pp. 19–20).

White's modified definitions of 'sect' and 'cult' are particularly useful to analyze the different ways in which early Jesus-sects operated in different regions of the Roman empire. The Jesus movement, which originated as one among many Jewish groups in Palestine, spread throughout the empire by early missionary endeavors. In this process, the sect began to behave like a cult in the regions where Jewish beliefs and practices were inherently foreign, like the city of Rome. In forging its own distinctive identity as a cult, the group underwent both adaptations and conflicts with the existing culture, as well as gradual distinction and separation from its Palestinian Jewish root. This process also involved internal struggles concerning the particular ways of accommodation and separation,

⁸ While Stark also suggested to see Christianity as a cultic movement, he thought the shift of the Christian identity from a sect to cult has happened early when the belief in Jesus' resurrection emerged (Stark 1986, pp. 223–24). I disagree with Stark because the belief in the resurrection was common among Jewish groups and not something religiously innovative in the first-century Jewish context. We also see continued sectarian aspects of Jesus movements in the gospels and Pauline letters. I agree with White that the diaspora settings pressured some Jesus-sects, including one of Paul, to behave like a cult (White 1988, pp. 17–18).

resulting in the development of various forms of Christianity in the ancient Mediterranean world (Bird 2002, pp. 225–46; Regev 2011, pp. 789–93).⁹

Paul's letters also reflect tensions between sectarian and cultic tendencies that coexisted in early churches. The former tries to maintain the original sectarian worldview of a Palestinian Jewish movement—often represented by Paul—by stressing the distinctiveness of the church from the dominant Roman culture; while the latter tends to connect and assimilate to the hosting culture for survival and expansion, as exhibited in some gentile members' thoughts and lifestyles (White 1988, p. 20; Cf. Mauss 1994, pp. ix–x). By reading Paul's letters in the trajectory of 'sect-cult' development in some regions of the Roman empire, we stop understanding the conflicts and polemics over Jewish traditions present in Paul's discussions as the indications of the binary opposition between Judaism and the nascent Christianity (Cf. Georgi 1995, p. 37). Instead, Paul's letters reflect the tension between different ideas concerning the core of the group's identity and how it draws and maintains its boundary in a given cultural context. The Jewish issues addressed in Romans can also be understood within the process of a particular Jewish sectarian worldview being challenged and adapted in an alien socio-cultural context of Rome (Cf. Nanos 1999, pp. 284–85).

3. Roman Church's Cultic Tendency as Reflected in Romans

What are some of the characteristics that reflect the Roman church's cultic tendency to assimilate more to the hosting culture and separate itself further from its Jewish root? As discussed earlier, the main object of Paul's criticism in Romans is the person addressed in Rom 2:1-5 and 2:17-34. Paul's critical dialogue with this interlocutor reveals the central tension present in the Roman church. Let us focus on Paul's criticism of this character to understand the main problem Paul perceived of the Roman congregation.

3.1. Misunderstanding of the Jewish Tradition

There have been extensive debates concerning the precise identity of this interlocutor in Rom 2:1-5 and 2:17-29. In the traditional Augustinian–Lutheran scholarship, this person was generally assumed to be a typical Jew who represents the legalistic and arrogant Judaism of the first-century C.E. According to this view, Paul is criticizing the Jewish hypocrisy and boasting based on their possession of the law. In the last couple of decades, however, more scholars have begun to identify this interlocutor as a gentile who was misunderstanding the function of the law and the nature of salvation (Nanos 1999, pp. 283–84; Das 2007, 2012; Thiessen 2014, pp. 378–79). This shifted view lies on the observation that Paul is not addressing an actual historical figure in these passages but using the ancient philosophical rhetoric called speech-in-character (*προσωποποιία*; Stowers 1994, pp. 143–50). In this rhetoric, an orator or a writer sets up an imaginative interlocutor to refute erroneous ideas and introduce the correct understanding of a particular subject matter. Thus here, the interlocutor is not an actual Jew but a straw man that Paul is setting up to make an effective argument on the law and faith. On top of this understanding of Paul's rhetoric, scholars also pointed out that Paul explicitly mentions gentiles as the implied audience of the letter (1:5; 11:13; Munck 1959, pp. 196–209; Stowers 1994, pp. 21–33; Engberg-Pedersen 2000, pp. 185–86). Paul's argument on Jewish traditions thus should be understood as specially tailored for the gentile audience in Rome, especially for those who were misunderstanding the relationship between Jewish practices and the gospel. Moreover, as Thorsteinsson correctly points out, the phrase “to call yourself a Jew (*ὁ Ἰουδαίος ἐπινομάζει*)” in 2:17 suggests that this person is not an ethnic Jew but a non-Jew who was misappropriating the title “Jew” without a proper understanding and practice of the law (Thorsteinsson 2003, pp. 195–98).

⁹ We see a different trajectory for a Jesus-group that moved to upper Galilee, which stressed its sectarian identity as the true elect over against other Jewish groups of that region. One example is the Matthean community. See (Davies 1964; Kampen 1994; Georgi 1995, pp. 53–54).

Claiming himself as a “Jew”, the main problem of this imaginative gentile interlocutor was his misunderstanding of salvation as something that he has already attained through the possession of the law, in particular, through the practice of circumcision (2:1-3, 25-29; 3:1; 4:11). Based on this false idea, he was not living a life of faith (2:21-29) but considered himself as standing at a superior position from others. As we will see more in-depth in the following discussion, for Paul, this gentile was exhibiting a complete misunderstanding of the law, faith, and salvation in the Jewish tradition, as well as the role of Jesus Christ. In his boasting and hypocrisy, the gentile also revealed that he has not yet separated himself from the wicked gentile world (1:18-32), but remaining in the same condition as other nonbelieving gentiles (2:1-3).¹⁰ While this person claims himself to be a “Jew” separated from the unfaithful world, he, in fact, is not (2:4-6).

Where is this misunderstanding coming from, and how does it reveal the cultic tendency present among the gentile believers in the Roman church? In his study of Romans, Stowers argues that the interlocutor’s erroneous understanding of the law and salvation is a result of mistaken assimilation of the Jewish tradition of law-justification with the Hellenistic ethic of self-mastery (ἐγκράτεια). According to Stowers, in the Greco-Roman world, controlling one’s body and passions was considered to be one of the most cardinal virtues of the society (Stowers 1994, pp. 42–56; Finn and Finn 2009, pp. 34–57).¹¹ It was a quality particularly expected from those who were in the superior positions of ruling others. In the culture where the world’s goods were considered to be finite, however, self-mastery was also a limited commodity that should be fought for and gained through competition against others. Stowers argues that the Roman church also shared this pursuit of self-mastery prevalent in its broader cultural milieu. For instance, in describing the gentile status in Rom 1:18-32, Paul stresses the absence of self-control among gentiles explicitly by describing their state as being full of lusts (ἐπιθυμίαις; v.24), degrading of the body (ἀτιμάζεισθαὶ τὰ σώματα; v.24), and degrading passions (πάθη ἀτιμίαις; v.26).¹² Also in 7:7-8:8, Paul explains that a human being cannot control passions because of the weakness of the flesh, reflecting the aspiration of self-mastery prevalent among the gentiles in the Roman church.

Considering the cultural emphasis on self-mastery, as Stowers argues, it seems that some gentiles in the Roman church were developing the false idea that they could attain this virtue by keeping parts of the Jewish law.¹³ Even if we do not assume actual opponents of Paul influencing the Roman believers, we can safely assume that Paul perceived the danger of some gentiles being misguided by this wrong assimilation of the law-justification with the practices and attainment of self-control. This gentile misunderstanding is especially plausible when we consider the tendency among Hellenistic Jewish writers to present the law as the supreme path for cultivating self-mastery in the ancient world (Stowers 1994, pp. 57–65).¹⁴ We also see in Paul’s other letters repeated conflicts he had to face against Judaizing apostles and circumcised gentile converts, who were preaching the law on top of the faith in Christ (e.g., Gal 2:14; 5:2-6).

Paul, of course, here is not saying that the virtue of self-mastery itself is wrong or that believers cannot or should not attain it through their faith. The idea that believers could become one with self-control would have even helped the gospel to take root in the Roman environment as a point of assimilation. As Rodney Stark notes, one of the strategies that a new cult implements in a foreign environment is appealing to the needs of the people (Stark 1986, p. 219). In Paul’s letters, we indeed find that he often presented his gospel by connecting it to the virtue of self-mastery. For instance, in 1 Cor 9:24-27, Paul compares believers to athletes who strive to exercise self-control in everything (Stowers

¹⁰ For the reading of Rom 1:18-32 as describing the typical gentile state, see (Stowers 1994, pp. 83–125).

¹¹ E.g., Plato, *Laws* 625E–626E; Galen, *The Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul’s Passions* 10.8.

¹² Scholars pointed out other “gentilizing” tendencies among the Roman gentile believers. See (Elliott 1990; Campbell 1992; Wright 1992, p. 251; Nanos 1996, pp. 75–84).

¹³ I should admit that here both Stowers’ and my discussions of self-mastery is mainly concerned with male gentile believers in the Roman church. Self-mastery (or self-control) was considered to be a virtue exhibiting one’s masculinity and thus belonged to the realm of males (Wilson 2014, p. 369–71).

¹⁴ E.g., Philo, *On the Special Laws* 4.55; Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.120-21.

1994, pp. 48–49; Cf. Garrison 1993). In Rom 6:1-14, he says that the acceptance of the redemption through Jesus' death and resurrection enables a person to control passions and live "in newness of life (v.4)".¹⁵ He urges the believers: "Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you succumb to its lusts (v.12)". In contrast, Paul accuses false preachers and members as "slaves of their own stomach (δουλεύουσιν ἄλλὰ τῇ ἑαυτῶν κοιλίᾳ; Rom 16:18)" or as those who serve their belly as their gods (ὢν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία; Phil 3:19). What worried Paul about the Roman believers was not their pursuit of self-mastery itself but their misunderstanding of the law as the means through which they could guarantee salvation. According to Paul, this idea seriously undermined God's mercy that is central to human salvation. It also invalidated the role of Christ for gentile believers, who paid the due for their inexorable sins through his death and made them stand blameless in the starting point toward the final salvation at the time of judgment.

3.2. Growing Separation from the Jewish Root

Together with the erroneous assimilation of the law-salvation with the Greco–Roman idea of self-mastery, another tendency of the Roman church that Paul perceived to be problematic was its growing separation from its Jewish root. This tendency is seen in the idea that unbelieving Jews are now superseded by believing gentiles, one that Paul refutes thoroughly in Romans. After correcting the misconception of circumcision and salvation (2:1-29), Paul immediately turns to the question of the "advantage (τὸ περισσόν)" of an ethnic Jew (3:1). With a hypothetical question and an answer, he asserts, quite strongly, that the privilege of Israel as the recipient of God's oracle and faithfulness remains intact. In 3:3-4, he says: "If some were unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God? Absolutely not (εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες, μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσῃ; μὴ γένοιτο!)" According to Paul, while some Jews are showing their unfaithfulness at present in their rejection of Jesus and the gospel, God's faithfulness upon them is never annulled, and Israel is not superseded (Oropeza 2007, p. 58).

Paul's discussion in Rom 9-11 also reveals the gentiles' wrong assumption about the fate of unbelieving Jews. Paul, up until Romans chapter 8, devotes his letter in presenting the correct ideas of the law and salvation, which is educating gentiles with the proper understanding of the Jewish tradition. Then, in Rom 9-11, he quickly dives into the subject of the Jewish unfaithfulness at present and gentiles' judgment over Israel. After a lengthened explanation about the necessity of Jewish unfaithfulness in God's plan for salvation (9:6-11:24), Paul expresses his firm conviction in God's faithfulness and mercy that will save "all Israel" at the time of his judgment (11:25-36). Paul's assertion of the miraculous salvation of all Jews indicates that some gentiles assumed unbelieving Jews' destruction at the final judgment. Concerning the situation in the Roman church, Mark D. Nanos summarizes that gentile believers in Rome were developing an "inadequate grasp of the priority, privilege, and irrevocable place of Israel in the history of salvation (Nanos 1999, p. 290)". This arrogance is reflected in Paul's exhortation to the gentile audience: "They [unbelieving Jews] were broken off because of their unfaithfulness, but you [gentiles; 11:13] stand only through faithfulness. So do not become proud, but stand in awe (11:20)". As assuming unbelieving Jews as having a fundamentally different status in salvation, gentile members were separating themselves further from the root of Judaism and building an independent identity.

Then, can we place the growing cultic tendency of gentile believers within the broader historical context of the churches in Rome? While space is limited for an in-depth analysis, we can ask whether there was any political change that has influenced the Roman community. In the churches of Rome, the tendency to assimilate to their cultural context would have existed from the very beginning when the groups were formed. The Roman administrative policies in the years preceding Paul's letter to the Romans, however, seem to have accelerated this process as resulting in conflicts and divisions

¹⁵ For more discussion, see (Wasserman 2008).

among the members of the Roman church. In 41 C.E., according to Dio Cassius, Claudius ordered Jews “not to hold meetings” while continuing their traditional Jewish lifestyle (*Roman History* 60.6.6; Jewett 2007, p. 18; Rutgers 1998, pp. 184–89; Williams 2004, pp. 38–39). Then later in 49 C.E., according to Suetonius, Claudius “expelled from Rome the Jews constantly making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (*Claudius* 25.4; Jewett 2007, p. 19; 1979, pp. 36–40, 100–3)”. Many scholars interpret this edict as reflecting struggles among Jews concerning Jesus (Johnson 2000, p. 91; Rock 2012, pp. 88–89). In this political context, some gentile members, consciously and unconsciously, were pressured to assimilate more to the Roman worldview to avoid unnecessary tension and distance themselves further from the Jewish tradition. When the edict was annulled after 54 C.E., and some Jewish believers returned to Rome (cf. Acts 18:3), the tension between gentile and Jewish members exacerbated (Rock 2012, pp. 89–90).¹⁶ Thus for Paul, addressing the growing breach between gentile and Jewish members and gentile believers’ separation from Judaism was of a direct importance (Cf. Beker 1986, p. 16). This internal tension was all the more problematic for Paul’s gentile ministry as a whole, which he considered to be consummating in the salvation of Jews and elect gentiles, the unified family of God.

4. Paul’s Effort of Establishing the Unity between the Roman Church and Israel: Stressing the Sectarian Identity of the Roman Church in the Gentile World

Then how is Paul preventing further separation of the gentile believers from the root of Israel? How is he establishing a unified identity of Jews and elect gentiles as the people of God? When we read Romans by using the model of sect-cult development in antiquity, we begin to see that Paul’s discussion of the Jewish tradition throughout the letter is not to distance the church from Judaism but to create a shared foundation upon which Jews and elect gentiles could stand together in the messianic era.

4.1. Law, Salvation, and the Fate of Unbelieving Jews

The first thing Paul is doing in Romans is correcting the mistaken assimilation of the law with the Greco-Roman practice of self-mastery. As discussed earlier, some believers, based on their knowledge of the law and circumcision, were misperceiving their present status as having already earned salvation that immunizes them from God’s final judgment, as judging others and boasting about their status. To address this problem, Paul, throughout Romans, stresses the futuristic aspect of faith and salvation. In 1:16–17, which functions as the guiding statement of the whole letter, Paul cites Hab 2:4b to confirm faith as the ground upon which God justifies an individual, regardless of one’s ethnicity and former sins (Hultgren 2011, p. 45). In the Habakkuk intertext, Israel is unfaithful, and God seems to have abandoned Israel (2:2–4). Despite the prophet’s agonized outcry, God even uses the wicked gentile nation of Chaldeans to exacerbate the hopeless situation for Israel (1:5–2:1). Then finally, God intervenes as reminding the prophet of God’s faithfulness and the necessity of the Israelites remaining faithful to God’s promise of salvation. The central theme of Habakkuk is thus faithfulness, which denotes an individual’s faith in trusting God’s promise for saving Israel as well as God’s faithfulness in keeping his promise for Israel, which will be fulfilled shortly (Beker 1986, p. 15). Paul, with his use of Habakkuk, stresses the fact that salvation is inherently futuristic and that faith in Christ entails hope for the future vindication that God will save those who remain faithful until the end (Quarles 2003).

Besides 1:16–17, Paul repeatedly stresses this futuristic aspect of faith and salvation throughout Romans (Colijn 1990; Dailea 1990, pp. 26–27; Cf. Gal 5:5). In 2:1–16, for example, as criticizing those who boast over their saved status, Paul says that there is the future judgment which will come when

¹⁶ For studies on the historical context of the Romans letter, see (Wiefel 1991; Longenecker 2011, pp. 43–45; Sanders 1993, pp. 129–51). Nanos further suggests the tensions between gentile and Jewish members as occurring within the synagogues in Rome (Nanos 1999, pp. 293–94).

God judges “the secrets of men (v.16)”. In 5:1-5, Paul says that while Paul notes that gentiles were justified by faith, what they can boast about is the hope in the future that relies solely on God’s faithfulness in keeping his promise. He says: “We boast in the hope (ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι) of the glory of God (v.2)”. In the continuing passage of 5:6-11, Paul further says that the present reconciliation with God will save them from the divine wrath at the time of judgment, which he also places in the future (σωθησόμεθα; v.9). According to Paul, perceiving salvation like a virtue that one can attain at the present time is a serious misunderstanding of faith and salvation in the scheme of God.

Based on the sound understanding of salvation, Paul then corrects the gentile believers’ wrong idea about the fate of unbelieving Jews. After discussing God’s impartial judgment upon Jews and Greeks (2:25-29), in 3:1-8, Paul addresses the issue of Israel’s unfaithfulness and its fate. In this passage, Paul, while acknowledging God’s wrath as a just due for the Jewish unfaithfulness, still trusts in God’s faithfulness in keeping his promise for Israel’s salvation (vv. 3-4). Later in chapters 9-11, Paul explains that the Jewish rejection of the Messiah is happening under God’s larger plan of hardening part of Israel for the sake of saving elect gentiles (e.g., 11:11-12, 25). He hopes for the salvation of “all Israel (11:26)” based on God’s mercy that was shown in his forgiveness of sinful gentiles (Hays 1989, pp. 160–63; Nanos 1999, p. 292; Oropeza 2007; Eastman 2010; Staples 2011; Krašovec 2014). Paul says in 11:25-26:

For I do not want you to be uninformed of this mystery, brethren, so that you may not be wise in your own estimation, that a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the fullness of the nations has come in, and so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written: “There shall come forth out of Zion the deliverer, He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.

As we see in this statement, Paul in Romans is not in opposition to Judaism or unbelieving Jews. The correction of the mistaken idea about unbelieving Israel’s fate also serves to prevent the gentile believers from drawing a firm boundary between themselves and Israel.

4.2. *Emphasis on the Jewish Root of the Church*

The second strategy that Paul is using to imbue the sectarian identity to the Roman believers is reminding them of the Jewish root, which is the basis of their faith and salvation. As many scholars have observed, Romans is replete with Jewish themes. For instance, Paul makes an unexplained reference to Jesus’ messianic descent from David (1:3-4; 15:12; Nanos 1999, p. 289; Cf. Garlington 1991, p. 237). He also cites and alludes numerous scriptural passages as his argument proceeds in Romans (Evans 1993, p. 14). Paul’s extensive use of the Jewish tradition in Romans has two major functions. One is to criticize gentiles who think that they possess the core knowledge of the Jewish heritage and assimilates it with those ideas and practices of the Greco–Roman world. By interpreting numerous passages from the Hebrew scripture in light of the faith in Christ, Paul debunks the gentile ignorance and presents a correct understanding of the Jewish tradition. Another function is to remind the Roman audience of the fact that the message of salvation through faith is fully rooted in the Jewish tradition, which is promised to Israel and has been the way through which God justified human beings throughout the history of Israel (3:30-31; 4:1-25).

Not only the general use of the scripture but Paul’s use of particular analogies also reminds the audience of their inseparable connection to the Jewish tradition. For instance, in Rom 11:13-24, Paul adopts the analogy of an olive tree by identifying Israel as the rich root, unbelieving Jews as branches that were cut off temporarily, and believing gentiles as “wild olive branches (v.17)” that were grafted to the tree. Paul then warns the gentile believers not to boast over the Jews who were cut off due to their unfaithfulness and reminds them of the rich root of Judaism that is the foundation of their hope for salvation (Buell and Hodge 2004, pp. 249–50; Khobnya 2013; Gordon 2016). Also, in Rom 4:11, Paul presents Abraham as the “ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised (4:11)”, linking the gentile believers to the ancestral lineage of Judaism. Presentation of Abraham as the common ancestor of Jews and believing gentiles is connected to Paul’s use of “adoption” language in describing

the gentile believers. In 8:12-17, Paul compares the transformed status of believing gentiles to “children” and “heirs” of God (Cf. Gal 4:7). Paul’s repeated use of familial language is inherently disrupting to the Roman social order centered around family and adoption since it symbolically detaches the gentile members from the Roman world and ties them to the Jewish root (Cf. Meeks 1986, p. 129; Buell and Hodge 2004, pp. 244–46; Lassen 1997).¹⁷

4.3. Reinstating the Sectarian Boundary

Finally, Paul directs his audience to draw the boundary not against Judaism, but the world. In Romans, we see that Paul emphasizes the sharp opposition between the lifestyles of the world and believers, as imbuing his audience with a robust sectarian spirit (White 1988, pp. 17–19; Cf. Wilson 1959, pp. 10–12; Stark and Bainbridge 1985, pp. 23, 49–60). As several scholars have noted, the decline narrative in 1:18-32 and the vice list in 2:21-22 describe the stereotypical gentile condition (Stowers 1994, pp. 83–125; Porter 1994; Martin 1995, p. 175; Thorsteinsson 2003, p. 212; Thiessen 2014, pp. 381–82). This negative depiction of the gentile world comes quite abruptly in the letter, immediately following Paul’s thanksgiving in 1:8-15 and confidence in his gospel in 1:16-17. The radical shift from a positive to negative emotion is rhetorically powerful in contrasting the worlds of believing and non-believing gentiles. Paul thus strongly urges his audience to separate from the gentile world by abandoning their arrogance over salvation, which makes them remain in the wicked gentile condition.

A similar effort of drawing the boundary against the Roman world is also seen in Rom 12. After forming the communal identity of gentile believers and Israel up to chapter 11, Paul from chapter 12 focuses on teaching the required lifestyle of believers, which distinguishes them from the world. In 12:1-2, Paul begins his exhortation concerning believers’ proper behaviors. He says:

Therefore I urge you, brethren, through the mercies of God to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, sanctified, acceptable to God, your logical service. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you discern what is the will of God, the good and acceptable and perfect.

Here, Paul makes it clear that the boundary should be drawn against “this age”, and believers need to become “perfect (τέλειον)”. Paul’s exhortation strikes the core of Jewish sectarian identity, which asserts that through their purity from the world, they play the role of the “elect” awaiting God’s ultimate salvation (Cf. Rom 8:33; 11:7).¹⁸ Based on his correction of the gentiles’ misunderstanding of the law in previous discussions, later in chapters 12-15, Paul explicitly lays out specific practices that fulfill the teachings of the law (13:8). Here, he also stresses the original Jewish sectarian worldview that the eschatological end is near (12:11-12) and the necessity of building a harmonious community of God that is ready for the day of judgment (15:5-6). According to Dieter Georgi, Paul in Romans is building “a renewed covenantal community” that grows out of the people of Israel, which is “not supposed to be an entirely different Israel, but a purified one, and thus, a restored Israel, the avant-garde of God’s future (Georgi 1995, p. 41)”.

For sure, Paul is not urging the Roman believers to dissociate from their context completely but allows room for assimilation and adaptation to the hosting culture. For instance, he encourages believers to become good citizens by maintaining social harmony with neighbors (12:14-21; Cf. 1 Cor 10:27) and obeying the secular authority (13:1-7). The boundary, however, is clear. They should correctly

¹⁷ It is also noticeable that Paul never uses a term that rips the gentile believers out from the boundary of first-century Judaism and identifies them as a separate group, for instance the terms like “Christian”. He rather uses the typical Jewish sectarian terminologies such as “elect (Rom 8:33)”, “chosen (Rom 11:5; 16:13; Cf. 1 Thess 1:4)”, “holy ones (Rom 1:7; 15:25-26, 31; 16:2, 15; Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 16:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1, 12; Phil 1:1)”, “the just (Rom 5:19)”, “the poor (Rom 15:26; Cf. Gal 2:10)”. (Georgi 1995, p. 40).

¹⁸ For general features of a sect, see (Wilson 1961, pp. 1–2; Dawson 2009, p. 527). For other sectarian ideas and rituals used in Paul’s letters, see (Meeks 1983, pp. 84–107).

understand the gospel in the tradition of Judaism, should not judge unbelieving Jews to whom God has given his faithful promise for salvation, and should form a community of the elect which does not conform to the world.¹⁹

The stress on the unity between the gentile believers in Rome and Israel is directly connected to Paul's plans of delivering the Jerusalem collection (15:15-21, 25-29) and accomplishing his final mission to Spain (15:23-24; [Aus 1979](#)). Paul's delivery of the gentiles' gift to the saints of Jerusalem is a symbolic acknowledgment of the irrevocably privileged place of Israel in the history of God's salvation. For Paul, this collection also signifies the unity and fidelity between Israel and gentiles, who are now included in the chosen family ([Nanos 1999](#), p. 290). It was also a demonstration of Paul's identity as a Jewish "priest (λειτουργόν; 15:16)" who offers the purified gentiles to God, as anticipating the imminent eschaton and God's ultimate vindication of Israel. Finally, Paul wraps up his letter by asking the gentiles for supportive prayers for his missions (15:30-33).

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I argued that we need to read Romans not within the antithetical framework of Judaism–Christianity but as a text reflecting the conflicts between a cultic tendency represented by the gentile members in the Roman church and a Jewish sectarian tendency shown in Paul's arguments. Based on Romans, we learn that some gentile members were assimilating the Jewish law as a means of attaining the Greco–Roman virtue of self-mastery. With this erroneous understanding, they were thinking that they have already attained salvation and were standing in a superior position compared to others. For Paul, this understanding of the law was seriously problematic because it misunderstands the Jewish tradition centered around faith, which is also in line with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Another problem was the assumption that gentile believers have now replaced Israel and that unbelieving Jews are destined for destruction. For Paul, this was also an incorrect understanding of God's faithfulness and mercy that saved gentiles will save "all Israel" at the time of eschaton.

As seeing the danger of gentile believers being drifted away from the root of Judaism, Paul, throughout the letter, strives to reinstate the sectarian boundary and the symbolic unity with Israel. For this goal, he first corrects the gentile misunderstanding of law and salvation by stressing the futuristic aspect of salvation and God's sovereignty in judging humanity. Paul also corrects the wrong idea about the fate of unbelieving Jews by elaborating on God's faithfulness promised to Israel and the overarching divine plan for salvation. Paul also reminds his gentile audience of the Jewish root of their faith, while stressing the separateness of the church from the Roman world. Throughout these efforts, Paul tries to create a united community consisted of believing Jews and gentile, which functions as the group of elects in the time of eschaton, but in no way separated from Judaism.

Did Paul succeed? From the late first-century C.E., we begin to see more churches in different regions of the empire establishing their identities separated from contemporaneous Jewish groups. We also observe the emergence of Christian anti-Jewish polemics, which continued throughout the history of Christianity. In this sense, it might be argued that Paul, ultimately, have failed in uniting two separating groups together and setting up a model for later Jewish–Christian relations. Reflecting the history of opposition between Christians and Jews throughout centuries, however, Paul's ardent appeal for unity in Romans seems to be more meaningful than ever.

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¹⁹ For Paul's other efforts to demarcate a firmer boundary of the Roman church from its cultural context, see ([Rock 2012](#)).

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Article

Christmas in the Room: Gender, Conflict, and Compromise in Multi-Religious Domestic Space

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Abstract: Interfaith relationships offer particular potential for creating religious coexistence; they also play out very differently in domestic space than in public and civic spaces, with the result that interfaith marriage becomes an important, yet unique, site of religious cooperation, co-existence, and conflict. The article argues that examinations of interfaith families must take three factors into account, each of which involves careful attention to the particular power dynamics of the family in question. First, scholars must think about the broader context in which the interfaith family has come to exist. Second, scholars must consider that the emotional and power dynamics of domestic space often have little in common with the compromises and power dynamics of public space. Lastly, while gender is not generally a key category of analysis for thinking about interfaith encounters in public space, gender, both as it shapes power dynamics and as it drives assumptions about childrearing and domestic labor, shapes interfaith family life and requires attendant scholarly attention.

Keywords: interfaith families; public; Christian; Jewish; gender; United States

Every year, the United States fights the Christmas Wars.¹ The Christmas wars are battles over whether religious displays belong in public, civic spaces. Can you put a creche up in the town square? If so, must you put a menorah up in the town hall? These debates extend to cover questions about what counts as religion: is the evergreen tree that grows in the town square year round a religious symbol when you decorate it with lights? Why is that tree, which has nothing to do with the baby Jesus, a religious symbol? Why is that the case, when the deciduous trees are simply lit up against the winter darkness (moreover, is it possible that you carefully planted that evergreen tree to stand, alone and proud, so that you *would* have a Christmas tree in the town square? Did you do it so that you would not have to have a conversation about buying and putting up a cut tree?) Can one argue for Christmas as a secular holiday? These debates spring up in towns and cities all over the United States whenever they plan their winter lights and sometimes again in November, when the decorations go up. These problems are resolved in a broad range of ways: Cambridge, Massachusetts, hangs aggressively secular lights across the road in their squares, with dancing figures and stars, leaving them up long beyond the Christmas season. In New York City, the famous tree in Rockefeller Center is on private property, as are the famous decorations in Saks 5th Avenue. In the town next to my hometown, they realized with relief that all along, they had been decorating a tree that actually belonged to the white clapboard Congregational Church on the town green, while in my hometown a menorah stands tall, next to the tree. These debates represent the intense public work of Christmas, the dominant holiday

¹ Though I first encountered this question as an American citizen, I first encountered the term “Christmas War” in the writings of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, specifically “The Christmas Wars: Religion in the American Public Square”, (Pew Research Center 2006a), <https://www.pewforum.org/2006/12/12/the-christmas-wars-religion-in-the-american-public-square/> and “The ‘Christmas Wars’: Holiday Displays and the Federal Courts”, (Pew Research Center 2006b), <https://www.pewforum.org/2006/12/12/the-christmas-wars-holiday-displays-and-the-federal-courts/>.

of the dominant religion in the United States.² All of these solutions rest on heated debates that extend, in various forms, to how religion might show up in the public square all year—at civic ceremonies like parades or at the graduations of private, and sometimes religiously affiliated, universities that none the less have religiously pluralistic faculties and student bodies. Scholars of American religion have thought extensively and productively about what it means to navigate the territory of interfaith interactions in the public spaces of a religiously diverse society.

In the United States, there is, however, another side to interfaith interactions and another realm in which people of different religious beliefs and heritages exist side by side, in both conflict and coexistence: the home. People of differing religions eat dinner and breakfast across the table from each other. They sleep in the same beds. They have to decide, together, which holidays to celebrate and how to decorate for them. They chose where and how to marry, what religious ceremonies to use to welcome children, and how or whether to religiously educate those children. Christmas is, as it turns out, a real flash point of debate for some of them. They are interfaith families, and the patterns that govern interfaith family life—the compromises that work, the places that cause pain, and the power dynamics—are very different from those that structure public life in multi-religious societies. This article probes and exposes those differences, using the example of Christian–Jewish interfaith families in the contemporary United States to think about how scholars might approach the study of multi-religious domestic space when such space comes about as the result of an interfaith marriage.

What can the study of Christian–Jewish interfaith families in the United States from the 1960s to the present tell us about interfaith families in and of other contexts? What can my approach to studying interfaith families suggest about how someone else might study interfaith families in Canada, India, Finland, or Korea? Interfaith marriage is a key site of conflict and co-existence in the contemporary United States, where approximately fifty percent of marriages occur across religious lines. That figure represents marriages across major world traditions, which researchers such as the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life have defined as Catholicism, Mainline Protestantism, Evangelical Protestantism, Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and no religion (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2009; Pew Research Center 2016, pp. 33–47; The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008; Pew Research Center 2015, pp. 35–47; Putnam and Campbell 2012, pp. 526–27). Interfaith marriage poses the potential for conflict on multiple fronts. First, religious communities sometimes come into conflict with each other about how to handle the “problem” of their members marrying each other. Differences around how to handle interfaith marriage can cause tension and disrupt other forms of ecumenical cooperation. Interfaith couples, meanwhile, face judgement from their respective religious traditions. Within their extended families, they have to contend with the hopes, dreams, judgements and interference of family members for how they will organize their home, and specifically, raise their children. Lastly, the couple themselves almost always needs to determine how they will navigate their own traditions—a process that is sometimes seamless, but can often result in conflict with each other and/or with those who disapprove of the choices that the couple makes.

Interfaith families are also a prominent site and source of coexistence. Interfaith couples often have long and happy marriages. Children raised in interfaith homes often end up with skill sets associated with “third-culture kids”, which is to say that they have broader worldviews and are more culturally aware than people raised in single traditions. Finally, as political scientists Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell write, interfaith families tend to produce what they refer to as the “Aunt Susan effect.” Simply put, the Aunt Susan effect says that, because of interfaith marriage, most Americans have a relative from a different religious background than their own. As a result, even if someone was raised to view other traditions as strange, foreign, misguided, or damned, once they get to know Aunt Susan, and to discover that she is kind, compassionate, and ethical, they cannot imagine that

² For excellent work on the role of Christmas as a public celebration in multicultural societies, including but not limited to the United States, see the essays in *The Public Work of Christmas* edited by Pamela Klassen and Monique Scheer (Klassen and Scheer 2019).

she is, in fact, sinful and damned because she comes from another tradition. As a result, people who have, for instance, an uncle in an interfaith marriage with an “Aunt Susan” become more tolerant of other religions, or even move beyond tolerance to the appreciation of other religious traditions (Putnam and Campbell 2012, p. 536).

Interfaith relationships offer particular potential for creating religious coexistence; they also play out very differently in domestic space than in public and civic spaces, with the result that interfaith marriage becomes an important, yet unique, site of religious cooperation, co-existence and conflict. My work investigated Christian–Jewish interfaith family life in the United States over the 50 year period from approximately 1965 to 2015. In my own work, I focused on relatively liberal Christians (cultural Christians, members of the Protestant mainline, and more liberal or lapsed Catholics and secular or religiously non-Orthodox Jews) because I was particularly interested in people who did not expect to experience religious conflict in their relationships when they began dating—these are people who, by and large, do not believe in exclusive truth claims and in this sense, they represent both the majority of interfaith marriages in the United States and the increasingly non-affiliated population. I am a historian and an ethnographer—someone who is bound to the specifics of my example. Although I do not believe in “American exceptionalism”, I do believe that context is central to analysis. My examples are drawn from the context of the contemporary United States, with the goal of helping scholars think about interfaith marriage other than the Jewish–Christian combination and in contexts beyond the United States. Specifically, I am going to argue that examinations of interfaith families must take three factors into account, each of which involves careful attention to the particular power dynamics of the family in question. First, scholars must think about the broader context in which the interfaith family has come to exist. Second, scholars must consider that the emotional and power dynamics of domestic space, the balance of power in a marriage for instance, often have little in common with the compromises and power dynamics of public space, for instance, which religion structures the society. Lastly, while gender is not generally a key category of analysis for thinking about interfaith encounters in public space, gender, both as it shapes power dynamics and as it drives assumptions about childrearing and domestic labor, shapes heterosexual interfaith family life and requires attendant scholarly attention.³

1. The Cultural Context of Compromise

As with any interfaith exchange, the historical context in which the interfaith family sits matters, as does the historical relationship between the two religions. So, for instance, there are several reasons why the Christmas debate is such an issue for Christian–Jewish interfaith families, rooted in the historical relationship between the two traditions and in the contemporary context in which they find themselves. First, for much of modern history, many Jews (and certainly the ancestors of the majority of Jews living in the United States) have been a minority in Christian countries, where they have also experienced anti-Semitism directly tied to Christian theology and the Christian calendar (think, for instance, of the pogroms and other anti-Semitic violence happening during Holy Week because, at the time, many people believed, erroneously, that the Jews killed Christ, a belief that was supported by much Christian teaching at the time (Tapper 2016, pp. 177–78; Scheindlin 2000, pp. 98, 103–5, 139)). Second, Jews

³ Because my monograph was largely a cultural history of debates about interfaith family life, and how couples engaged with the resulting rhetoric, and because, historically, those debates assumed heterosexual families (gay marriage was not dominant part of the political landscape for much of the time that I studied), *Beyond Chrismukkah* focuses on heterosexual couples and the families that they create. Before I realized that I would shape the project in that way, I also interviewed a number of same-sex couples about their child rearing practices, but did not end up with a large enough sample before I realized that my focus on representation was going to mean a project about opposite-sex couples. Here, I am focusing on heterosexual couples in part because I am particularly interested in parsing the implications of considering interfaith marriage in conditions of patriarchy. For more on the intertwined histories of Jewish responses to interfaith family life and LGBTQIA rights generally and the marriage equality movement more specifically, see Samira Mehta and Brett Krutzsch. “The Changing Jewish Family: Jewish Communal Responses to Interfaith and Same-Sex Marriage” (currently under review but available by direct request to the authors.)

have long feared and policed assimilation, with the fear that, in order to escape anti-Semitism, because of internalized anti-Semitism, or simply because being a minority is hard and Christmas is fun, that Jews will start celebrating Christmas. In this fear, Christmas is the gateway drug to assimilation—the fun thing that will attract Jews to become Christian, a category that from the perspective of many Jewish leaders in this conversation, includes both professing Christians and a secular identity that is inflected with Christian culture and symbols more than with Jewish ones. In this fear, nothing in Judaism can compete with the fun of Christmas, and so if an interfaith family celebrates Christmas, the children from that family will end up Christian, rather than Jewish, in adulthood.⁴

The decision then, of a Christian–Jewish interfaith couple in the United States to celebrate Christmas, is set against a background of Christian supremacy, whose costs range from assimilation to genocide and is therefore more charged, in the Jewish community, than the decision of a Jewish–Hindu couple in the US to celebrate Diwali. Hinduism, its holidays and its trappings, are not the religious culture that has, historically, persecuted most Jews. Nor are most Jewish leaders worried that the pressures of assimilation will result in Jews ceasing to be Jewish in favor of becoming either Hindu or Buddhist. In addition, in the US, these religions are not the dominant culture to which Jews might assimilate, and many Western Jews are comfortable with adopting and exoticizing Hinduism and Buddhism, such that they are seen as identities that can co-exist with a Jewish identity in a family or even within an individual. The American Jewish encounter and interest in these traditions is long-standing, as scholars such as Emily Sigalow have documented, and structured by a radically different power dynamic than the Jewish–Christian relationship.⁵ In addition, some Jewish practitioners of meditation and yoga have turned them into “Jewish” practices.⁶ As a result, a yoga practice does not seem incompatible with Jewish identity, even if it includes practices that are arguably rooted in Hindu devotional practice, such as chanting in Sanskrit, even while a Christmas tree, which is less clearly tied to Christian theology, may feel threatening.

This backdrop makes it broadly more acceptable for a Hindu–Jewish interfaith couple to combine traditions than Jewish–Christian couples. Because of meditation and yoga practices, some Buddhist and Hindu symbols are present in non-interfaith Jewish homes. As my interviews with Hindu–Jewish families and Christian–Jewish families revealed, visitors to a home are likely to accept statues of gods or bodhisatvas as “art” rather than as devotional objects in ways that statues of Christian saints are not. While Christmas may be seen as an assimilationist threat, and Easter is haunted by its anti-Semitic heritage, Diwali is more likely to be treated as an interesting cultural experience, particularly if the family shows no literal belief in the deities. Even if a Hindu–Jewish couple were actually including robust Hindu education in their interfaith mix, their community would be less likely to criticize their choices than they would their Christian–Jewish counterparts. The co-existence that is possible for Jewish–Hindu or Jewish–Buddhist couples is the result of this specific power imbalance.

Significantly, context is important in thinking about the extent to which assimilation is a concern, specifically the context of the power dynamic that the traditions in play have historically had with regard to each other and that they have regarding the culture in which the family is situated. As Shreena Gandhi’s current research demonstrates, Indian Hindu immigrants to the United States have actually adopted Christmas as an American Hindu holiday. Hindus do not tend to have time off for Hindu holidays in the US and therefore have taken to using Christmas and New Year’s Day as gathering times for family, often with many of the trappings of American Christmas—namely gifts, a tree, and dinners. They adapt the holiday and its celebration, for sure, but even though Indian Hindus

⁴ For a robust description of the secular in the United States as Protestant, see (Fessenden 2013). For a historiography of how scholars of American religion have understood the idea of the secular in the United States as inherently Protestant (and for some critiques of that idea), see (McCrary and Wheatley 2017).

⁵ For more on the history of the relationship between Jews and Buddhists in the United States, see (Sigalow 2019).

⁶ For evidence of Jews who have framed yoga and meditation as Jewish practices see (Bloomfield 2004; Copeland 2020; Krucoff and Levine 2011; Brotman and Morinis 2014; Kaplan 1995; Roth 2009). For scholarly work on the incorporation of yoga into Christian communities and the power dynamics underpinning those moves, see (Jain 2017).

have their own history of interactions with Christmas, through British colonialism, that history does not seem to deter many from adopting the holiday in the US context. The historical relationship between the two traditions, and also the contemporary relationship between the two traditions, in any given geographical setting, shape the community responses that an interfaith couple or family will experience, whether tending toward conflict or accepting coexistence.

2. Home and the Concept of Religious Compromise

As we have established, the broader context in which these interfaith interactions come to exist is very important, but there are two major factors that separate the example of interfaith families from other forms of interfaith interaction. The first is that most of the decisions and compromises of interfaith family life happen in private space and in emotionally close relationships, rather than in a public or civic space. In the United States, scholars, activists, and religious leaders talk quite a bit about both religious pluralism and religious diversity; and it is important, when thinking about interfaith work and interfaith families, to remember that these terms are not synonymous (McCarthy 2007; Patel 2010, 2012; Miller 2013; Rose 2001). Religious diversity is a fact—a place is religiously diverse if there are people from many religious backgrounds there. The presence of multiple ethnic groups creates an ethnically diverse space. These terms do not, in the end, say anything about how those people do or do not get along with each other.

Pluralism indicates an attempt to work together with each other—to find common ground. As Kate McCarthy points out, however, in *Interfaith Encounters in America*, there are ground rules for how pluralism works. The ground rules are set by the dominant culture in any given context, so in the United States, the ground rules are basically Protestant (McCarthy 2007, pp. 1–14). Here, however, is how we do pluralism in the US: we all agree to be the lowest common denominator of our religious traditions in public, essentially as a way of co-existing, of minimizing conflict through compromise, but as in any power dynamic, the groups with less power compromise more. If we have an interfaith service, then, the format is essentially that of a Protestant Christian worship service, and the more unusual parts of other religions—the places where they bump into each other—are left out. If a reading from the Vedas fit nicely into a space that would normally be filled by a biblical reading, that is acceptable. Generally, devotional chanting is not. Similarly, the universal qualities of religions are emphasized and not their points of conflict—this is not a place where people generally talk about salvation only through Christ, or the chosen-ness of the Jewish people. Jews rarely arrive with a Torah scroll that they then forbid non-Jews to touch. Christians often decide that the interfaith setting is not a place to serve communion (particularly not with a closed communion table). Muslims and Orthodox Jews do not insist that the prayer space be segregated by sex—they simply adapt their participation to things that can be done in mixed-gender spaces. Interfaith breakfasts tend to avoid pork, so that the Muslims and Jews can be comfortable, or maybe avoid meat altogether, if they include a wider range of religions including Hindus and Buddhists. Mormons in interfaith settings usually do not object to the presence of coffee, but do not partake.

Concessions are made so that everyone can share space, and the assumption is that, when people go home, they can experience the full range of their own religion—no one is giving anything up by not eating bacon at the prayer breakfast, because they can have bacon in their homes. In non-interfaith worship settings, such as a synagogue or church on a normal Saturday or Sunday morning, Jews can call themselves the chosen people and Christians can read John 14:6 without causing offense.⁷ Hindus can chant and provide offerings of food to statues, without worrying about how Christians, Muslims, and Jews might feel about “idolatry.” In interfaith marriage, however, one is navigating the needs of different identities in one’s presumed homogenous religious space, and potentially taking one’s spouse

⁷ “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” as translated in the (Coogan et al. 2018)

into one's worship space, where they will hear language of religious particularity with outsider ears, or, if the worship is taking place in a religious language that they do not know, such as Hebrew or Sanskrit, they may not understand some of those comments, but would be excluded by simply not having those linguistic skills, and not realizing that neither do many of the other participants.

Sometimes these are problematic and uncomfortable combinations, and sometimes they simply require negotiation. However, if one wants a kosher kitchen, one has to impose a kosher kitchen on the entire family. The rules of keeping kosher are such that a Christian spouse cannot make bacon and eggs for breakfast or a cheeseburger for dinner in the family kitchen while the Jewish partner keeps kosher, according to the stricter definitions of keeping kosher. This is something that might be parallel with the experiences of a Hindu vegetarian sharing a kitchen with someone who is not vegetarian—many Hindus do not want to eat food cooked in pans that have ever cooked meat, no matter how carefully those pans have been cleaned. There are ways around this. One couple that I interviewed during my fieldwork consisted of a Jewish woman from New York and a Protestant man from Texas. While he generally lived a pork-free existence in their home, on his birthday, she would drive to a local breakfast joint and bring home bacon that he could eat on the back porch. In addition, as with many other Jewish households, many of the interfaith couples I spoke with made distinctions between the food that they ate in the house, which followed some dietary restrictions, and what they got at restaurants, which could be anything. These were, of course, compromises, but they were also very clear exceptions to the general household rule. The food that was cooked in these houses did not include pork, shellfish or the mixing of milk and meat. Though exceptions were made for food consumed outside, the non-Jewish spouse could not, for instance, keep the ingredients for a ham sandwich in the house.

In other interfaith families, particularly interfaith families where the Christian parent came from an ethnic or racial minority, the couple agreed to raise the children Jewish, but decided explicitly not to keep kosher, because to do so would dishonor the food traditions of the Christian parent. This, for instance, was the case for two Ashkenazi women with whom I spoke, one of whom is married to an African-American man who was raised on a hog farm in the southern United States, and the other is married to a Puerto Rican man who wanted to make sure his children were steeped in Latin food traditions. For many, then, to keep kosher or not to keep kosher is a binary proposition, largely for logistical reasons. In addition, religious strictures aside, many families feel that an important aspect of family togetherness is that everyone eats the same food together, and that separate meals undermine the family table as a place of community. In these cases, everyone must follow the rules of one tradition over another.

Christmas provides another example of how public and private sometimes play out differently for interfaith families. One of the standard understandings of American pluralism is that one might share in the celebrations of one's friends, and even one's extended family, as long as one does so in the other family's space. In the case of the Christian–Jewish interfaith family, this approach was actively encouraged by the Reform movement of Judaism, which set up an outreach branch specifically to interact with interfaith couples. Not only was this the approach recommended by clergy, but it was enshrined in the prescriptive literature that the movement published. For instance, *If I Am Jewish and You Are Christian, Then What Are the Kids: A Parenting Guide for Interfaith Families* by Andrea King was published by the Union for Reform Judaism, first in 1993, but reprinted as recently as 2015. In that book, the Episcopalian author, who married a Jew and agreed to raise Jewish children, uses composite characters to espouse this point of view. She has the son of a family whose choices match her own reflect, "I like Christmas at Grandma and Grandpa's house . . . They have a Christmas tree, and we get presents, and Mom takes presents for everyone, even though it is not our holiday. Mom said it's like when we went to my friend Tai Wong's house for Chinese New Year. We can go to his house and help him celebrate his holiday, even if it is not ours." (King 1993, pp. 43–44). The goal, here, was to allow interfaith couples to experience the holidays, while maintaining Jewish homes utterly unmarked by Christian celebrations.

It turns out that “celebrating in other people’s houses” can be tricky for interfaith families, which is to say that the topic became a site of conflict, either between couples or between couples and their Jewish religious communities. For many people from Christian backgrounds, even if they are not believing or practicing Christians, it was sometimes very difficult to keep Christmas (the decorations, the music, the food) entirely out of their homes. Meanwhile, for many Jews, Christmas is the time when it seems as if the entire United States has teamed up to tell them that they are not “real Americans”, because of the Christmas music and decorations, and even theoretically neutral civic space like public libraries. For people who feel this way, it is important to have their homes be Christmas-free sanctuaries, where they can escape feeling like cultural outsiders. Moreover, having a home free from of Christmas accoutrements can signal to other Jews that this is a Jewish home—having a Jewish home decorated for Christmas can signal to other Jews that one is assimilating to the mainstream American culture in ways that have historically been seen as problematic by Jewish communal professionals and, potentially, by other lay members of the community. This public and private divide can cause problems for interfaith families—for the Christian, the public celebration of Christmas is often not enough, whereas for the Jewish partner, bringing the tree and other symbols of the season into the private home is deeply fraught.

Different families come up with different compromises. Some families simply do not celebrate Christmas at home at all, following the Reform movement’s suggestions that they celebrate only in the homes of relatives. Many others find other compromises. Perhaps most interestingly, one couple whom I interviewed talked about carefully prioritizing what mattered to them in working out their compromises. The Jewish husband explained that he had what he described as an “allergy” to both Jesus and Christmas trees and did not really want either of them in his home. The Mormon wife thought about it and realized that while she felt that Jesus was essential to her understanding of the holiday, she did not feel that she needed the tree. They agreed that he would work on his “Jesus allergy”, so that she could have a nativity scene, but that she would give up the tree. Another couple made almost the exact opposite choice. In that family, the husband came from a Christian background and really wanted the festivities of the season, but no longer believed in the Christmas story, *per se*. They had a tree, and presents, but did not emphasize the theological elements of Christmas. A third household, committed to Judaism, but with a husband who had been raised Catholic, chose to celebrate Christmas in the years that the husband’s children from his first marriage joined them. The Jewish wife and stepmother simply felt that it was more important that her stepchildren be able to maintain their traditions than that her home be free from Christmas. Lastly, many people simply do both—which may mean celebrating Christmas and Hanukkah, or it may mean celebrating Christmas in December, and the Jewish holidays when they appear on the calendar. Many couples, of course, take joy in the celebration of each other’s holidays, but when they do not, conflict is possible. The domestic space is, for most people, a refuge, and so it can seem hard for the Jew who feels like a minority at Christmas to take the holiday into the home; but as Christmas is also a deeply domestic holiday, many find themselves depressed if it is excluded from the home. As a result, the compromises that work in public do not always work in private (or they work for some people and not for others), but thinking about the distinctions of public and private are of central importance in thinking about the interfaith family.

3. Gender, Labor, and Compromise in Domestic Space

The relative power of the two traditions is a cultural factor in how interfaith families shape their choices and in how their choices are perceived by their communities. In the context of the family and the household, it is often not the most important factor, which is one of the most significant differences between interfaith dynamics in public space as compared with in domestic space. Gender constitutes a final crucial lens for understanding interfaith families and the power dynamics that shape what household coexistence might look like and who must make the concessions in reaching compromise. Rather than focusing on how the genders of the parents formally determine the religion of the child—Judaism is, traditionally, matrilineal whereas Hinduism and Islam are patrilineal, in interfaith

families, the role of gender in household dynamics often determines much of the distribution of power and labor in heterosexual families (gendered assumptions and roles are still factors in families headed by same-sex couples).⁸ The role that gender plays differs from family to family and does not always result in the interfaith family configurations that one might most immediately expect, but it is always part of the dynamic in heterosexual interfaith families.

Particularly before the 1980s, religious leaders worried that women (be they Jewish or Christian) would cede to their husbands demands and would raise children in the husband's religion, because of the nature of patriarchy. They worried that husbands would actively forbid their wives from maintaining the religious practices of traditions that the husbands did not share (Mehta 2018, see particularly Chapter 1). For instance, pre-Vatican II, priests worried that Protestant or Jewish husbands of Catholic women would forbid their wives from cooking fish on Friday, instead demanding pot roast. Conversely, they also recognized that much of religious life and practice occurs in the home, and that women do most of the labor in the home. If a husband did not compel his wife to practice his religion, would she do so? Could Protestant or Jewish wives be counted on to put fish on the Friday night dinner table for their Catholic husbands and children? Would Catholic or Protestant women pull out all of the stops when it was time to cook *Shabbos* dinner or make a Passover *seder*?⁹ How would they know how to do those things? Would she drive the children to Hebrew School? To CCD?¹⁰ In addition, and more to the point, if she only did so because her husband forced her to do so, would she do the work grudgingly, such that her children learned to resent the religion, rather than to love it? What actually happened varied, from family to family, depending on levels of commitment, and the dynamic between the couple, but as Jennifer Thompson's work has shown, not only were many Christian or post-Christian women willing to raise Jewish children, they often increased the family's Jewish involvement (Thompson 2014). Gender, then, shaped the concerns that religious leaders and others brought to interfaith families, whether or not those concerns were born out in practice.

Gender also shaped the attitudes of the couples themselves, and the ways in which they made decisions about their own families' practices. In my research, many women, in particular, baby boomer women, articulated that they wanted to raise their children with religion and wanted their husbands to be involved in that process. These (usually Christian) women often assumed that the only way that they could get their (usually Jewish) husbands to help was if they chose to raise their children as Jews, i.e., in the husband's tradition. That attitude persisted into Generation X's marriages, with Christian women assuming that they would get more equal parenting from their Jewish husbands if they raised the children as Jews. Jewish women, however, did assume that their Christian husbands would participate in the raising of Jewish children, though not that they would fully share responsibility for religious upbringing.

Men in interfaith marriages had a different perspective on the gender dynamics of their interfaith marriages. I spoke with a number of couples who all participated in a trip to Israel, designed for interfaith couples, explicitly to encourage them in making Jewish choices for their families. On this trip, sometimes everyone was together, but they also did break-out groups, both by religion and by gender—sometimes all of the women were together and all of the men were together, such that the groups were religiously mixed. Other times, all of the Christians were together and all of the Jews were together, and the groups were mixed gender, considering that each couple of the group was an interfaith couple committed to living a Jewish life together. In my interviews, both the Jewish women and the Christian men reported that the Jewish men expressed skepticism about their wives'

⁸ While this work on gender is reflected in my work, the most explicit work on gender in interfaith families can be found in (Thompson 2014; K. R. McGinity 2014; K. McGinity 2009).

⁹ Shabbos is the Jewish Sabbath, which runs for 25 h from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. Seder translates as "order" and is the structured meal and ritual that occurs on the first night of Passover in Israel and the first two nights of Passover in the diaspora.

¹⁰ CCD stands for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and it is a religious education association established in Rome in 1562. In the United States, public school children attend CCD on weekday afternoons, such that it requires extra transportation.

commitment and motivation for agreeing to raise Jewish children. Why, these men wondered, had their wives agreed to raise Jewish children and could they trust them to do it well, honestly, and to not in the end try to undermine the Jewish identity of the children? Certainly, there are factors here that move beyond gender: Jews are a marginalized religious group in the United States, and many Jewish communities are strongly marked by histories of religious marginalization in Europe and other places, prior to their migration to the United States. That marginalization remains central to many Jewish identities and, combined with the fact that Jews do not proselytize, means that some Jews find it surprising, if not incomprehensible, that someone who was not raised Jewish would be interested in and committed to Judaism. The skepticism that the husbands expressed then, is not inherently surprising, but my informants unilaterally noted that the Jewish women did not express concern about their Christian husbands' motivations in agreeing to raise Jewish children. It seems very likely that these questions about motivation reflected assumptions about who would, and should, shoulder the work of religious transmission: if women were understood to do more of the work, or at least to be primarily responsible for ensuring that the work was done, men were more likely to question why and whether their wives were willing to shoulder the burden of such work outside their own tradition.

Lastly, I would note that that I interviewed couples who committed to raising their children in a third religion or in both of the parental religions. Each of these couples claimed that their choices were rooted in feminism—that they had seen too many women forced into raising their child in their husband's traditions at the expense of their own, and too many women were doing all of the work of religious education for the family. These families who committed to a third path—be it an entirely new tradition or a tradition of doing both—did so in the name of theoretical gender equality. That equality did not always play out as intended, but the desire for gender equity was foundational to the decision.

In practice, as with all other interfaith family arrangements, the families that I interviewed created a range of family practices and had different motivations and definitions of gender equality. For instance, in one family, where the mother herself was the child of interfaith marriage, she had watched her mother give up Christianity and do all of the work involved in raising Jewish children, so equality meant not privileging one parent's religion over the other. Because her husband was the primary breadwinner and she was primarily in charge of the children and the household, she did the majority of the work in maintaining both religious traditions—she did the cooking, the decorating, and much of the volunteering in the couple's interfaith community, though she did so with the participation and support of her husband. In their marriage, however, what was primarily important was that they do both, not how the work of doing both was divided. In another couple whom I interviewed, in which the couple had very similar careers, with similar time commitments and stress, they valued coming to joint decisions and splitting the labor. In part because the husband was more comfortable in his Jewish–Buddhist identity than the wife was in her Mormon identity, the family often spent more time in Jewish community, but they attended all services together and the parents split or shared the labor of creating a dual-faith home. For both of these families, however, the rationale for doing both religions was, in part, feminist. Both families resisted the idea that a woman should sacrifice her tradition to maintain her husband's. Both also ideologically rejected the idea that the woman should shoulder the great responsibility for that work, though in practice only one couple implemented an even division of labor. These two families were representative of many of the families that I interviewed who chose to maintain two religions—they wanted to see both sides of the family heritage transmitted, they articulated feminist reasons for doing so, and they aspired, though did not always achieve, an equal gender division of labor as a result of their decisions. Doing both is, then, an attempt to avoid a co-existence based on the structural inequalities of heterosexual marriage in a patriarchal society. Rather, they were looking for a way of cooperating, even if it meant more coordination and potential conflict than would have existed if one person capitulated and even if, as is often the case, doing both created more tension and conflict or potential conflict with their broader communities.

4. Conclusions

The domestic space of the interfaith family is a very different setting for interfaith interaction than the negotiations of shared civic space, or even of institutional interfaith cooperation. As with any interfaith dynamic, the broader cultural context in which the interfaith family is set is terribly important—the religions exist in historically and culturally unique relationship to each other. The domestic space, however, introduces some unique complications. The emotional stakes of the private, domestic space turn out to be much higher, and the compromises can be, or feel like, zero sum games. If your spouse has a Christmas tree in your home, it is no longer a home to which you can retreat, and if your spouse has decreed or requested that there be no tree, your home may feel depressingly devoid of holiday cheer. Though compromises are possible, and sometimes work, at other times, they leave neither person feeling satisfied with their home, and unlike with public shared space, there is no place to retreat and “have it your way.” Lastly, while gender dynamics are not entirely absent from interfaith engagement between religious groups or otherwise, within the public square, they do not shape the fundamental power dynamic of the negotiations in which heterosexual couples find themselves making decisions about interfaith family life in the context of strict gender roles and divisions of labor—ideologies to which they might or might not subscribe, but which often shape their interactions none the less.

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Article

An Aristotelian Interpretation of Bojo Jinul and an Enhanced Moral Grounding

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Abstract: This paper explores the eclecticism of Bojo Jinul (1158–1210 CE), who is arguably the most influential historic figure in establishing and developing the Buddhist monastic institution of Korea. As a great harmonizer of the conflicting Buddhist trends in the late Goryeo period, Jinul not only shaped the foundation of the traditional monastic discipline balanced between theory and practice but also made Korean Buddhist thoughts known to a larger part of East Asia. I revisit the eclecticism of Bojo Jinul on harmonizing the two conflicting understandings of enlightenment represented by Seon (Cha'n) and Gyo (Hwaeom study) schools: the former stressing sudden enlightenment by sitting mediation and oral transmission of dharma and the latter stressing gradual cultivation by the formal training of textual and doctrinal understanding specifically on the Hwaeom Sutra. Utilizing the metaphysics of Aristotle, I confirm the logical validity of his eclecticism and address some of its moral implications.

Keywords: Korean Buddhism; Jinul; sudden enlightenment; gradual cultivation; Korean Seon; Zen; potentiality and actuality; Aristotelian metaphysics

1. Introduction

This paper explores the eclecticism of Bojo Jinul (1158–1210 CE), who is arguably the most influential historic figure in establishing and developing the Buddhist monastic institution of Korea. As a great harmonizer of the conflicting Buddhist trends in the late Goryeo period,¹ Jinul not only shaped the foundation of the traditional monastic discipline balanced between theory and practice² but also made Korean Buddhist thoughts known to a larger part of East Asia. Some of his writings were passed to China through the Ming collection of Buddhist Tripitaka and also shared with the Japanese Buddhist community.³ Differing from other contemporary Seon thinkers, Jinul was very systematic in harmonizing spiritual practices and the Hwaeom philosophy.⁴ In this paper, I utilize Aristotle's ontology to explain Jinul's eclecticism, harmonizing the two conflicting understandings of enlightenment represented by Seon (Cha'n) and Gyo (Hwaeom study) schools: the former stressing sudden enlightenment by sitting mediation and oral transmission of dharma and the latter stressing gradual cultivation by the formal training of textual and doctrinal understanding specifically on the Hwaeom Sutra. These two approaches not only represent the fractious climate of the Buddhist community during the Goryeo period but also reflect a larger enduring controversy on the moral grounding of spiritual enlightenment in mundane reality.

¹ (Koh 2014).

² (Park 2005).

³ (Yi 1998, p. 143).

⁴ (Shim 1999, p. 51).

Although coming out of and following the tradition of the Nine Mountain Schools of Korean Seon,⁵ Jinul recognized the positive value and function of the Hwaeom study school, which most of his people, Seon monks, would challenge for their theoretical validity and methodological efficacy. According to Jinul, both Seon and Gyo schools were suffering apologetic flaws, which are nuanced by Keel's characterization of Gyo as "expansion" and Seon as "concision".⁶ If these two practices lose their original spirits and become extreme, they could subject to unexpected consequences. While the former can suffer from self-aggrandizement, the latter can suffer from self-abasement.⁷ In contrast to other Seon thinkers, Jinul tried to find a balanced theoretical framework, which could embrace the wide-ranging paradigmatic characteristics of these conflicting schools. In particular, he tried to clarify what it means to experience sudden enlightenment in the process of spiritual and moral cultivation in the form of the Bodhisattva vow. He believed that the Gyo approach is indispensable to translate the metaphysical state of Buddhahood into the spiritual and moral language for the physical reality. To clearly draw moral implications of Jinul's syncretism and eclecticism, I utilize Aristotle's argument of being; argument of potentiality and actuality. This Aristotelian interpretation shows how the idea of the Buddhahood attained from sudden enlightenment can be logically justified and sustained in conjunction with the necessity of spiritual cultivation. I conclude that when interpreted by Aristotle's notion of actuality, Jinul's syncretism offers a firmer theoretical grounding, particularly for moral cultivation. To reflect the conference theme of Religious Conflict and Coexistence, my conclusion will include a brief discussion of some moral implications of Jinul's eclecticism.

2. Focus of Discussion

Prior to the main discussion, it seems worth noting the focus and scope of my analysis with Aristotle's metaphysics. Jinul's syncretic and eclectic effort to balance between sudden awakening and gradual cultivation is not his own invention. There had already been serious conversations and debates in Chinese Buddhist communities on how to harmonize the different paths of enlightenment. Many thinkers from various sectarian communities were trying to come up with a unified system of thought and practice. Good examples include Chih-i (538–597) of the T'ien T'ai; Fa-tsang (643–712) and Ch'eng-kuan (738–840) of the Hua-yen; and Tsung-mi (780–841) and Yen-shou (904–975) of the Cha'n. However, as Buswell notes, most of them, particularly thinkers of Cha'n Buddhism, failed to "go beyond the recognition of correspondences to an explicit effort to merge the two sects either doctrinally and practically".⁸ The arguments from the Korean Buddhist community were neither persuasive nor productive. For instance, according to Jinul's assessment, Toui's inordinate emphasis on emptiness had made the Hwaeom method of gradual cultivation pejorative and useless. Muyeom's emphasis on the tradition of the Patriarchs had failed to explain the deep soteriological dimension of Samadhi.⁹ He believed that sudden awakening and gradual cultivation are not two different spiritual experiences but a single state of enlightenment, which is fully revealed or realized through the process.

Therefore, my discussion is aimed at giving new light to Jinul's argument for the unity of these seemingly separate events. To better analyze Jinul's argument structure and points, I invite Aristotle's ontological framework of potentiality and actuality. Although it seems unfit, from the outset, to utilize the concept of actualization for the notion of Buddhahood, since the Buddha nature pursued by Seon practitioners is beyond any typology of existence, I believe that Aristotle's point on the change/transformation rendered and guided by and within the form of a phenomenal experience is

⁵ (Mu 1987, p. 87).

⁶ (Keel 2012, p. 63).

⁷ By self-aggrandizement, I mean the spiritual arrogance due to the inordinate confidence in the person's internal experience, which has yet to reveal its practical impact. By self-abasement, I mean the person's low self-esteem caused by the absence of his or her inner, divine potential.

⁸ (Chinul and Buswell 1983, p. 37).

⁹ (Shim 1999, p. 15).

still meaningful in explaining the concurrence and coexistence of the experience of awakening, which is the complete state of Buddhahood, and the necessity of cultivation, which demands spiritual and moral practices. To focus my discussion specifically on Jinul's eclecticism, I will use, as the primary text, his *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*, which provides details on the relationship between sudden awakening and gradual cultivation. For the interpretative framework to help explain the unity of being between the Buddha nature and the monk on spiritual cultivation, I will utilize Aristotle's discussion of potentiality and actuality in the Book XI of *Metaphysics*.

My utilization of Aristotle's hylomorphism for Jinul's eclecticism may be retrospective of Keel Hee-Sung's *Salvation According to the Korean Zen Master Chinul and Karl Barth*, which was published in 1989 by Buddhist-Christian Studies.¹⁰ Keel used the Barthian soteriology harmonizing justification/faith and sanctification to defend the theoretical coherence of Jinul's eclecticism. Similarly, my use of Aristotelian ontology is intended to respond to the major question about how the final, ultimate stage of spirituality can both precede and necessitate the seeker's cultivation. Just as Keel made justification/faith and sanctification parallel with sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation, respectively, I will juxtapose Aristotle's ontology of potentiality and actuality with Jinul's soteriology of Buddhahood. My argument is that Jinul's eclecticism is not self-contradictory. Neither of the spiritual experiences, sudden awakening and gradual cultivation, would be sacrificed by his syncretic attempt particularly when the Buddha nature (the Ultimate Truth) is viewed as actuality, the awakened monk as potentiality, and the cultivation process as actualization of Aristotle's metaphysics.

There is an important point that I need to clarify before proceeding with my discussion about Aristotle's hylomorphism. Some may feel uncomfortable about bringing the conversation on Buddha nature into a theory of being because according to the universal belief of Seon Buddhism, the Buddha is neither being nor non-being; at the same time, it can be being and non-being. Since the definition is elusive, Aristotle's logical analysis of being seems inapplicable. Therefore, my use of being should be distinguished from the general qualifications discussed in both Physics and Metaphysics. Although it is not right to conceptualize Buddha and claim that there is a specific way and form in which it exists, all Buddhists, including Seon practitioners, would agree that Buddha is real. It is a being not in a physically and conceptually fixed sense but as that which manifests and makes itself known to us. Even if it is impossible to put into words how Buddha exists, the fact that it exists and interacts with the world in the conventional sense and that there is substantial change, progress, or transformation in the life of the awakened monk is undeniable. In particular, considering the Mahayana teaching of fifty-two stages of Bodhisattva, the Buddhist notion of ultimate reality is not the same as Aristotle's Supreme Reason and God. Thus, my utilization of Aristotle's hylomorphism is limited to illuminating the logical basis of the ontological transition of the awakened monk from one stage to another, which presupposes a variety of changes such as quantity, quality, power, and maturity.

3. Buddha Nature as Actuality

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* discusses how being can be perceived, understood, and analyzed logically. Book XI covers the relationship between being X potentially and being X actually. While the potentiality of a thing is the power and conditions to become what it is ontologically destined to be, actuality is the motion, change or activity that represents an exercise or fulfillment of a possibility.¹¹ It is also the telos toward which being is transforming. When Aristotle's actuality and potentiality are compared with sudden awakening and gradual cultivation, respectively, Jinul's claim that the Buddhahood precedes the monk's cultivation and that they should be in unity seems more plausible. In particular, Aristotle's notion of actuality (Section 3) supports the first two of Jinul's three major arguments: (a) awakening to the Truth or the Buddha nature should happen before cultivation in the ordinary sense of time;

¹⁰ (Keel 1989).

¹¹ (Durrant 1993, p. 206).

(b) gradual cultivation necessitates the sudden, complete awakening as the power and telos for the full realization of the Buddha; and (c) both spiritual events should be in unity in the ultimate sense of time. Sections 4 and 5 on potentiality and actualization in this paper will provide a logical support for Jinul's second and third arguments respectively.

Actuality precedes potentiality.¹² Aristotle says, "Actuality is prior to all potentiality of this sort both in account and in substance; and in time in one way it is and in another way it is not".¹³ This means that actuality of a being as form is already in place before its potentiality is activated. The idea, capacity, and ontological direction are inherent within the being. Our sense experience of the being is simply the outcome of the actuality and form of the being. Aristotle articulates the priority of actuality by saying:

So that it is evident that the things which are potentially are discovered when they are drawn out into actuality; the explanation is that thinking is the actuality; so that the potentiality is from actuality, and because of this they know by making (for the individual actuality is posterior in coming to be).¹⁴

As mentioned above, Aristotle explains the precedence of actuality in three different ways: (a) Actuality precedes potentiality in account. He explains, "I mean by able-to-build what is capable of building and by able-to-see what is capable of seeing and by visible what is capable of being seen".¹⁵ The potential of each example presumes the capacity that it intends. Aristotle continues, "It is necessary for the account and the knowledge of the one to precede the knowledge of the other".¹⁶ (b) Actuality is also prior in time. Beings that are already active but still potential may look prior because the final outcome comes from it in order. However, Aristotle notes the very source of change. It is actuality. He says:

It is always the case that from what is potentially what is actually comes to be, by means of what is actually, for example, man from man, musician by means of musician, in each case something bringing about change first; and what brings about change already is actually.¹⁷

(c) Finally, actuality precedes potentiality in being or substance. Since the form as actuality has the state of being, toward which the maximized capacity and quality of the matter as potentiality are set, it exists first.

"Things posterior in coming to be are prior in form and in substance (for example, adult to boy and man to seed; for the one already has the form, the other does not), and because everything that comes to be proceeds to an origin and an end (for that for the sake of which is an origin, and the coming to be is for the sake of the end), and the actuality is an end, and the potentiality is acquired for the sake of this".¹⁸

This hylomorphism can help make Jinul's argument plausible for the harmony between sudden awakening, which is the methodological foundation of his Seon tradition, and gradual cultivation, and particularly for his points of the priority of sudden awakening and the unity of those experiences. According to Jinul, if using Aristotelian language, Buddha is the form. To be more specific, it is the absolute form or God, which does not necessitate any potentiality to be real. However, since this paper focuses on the theme of the spiritual transformation and fulfillment of being rather than

¹² (Aristotle and Makin 2006, p. 10), *Metaphysics*: 1049b.5. All of the following quotations from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* come from Makin's translation.

¹³ *Metaphysics*, 1049b. 10. p. 10.

¹⁴ 1051a, 30. p. 14.

¹⁵ 1049b. 10-15. p. 10.

¹⁶ 1049 b.15. p. 10.

¹⁷ 1049b.24-25. p. 10.

¹⁸ 1050a. 5-9. pp. 10-11.

the philosophical discussion of God, it does not deal with the question of whether Jinul's notion of Buddhahood can be compatible with Aristotle's notion of God. They are, as a matter of fact, different. While Aristotle's God as unmoved mover and uncaused cause is the God derived from the logical conclusion under the law of physics, Jinul's notion of Buddha demands a different kind of understanding and explanation able to embrace any type of polarity, including form and matter, substance and accidents, and personal and impersonal attributes. However, Aristotle's hylomorphism is still relevant to Jinul's eclecticism because the Buddhist notion of awakening and cultivation necessitates a change or transformation from one state of consciousness to another, whether those experiences happen concurrently or in a consecutive order.

The notion of awakening and enlightenment in Jinul's *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind* (SCM hereafter) shares common characteristics with Aristotle's actuality. It is the ontological state, which every Seon practitioner as a being pursues to attain, and the ultimate nature and telos of all beings. Although the telos of everything biological would be death and extinction in the conventional dimension, it is the highest state of being in the ultimate dimension, whose existential reality is substantial but cannot be settled in a conceptual framework. The actuality that all human beings, including Buddhist adepts and ordinary people, are supposed to realize is the Buddha nature. It is the ultimate stage of our ontological qualities and our true, completed identity. In Jinul's language, the actuality as being is "the self-nature" and "the mind of void and calm, numinous awareness".¹⁹ It is the highest ontological state into which the whole being of the person including the body and the mind needs to be dissolved. As Jinul notes, this actuality has a variety of names, depending on the scripture: *the mind-ground* in the Bodhisattva Śīla Sūtra, *bodhi* or *nirvana* in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, *dharmadhatu* in the Avatamsaka Sūtra, *Tathāgata* in the Diamond Sūtra, *suchness* in the Golden Light Sūtra, the *dharmabody* in the Pure Name Sūtra, *Tathāgatagarbha* in the Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra Sūtra, etc.²⁰ Like the fully grown and functioning adult as the actuality of an infant in Aristotle's examples, the Buddhahood as the self-nature is inherent in every being. In other words, our own natures are "the true dharma".²¹ It is our mind where Buddhahood can be attained.²² Like the form and actuality, the Buddhahood that we inhere is "originally whole and complete in itself".²³ Jinul says:

Rather, it stresses that everyone is originally a Buddha, that everyone possesses the impeccable self-nature, and that the sublime essence of nirvana is complete in everyone. There is no need to search elsewhere; since time immemorial, it has been innate in everyone.²⁴

The problem is that we have the false beliefs that it is the dimension of the body that defines our identity and determines our capability and that salvation is outside of our beings. Jinul articulates the problem that prevents us from seeing the actuality:

It (Buddha Mind) is not outside the body. The physical body is a phantom, for it is subject to birth and death; the true mind is like space, for it neither ends nor changes. Therefore it is said, "These hundred bones will crumble and return to fire and wind. But One Thing is eternally numinous and covers heaven and earth."²⁵

Jinul continues:

¹⁹ (Chinul and Buswell 1983, p. 145), *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind* (hereafter SCM) in *The Korean Approach to Zen*.

²⁰ (Chinul and Buswell 1983, p. 163–64), *Straight Talk on the True Mind* (hereafter STT) in *The Korean Approach to Zen*.

²¹ SCM, p. 140.

²² SCM, p. 141.

²³ SCM, p. 141.

²⁴ STT, p. 162.

²⁵ SCM, p. 145.

It is not your physical body. Furthermore, the four elements which make up the physical body are by nature void; they are like images in a mirror or the moon's reflection in water. How can they be clear and constantly aware, always bright and never obscured.²⁶

The Buddha Nature or Mind as actuality is the principle that all human beings have to discover. He says, "In the wisdom of the saint it is no brighter; hidden in the mind of the ordinary man it is no darker".²⁷

In particular, as Aristotle's form and actuality do, Jinul's Buddha Nature gives the being the telos and power to change. It means that the awakened Buddha Nature precedes gradual cultivation as the telos. Without knowing the direction, in other words, without being awakened to the Buddha Nature, any pursuit of the Truth would be misguided and futile. This idea reflects Aristotle's definition of the end as the full functioning:

For the functioning is the end, and the actuality the functioning; and that is why the name 'actuality' is employed with respect to the functioning and points towards the fulfillment.²⁸

The seeker must have the right will and especially the right sense of direction, through "inward illumination",²⁹ which reconfigures his purpose of life at the very moment of enlightenment. Therefore, Jinul's actuality can be the full functioning of being, which is the Buddha Nature as the telos. For example, the adulthood is the actuality of a boy. According to Witt, "The boy exists for the sake of an end which is being an actual human being".³⁰ What he means by the actual human being is the being, which "is able to perform the array of typical human essential functions that constitute it".³¹ Although the boy has not reached yet adulthood in terms of capabilities, his being is moving toward the internal direction or goal, which is the actuality. Similarly, the awakened monk undertakes his spiritual cultivation with the absolute sense of direction, which is the form and actuality in Aristotle's language.

The Buddha Nature as actuality is also the power or source of change. The power, which cultivates the awakened monk into the full realization or full revelation of Buddhahood is the mind-nature itself. "The mind of void and calm, numinous awareness" is not only the telos or destination toward which the seeker runs with effortless effort and thoughtless thought, but also the power to shape the character of his intellectual and spiritual pursuit and reveal his true nature and identity in the physical, conventional realm, for the bodhisattva vow. Jinul quotes Lin-chi on the Buddha Nature as the source of change:

It is only that *formless thing* before your eyes, clear and bright of itself, which knows how to expound dharma or listen to dharma.³² What is capable of seeing, hearing, moving, and acting has to be your original mind; it is not your physical body.³³

The medium that translates the Buddha Nature into actuality in Jinul's argument is faith and knowledge. He says, "If you gain some faith and understanding, you will walk hand in hand with the saints of old".³⁴ The very moment when we come to have sincere faith in the self-nature is when the ontological transformation for Buddhahood gets activated.

²⁶ SCM, p. 146.

²⁷ SCM, p. 147.

²⁸ *Metaphysics*: 1050a. 22–24. p. 11.

²⁹ (Keel 2012, pp. 91–93).

³⁰ (Witt 2003, p. 85).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² SCM, p. 141.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

4. Awakened Monk as Potentiality

Aristotle's potentiality is formulated by his notion of change. In his *Metaphysics* XI, he states, "They (potentialities) are all origins of some kind, and are so called in relation to one which is primary, which is an origin of change in something else or in itself *qua* something else".³⁵ Potentiality is the capacity in both quality and quantity to make an object become what it is actually. Laguna defines it as "an inner tendency to reach a natural end, to take on a specific form".³⁶ According to Witt, the primary meaning of potentiality is related to "the idea of agent or an active power".³⁷ It demands various understandings, depending on how the object is related and interacts with the source of change. Potentiality as agent power can be a rational and non-rational agent. It can also be an active or passive agent. For the degree of the ontological fulfillment, it can be complete or incomplete. Thus, the most basic understanding of potentiality would be whether the source of change/power comes within or without and whether or not the being in question is a natural unity.³⁸ Easy examples of the rational and non-rational agent are human beings and non-sentient beings; examples of the agent and passive powers are fire bringing heat to an object and oil being flammable in certain conditions; examples of natural unity are human being, plants, and animals whose ontological change happens to the organism as a whole. Aristotle summarizes variations of potentiality:

It is plain then that there is in a way one capacity of acting and being affected (for something is capable both in that it has a capacity of being acted upon and in that something else can be acted on by it), but in another way they are different. For the one is in the thing affected (for it is because it has a certain origin, and because the matter also is a certain origin, that what is affected is affected, and one thing by another; for what is oily can be burnt while what yields in a certain way can be crushed, and similarly as regards other cases); the other in contrast is in what acts, such as heat and the building craft—the one in what can heat and the other in what can build. That is why, *qua* naturally unified, nothing is affected by itself; for it is one, and not something else.³⁹

This notion of potentiality can support the plausibility of Jinul's second argument of the necessity of gradual cultivation. The major question that the Seon School had against the Gyo School at the time was why the fully awakened monk needs further spiritual cultivation. Although Jinul was related more to the former due to his doctrinal affiliation, he did not think that it was desirable or advisable to completely ignore the practice dimension of awakening because it was an undeniable fact that most Buddhist practitioners, whether awakened or not, would continue to face temptations and challenges of life in the conventional realm and many would fall short of keeping the Buddha Nature. Thus, Jinul had to develop a logical explanation to reconcile sudden awakening and gradual cultivation. The way that Jinul articulates his thought reflects some of the major points of Aristotle's potentiality. Jinul argues that the awakened monk needs to continue to work on his/her spiritual development. How can this claim be compatible with the perfected nature of awakening? The best response would be to reformulate the concept of awakening. Although Jinul did not try to offer a new interpretation of awakening, he did elaborate potential challenges that the awakened monk had to face and how he could sustain the awakening. When talking about the sustainability of awakening in *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*, Jinul consistently used conditional clauses. For instance, Jinul says:

This pure, void, and calm mind is that mind of outstanding purity and brilliance of all the Buddhas of the three time period; it is that enlightened nature which is the original source of

³⁵ *Metaphysics*: 1046a, 9–12. p.1.

³⁶ (De Laguna 1951, pp. 155, 161).

³⁷ (Witt 2003, p. 41).

³⁸ (Witt 2003, p. 43).

³⁹ *Metaphysics*: 1046a.19–29. p. 2.

all sentient beings. One who awakens to it and safeguards that awakening will then abide in the unitary, “such” and unmoving liberation.⁴⁰

He continues:

After awakening, you must be constantly on your guard. If deluded thoughts suddenly appear, do not follow after them—reduce them and reduce them again until you reach the unconditioned. Then and only then will your practice reach completion.⁴¹

Jinul’s reservations about the inordinate dependence on sudden enlightenment goes so far even as to confirm the possibility of corruption.

Although the person who has suddenly awakened is the same as the Buddhas, the habit-energies which have built up over many lives as the rooted. The wind ceases, but the waves still surge; the noumenon manifests, but thoughts still invade.⁴²

Although Jinul recognizes temptations and the possibility of the degeneration of awakening, he should not mean a qualitative deficiency of the Buddha Nature in the initial awakening. If so, it would undermine the very formative tradition of his Seon Buddhism. As Watson articulates potentiality as “possibility of the actual” rather than of random events,⁴³ the full capacity of the Buddhahood should be inherent in the person. To be coherent, Jinul had to keep the position that sudden awakening and gradual cultivation were not two different experiences. He would have argued that they occur in phases in the conventional sense of time but concur in the ultimate dimension. This is the point where Aristotle’s notion of potentiality becomes suitable to logically explain this paradoxical nature. Sudden awakening and gradual cultivation can be understood temporally. They can be also understood as the quantitative and functional expansion or fulfillment of a single unified substance.

If juxtaposed with the pair of Aristotle’s hylomorphism, there are three possible candidates, in general, in *Secrets on the Cultivating the Mind*, for the notion of potentiality particularly as passive agents. The active agent in Jinul’s discussion would be Buddha. He says:

Although we know that a frozen pond is entirely water, the sun’s heat is necessary to melt it. Although we awaken to the fact that an ordinary man is Buddha, the power of dharma is necessary to make it permeate our cultivation. When that pond has melted, the water flows freely and can be used for irrigation and cleaning.⁴⁴

Therefore, the first candidate as passive agent is the awakened monk, who has the potential to successfully keep his Buddha Nature; the second is the awakened monk, who has lost the potential to sustain the Buddha Nature; the third is the ordinary people, who lack the potential to actualize the Buddha Nature. What makes them different is the conditioning; how they are prepared as passive agents for the divine transformation or revelation of the Buddha. They can either ontologically flourish or be locked in Manuśyaloka. The three previous quotes of Jinul that I have already made in this section explain the first two candidates. The following quotes describe the ordinary people as potentiality not to become Buddha:

Alas, many have broken their ties with the spiritual family of the Buddha in this manner. Since they neither understand for themselves nor believe that others have had an understanding-awakening, when they see someone without spiritual powers they act insolently, ridiculing the sages and insulting the saints. This is really quite pitiful!⁴⁵

⁴⁰ SCM, 147.

⁴¹ SCM, p. 148.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ (Watson 1898, p. 338).

⁴⁴ SCM, p. 143.

⁴⁵ SCM, p. 144.

When the ordinary man is deluded, he assumes that the four great elements are his body and the false thoughts are his mind. He does not know that his own nature is the true dharma-body; he does not know that his own numinous awareness is the true Buddha. He looks for the Buddha outside the mind.⁴⁶

One who is deluded and turns his back on it passes between the six destinies, wandering in samsara for vast numbers of kalpas.⁴⁷

My classification of the seeker as potentiality is meant only for convenience. They all belong to the same category of being. The question is whether they are receptive to the Buddha Nature. What is common is that they all remain as potentialities for the actualization or oblivion of the self-nature.

5. Cultivation of Buddhahood as Actualization

When juxtaposed and compared with Aristotle's hylomorphism, Jinul's eclecticism needs to respond to an important and challenging question. How does the ontological unity work in his framework? Since his position maintains that the awakened monks need to continue to work on wholesome qualities, how can the notion of awakening of the Seon school, which presumes the instantaneous perfection of all meritorious qualities, be logical and meaningful? In responding to this question, Jinul focuses on the presence of the practical obstacles in the phenomenal world and repeats the necessity of further spiritual works. Jinul says:

Although he has awakened to the fact that his original nature is no different from that of the Buddhas, the beginningless habit-energies are extremely difficult to remove suddenly and so he must continue to cultivate while relying on this awakening . . . he constantly nurtures the sacred embryo.⁴⁸

He continues:

After awakening, you must be constantly on your guard. If deluded thoughts suddenly appear, do not follow after them.⁴⁹

His response does not actually answer the question of why, particularly in *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*. The only possible answer would be his denial of the substance of cultivation. Since the evil that the awakened monk has to face is not a substantial entity coming out of his internal desire or will but the illusion from the internal habits, like a plume of smoke after a fire is put out, there is no deficiency in the initial awakening. Jinul explains:

"Thus you eliminate evil, but you eliminate without actually eliminating anything; you cultivate the wholesome, but you cultivate without really cultivating anything either".⁵⁰

To further strengthen his argument for unity, a functional interpretation of Aristotle's actualization would be helpful. According to CAO's functional understanding of actualization, there is no substantial and qualitative difference between potentiality, which is the awakened monk in Jinul's case, and actuality, which is the monk, who has reached the ultimate state of enlightenment. The only difference is quantitative. It means that there is a spectrum or gradation of the functioning of Buddhahood. CAO articulates his functional unity as follows:

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ SCM, p. 144.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ SCM, p. 148.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The ground for the likeness between potentiality and actuality is that both of them belong to one being; in other words, they share one and the same essence and substance and merely differ in degrees.⁵¹

In other words, actualization is the revelation of two ways of being or different grades of one being rather than an ontological transformation accompanying a substantial and qualitative change. In *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*, Jinul nuanced this mode of actualization with the idea of functional unity. Like a human embryo containing the same essence as that of an adult, the awakened monk on cultivation, as potentiality, does not lack any of the Buddha Nature. The awakened monk, like a growing child, needs to continue to get nutrients and strengthen his spiritual muscle with the internal power. Jinul used an example of the growing child:

This (cultivation) process can be compared to the maturation of a child. From the day of its birth, a baby is endowed with all the sense organs just like everyone else, but its strength is not yet fully developed. It is only after many months and years that it will finally become an adult.⁵²

If this actualization of Buddhahood is put in CAO's Aristotelian language, the potentiality whose source of change comes within should be free from external hindrances to become actuality because the Buddha Nature is internal. CAO says:

For those things whose source of becoming is internal, if nothing external hinders it and necessarily it will become an actual substance, then this is a potential being.⁵³

Jinul says:

If thought moment after thought-moment he continues to train in this manner, does not neglect to maintain his training, and keeps Samadhi and prajna equally balanced, then lust and hatred will naturally fade away and compassion and wisdom will naturally increase in brightness; unwholesome actions will naturally cease and meritorious practices will naturally multiply.⁵⁴

Thus, when Jinul talks about the further cultivation of the awakened monk, he did not think of a change of essence but of a functional growth or fulfillment. Differing from the ordinary people, who willfully reject the dharma, the awakened monk has the full capacity of Buddha. However, the capacity remains potential until it is fully revealed to the phenomenal world through both spiritual and moral expressions. Buswell summarizes the full functioning as the realization of "the noumenal essence, which is the perfect, bright, and self-reliant foundation of the dharmadhatu, and the phenomenal function which manifests objects in the sensory realms in all their diversity".⁵⁵ In other words, both awakening and cultivation experiences are a single event. They are simply spread in the conventional time. But, in the ultimate sense of time, from the viewpoint of the Buddha as form and actuality, they are not separate but unified. Jinul says, "Sudden awakening and gradual cultivation are like the two wheels of a cart: neither one can be missing".⁵⁶

6. Conclusions: Jinul's Eclecticism as an Enhanced Moral Grounding

I hope that my utilization of Aristotle's hylomorphism has helped clarify and support the coherence of Jinul's eclecticism on the tension between sudden awakening and gradual cultivation. I have argued

⁵¹ (Cao 2015, p. 469).

⁵² SCM, p. 145

⁵³ (Cao 2015, p. 479).

⁵⁴ SCM, p. 149.

⁵⁵ (Chinul and Buswell 1983, p. 54)

⁵⁶ SCM, p. 149.

that Aristotle's notion of potentiality and actuality is useful in expounding the logical coherence of the harmony and unity of sudden awakening and gradual cultivation. Although both aspects seem to be separate experiences in the conventional sense of time, they are ontologically united in the ultimate sense of time. The former is the form and essence of the latter. The latter is the revelation of the former in the phenomenal world. They are in sync and unity in the sense that the cultivation is determined for its capacity by the awakening and that the awakening manifests its form through the gradual cultivation leading to the full functioning of the self-nature. The only difference between the one with the initial awakening and the one with the full enlightenment is not qualitative but quantitative in functionality.

In addition to this philosophical discussion, I want to conclude my discussion by highlighting some moral implications of Jinul's eclecticism, which I believe is particularly related to our conference theme: *Religious Conflict and Coexistence: the Korean Context and Beyond*. Religious tensions and conflicts have been around since the beginning of human history, let alone other types of secular conflicts. The current conflict in Palestine calls to mind the animosity between Israel and Canaan of the old biblical narrative; the history of Islamic Conquest makes many contemporary Christians fear the Muslims as their neighbors; religious extremists armed with fundamentalist theology threaten the modern society based on plurality; and unprecedented Buddhist violence against the Rohingya people in Myanmar challenges our faith in the traditional religion of pacifism.

Although there are numerous reasons for the causes of these conflicts, one of the easiest explanations is the disparity between what religions teach and what their followers actually do. None of the major known world religions promotes division and violence. None of them tolerate discrimination, hatred, and closed-mindedness. Thus, the problem is obviously the lack of integrity. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, integrity is a state of whole and not divided. It refers to the moral quality that brings honesty and transparency in our moral thought and action. It ultimately leads to the whole person balanced between moral knowledge and practice. Although intended for spirituality, Jinul's eclecticism offers a strong moral lesson for the negative experiences, which our religious communities have created and suffered. In the last part of *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*, Jinul articulates the balance between samadhi and prajña.⁵⁷ Although he talks about the spiritual qualities of calmness and alertness in both the absolute and the relative dimension, a desire for the whole person is nuanced. This thought confirms that sudden awakening and gradual cultivation should be in sync. Both experiences represent the entirety of what it means to be a Buddha. In Buddhist metaphysics and soteriology, being a Buddha is not different in nature from being a whole person particularly in the moral context.

To be more specific, Jinul's emphasis on harmony between the capacities of sudden awakening and gradual cultivation is intended to cultivate the qualities of the two opposite poles of our moral attitude. The former represents calm inner reflection, non-doctrinal spirituality, and the growth of personal spirituality and the latter represents the outer manifestation of the inner qualities, alertness, inquisitive attitude, and engagement in collective effort for the common good. The former is deconstructive in nature and the latter is constructive. To become a Buddha or to fully realize Buddha, one has to get both elements finely tuned. If the former gets extreme, it would fall to self-indulgence. If the latter gets too extreme, it would fall to self-denial. The solution should be to let these two experiences happen simultaneously in practical situations, which I believe is the characteristic of the whole person.

Let me articulate further this moral teaching of Jinul's eclecticism, developed out of my Aristotelian interpretation, with a metaphor of the house. There are two different modes of having moral consciousness. One is to build the house of moral consciousness and the other to deconstruct the house of moral consciousness. The former as the metaphor for gradual cultivation is our capacity, desire, and duty to continue to investigate, expand, and sustain our wisdom to build good moral relations and community and create a divine sense of order and establish norms. We need to constantly experience

⁵⁷ (Kim 2014, p. 95).

and engage in the phenomenal world to manifest our true nature by attaining the wisdom of the Buddha whose countless forms need to be discovered and cultivated. It is our active exploration of the truth. In the meantime, the latter as the metaphor for sudden awakening is our capacity to shut down the gate of the outer world and hear the inner voice. It brings things together to absorb the illusory world and ultimately concentrate on the Buddha Nature. It seeks the self-nature within the mind.

Therefore, Jinul's version of hylomorphism of sudden awakening and gradual cultivation naturally leads to the cultivation of the whole person based on three specific virtues: authenticity, transparency, and unity. First, those who have successfully harmonized the initial spiritual enlightenment with the ensuing cultivation should be more authentic than those remaining in either pole in manifesting the wholesome qualities of the Buddha Nature. Since their moral practices come from a deep inner realization of the truth, they are more than followers of moral rules. They themselves feel, learn, and awaken to the dharma penetrating all dimensions of life, including the moral dimension. They themselves become the author of morality by doing what they sincerely believe is true and right. Just as their spiritual work is guided and empowered directly by the self-nature, their action to benefit humanity and the world is genuine and authentic. Their bodhisattva acts are natural and spontaneous. Second, the harmonizer's moral act is consistent and persistent because of the transparency between the inner and outer self. It means that the Buddhist practitioner has a firm foundation for his moral will. He would not be easily swayed by unwholesome internal desires and external pressures and coercion. His moral principles anchored in the spiritual enlightenment of Bodhisattva would not be compromised by any threat or temptation. Third, the unity of awakening and cultivation would perpetuate the positive cycle of the inspiration of the Buddha Mind and its translations into a variety of forms and shapes of compassion; it would ultimately help the seeker with the whole person character be versatile in engaging wisely the constantly changing phenomenal world and its moral contexts. The deconstructive spirit from sudden awakening would help the seeker transcend any type of barrier to make karuna prevail in life. The constructive energy from cultivation would help the seeker find a strong sense of order and direction and constantly engage in new ways to express and explore the endless possibility of the dharma. This whole person character inspired by Jinul's eclecticism should be considered valuable for not only intra-religious but also inter-religious interactions. All religions are on the same journey of finding the Truth but taking different paths and having different experiences. Differences should not be impediments to mutual dialogue but be catalysts to spark intellectual and spiritual curiosity to expand and deepen the understanding of each. I believe that while the idea of gradual cultivation/sanctification would play the role, for any religion, in constructing and sustaining a tradition, sudden awakening/enlightenment/faith would provide a power to transcend any conceptual, spiritual, and geographical barrier. Both elements would bring mature spirituality and developed skills and they would enrich the tradition of each. In particular, when they are harmonized in a spiritual life, a better interaction across different religious communities can be anticipated.

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Article

Syncretism, Harmonization, and Mutual Appropriation between Buddhism and Confucianism in Pre-Joseon Korea

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Abstract: Following the introduction of Buddhism to China, various strategies of accommodation with Chinese culture were developed, all amounting to some form of syncretism with Chinese religions, mainly Confucianism. Buddhism in pre-modern Korea displayed similar forms of interaction with Confucianism. This article aims to critique the notion that such interactions were merely forms of “harmonization”, finding common ground between the traditions. If one religion borrows from another or adopts the message of another religion, it will be affected to some degree, which is why the concept of syncretism is a better tool of analysis. This article concludes that there was a strong official support in Goryeo Korea towards the genuine convergence of Confucianism and Buddhism. Since Buddhism, as a result, took on many of the tasks carried out by Confucianism in China, the reaction against Buddhism by a reinvigorated Confucianism from the late fourteenth century onward was much stronger than in China.

Keywords: Buddhism; Confucianism; syncretism; harmonization (*hoetong*); Unified Silla (668–935); Goryeo (918–1392)

1. Introduction

The question of how Buddhism changed after it was transmitted to China, and how it in turn affected Chinese society, has been hotly debated among scholars of Buddhism. A glance at the titles of the most influential works on this question illustrates the widely diverging views: While Zürcher emphasizes the Buddhist “conquest” of China (Zürcher [1959] 1972), Kenneth Ch’en looks at how Buddhism transformed China (Ch’en 1973). A middle position is taken by Sharf, who points out that the question “who transforms whom” is misleading: since there was, in fact, no neat “transmission” of Buddhism from India to China; Chinese Buddhism should be treated on its own terms from the beginning, as a Chinese phenomenon rather than as a derivative of Indian culture (Sharf 2002).

To some degree of course the different positions of these three scholars are the result of the different time periods they were active in. While Zürcher and Ch’en sought to establish historical facts through a rigorous analysis of the source material, under the influence of the post-modern turn of the late twentieth century, Sharf was more attuned to the assumptions and rhetorical modes employed by historians when arguing their case. However, even though Sharf is arguing strongly against any comparison between Chinese and Indian Buddhism, the core of his argument is in fact the sinification of Indian Buddhist concepts: his work shows how standard Indian concepts such as the three bodies of Buddha (*trikāya*) were reinterpreted from a binary *ti-yong* 體用 (essence–function) perspective, to conform with Chinese Indigenous ways of reasoning.

Thus, all three works can be said to describe, from various angles, how the confrontation between Buddhism and Chinese culture, and in particular with Confucianism, played out. While Zürcher focuses on the early political history (until the fourth century AD), Ch’en looks at various points of interaction, from politics to social customs, focusing especially on how Buddhism adapted itself

to Chinese politics and society. Sharf finally looks at the realm of ideas: his work deals with a Taoist-Buddhist work, but rather than the syncretism between Taoism and Buddhism, the real topic is the persistence of traditional Chinese frameworks of interpretation. As such, these works form a convenient hook for the present study: by the seventh century, when the Korean peninsula achieved political unification, it had thoroughly absorbed both sinified Buddhism and Confucianism. Of course, it had its own indigenous religious culture, but this left barely any imprint on the written record. Since both Buddhism and Confucianism were imported systems/ideologies, their dynamic of interaction was somewhat different from China, yet also informed by their relative positions in China.

For one, there is no evidence of any strong antagonism between these traditions in Korea before the fourteenth century; once in a while, a Confucianized intellectual such as Choe Seungno (927–989) criticized Buddhism, yet at least in part this criticism formed part of the posturing of what a Confucian state in the Chinese mold ought to look like, and is not necessarily a reflection of wider trends.¹ In fact, during the Unified Silla (668–935) and Goryeo (918–1392) periods, Buddhism and Confucianism were mostly spoken of in terms of their complementarity, as mutually harmonious systems. This harmonization will be the main focus of this paper; yet, even in the absence of overt conflict, a close reading of discourses of harmonization reveals underlying tensions and problems.

Methodologically, I will try to apply the concept of syncretism, for the following reasons: 1. Despite the vagueness and problematic nature of the term for religious studies, a nuanced definition can add to the discussion, because 2. within Korean Studies, the concept of harmonization is mostly applied uncritically, failing to disentangle rhetoric strategy and factuality; therefore, 3. describing the process of interaction between Buddhism and Confucianism as syncretic can disestablish the unproblematic notion of Buddhism and Confucianism as being “in harmony” and uncover the purpose behind discourses of harmonization.

The second section will necessarily try to clarify the use of the concept of syncretism, primarily through the work of Timothy Brook, who has written extensively on the problem of syncretism between Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism in Chinese history. Here, I will also contrast this with extant scholarship on Korean language and its achievements and limitations. The third section will deal mainly with the intellectual legacy of Choe Chiweon (b. 857), the first in Korean history to theorize the relationship between Confucianism and Buddhism. Since Choe lived at the end of the Unified Silla period, his ideas could not fully be implemented during his lifetime, so the fourth section will look at strategies of syncretization between Confucianism and Buddhism during the Goryeo period, and ascertain the agendas behind this, as well as the implications for each side.

2. Methodological Issues: Why Syncretism?

Before dealing with syncretism and related concepts, it is also necessary to define what we mean by “Confucianism” and “Buddhism”. While Buddhism is more straightforward in that it will easily fit most definitions of what constitutes a religion, Confucianism defies such easy categorization. Rodney Taylor (Taylor 1990) and others have made a convincing case for treating Confucianism as a religion, but it should also be acknowledged that some aspects remain decidedly in the realm of the secular: the guardians of Confucianism were the scholar-bureaucrats who governed the country, and though they also oversaw the ritual and cultic aspects, for the most part they were concerned with politics and the management of the population.

More importantly, however, Confucianism is problematic because it has developed into a blanket term with very porous borders. In particular, the assumption that it is somehow identical with Chinese culture should be disabused from the beginning. Although it emerged in the Sinitic cultural sphere, its values were universalist. In fact, before the systematization of Confucianism into what is known in the West as Neo-Confucianism, usually attributed to the efforts of Zhu Xi (1130–1200), there was

¹ For Choe Seungno’s criticism of Buddhism in his 28-point policy critique, see (Lee 1993), pp. 273, 276, 278–79, 285, 289–92.

little in the way of Confucian orthodoxy. The supposed exemplars of the tradition, the scholar-officials (Ch. *Ru* 儒, *shi* 士), were eclectic and non-exclusive in their worldview, often freely embracing other traditions, including Buddhism and Taoism. Even the Confucian canon includes works that were retroactively ascribed to Confucian sages or mythical emperors, but were actually of uncertain origin. A case in point is the *Yijing* or *Book of Changes*, which can be read either as a book of prognostication or a cosmological primer.

In this paper, the Confucianism that will be discussed is mostly the idealized form as it existed in the minds of certain scholars, the Confucianism-as-it ought to be; and the same goes for Buddhism. Hence, I will talk about the teachings rather than religions, since the latter ought to embrace what people actually practiced, but due to lack of sources, this will mostly remain outside my purview. However, while there was thus a kind of “imagined Buddhism” and “imagined Confucianism” that was current throughout the East Asian Sinosphere, at the same time, there were regional variations, often tied to the situation on the ground, and to the degree that the sources allow us to do so, this will also be discussed.

One of the aims of this study is to bridge East Asian and Western scholarship on the topic at hand. The role of the conceptual toolbox employed by scholars is usually taken for granted; yet despite the globalization of research, it is often overlooked that countries or regions may use different conceptual frameworks that do not fully overlap. Yet, there are not many studies that compare terminological impasses in East Asian humanities studies. An interesting study that goes to the heart of the matter is Ross King’s work on the concept of diglossia, as applied in Korean literature studies. King shows how the term, which originates in linguistics to denote a situation where there are two language codes, the vernacular (with all its various dialects) and an elite, mainly written, language, gradually started to be employed from the 1990s in the work of Korean literature scholars. However, there, it developed a decidedly negative connotation, as the situation up until the nineteenth century where authors used the elite Literary Sinitic for official communication and vernacular Korean for private communication was interpreted as an obstacle to the full development of the Korean language (King 2015). To get out of the quandary of such idiosyncratic local usage of globalized academic English, King boldly proposes to make Literary Sinitic (Hanmun) terms the standard koine rather than English, because of the greater transparency of the compound terms.²

A similar tension can be observed between the Western term syncretism and East Asian cognates, such as *hoetong* 會通. Just as the major monotheistic religions shun the idea of syncretism as a kind of “incest revulsion” (Fischer 2012, p. 3), Buddhist and Confucian scholars generally do not use the Korean dictionary translation of syncretism, *honhapjuui* 混合主義. Instead, whenever the interaction of Buddhism and Confucianism is discussed, it is predominantly in terms of harmonization; the term *hoetong* can best be understood as an attitude of accommodation and harmonization, looking for what connects and communes rather than what separates.³ However, the term seems to have emerged in modern Korean academic circles through the work of Choe Namseon (1890–1957), who in 1930, first proposed the term *tong Bulgyo* 通佛敎 (syncretic Buddhism) as one of the defining characteristics of Korean Buddhism, and by extension also of Korean culture (Shim 1989). Choe Namseon derived the term from his study of the works of Weonhyo (617–686), who sought to reconcile various apparently contradictory Buddhist ideas by reinterpreting them through his own dialectic framework. Whereas it is therefore based on a framework that is indeed syncretic in that it integrates several disparate Buddhist ideas in a new system, the term becomes problematic when applied to virtually all religious

² (King 2015, p. 13). “Eonmun goeri” is one of the alternative terms he suggests.

³ A search of the terms “yugyo” (Confucianism) and “hoetong” in academic articles on riss.kr, the representative South Korean database for academic research, yields 165 returns, while a search for “yugyo” and “honhapjuui” has only 22 returns; “singkeuritjeum” yields no results. Virtually, the only article to use “honhapjuui” for the pre-modern period is (Choi 2007). Search results retrieved on 26 March 2020. For Buddhism and *hoetong* the research results are similar (447 and 26, respectively). Other terms are also used in Korean scholarship, notably *seuphap*. However, to all of these negative connotations cling (Choi 2007, p. 40).

and philosophical phenomena (Cho 2004). Moreover, it is very vague; usually, authors use the term to illustrate the genius of a particular author in managing to reconcile apparently conflicting notions, but methodologically, it lacks the rigor to analyze, for example, how specifically this “harmonization” worked and what the religious implications were for the traditions being harmonized.

In the case of the term “syncretism”, by contrast, there exists a vast repository of critical research; if anything, there is too much available, making it impossible to summarize. Fundamentally, of course, the concept is easy: it refers to the borrowing by one religion of elements from another, or in the fashioning of a new religion on the basis of (fragments of) other religions. What makes the matter complex, however, is the fact that the concept makes both theologians and religious studies scholars wary: ⁴ it unsettles the unspoken assumption that religions are *sui generis* entities, because it entails the idea of impurity. Merely contemplating the possibility of syncretism is regarded as an admission that one’s religion is not self-sufficient and neatly bounded (Leopold and Jensen 2004, p. 3). Thus, theologians resist the idea, while religious studies scholars tend to over-complexify it, sometimes to the point of unintelligibility.⁵

The difficulty seems to lie especially in distinguishing whether parallel elements in two traditions are the result of conscious attempts at borrowing, or merely accidental similarities, or “natural results of interaction”. Leopold and Jensen suggest that the unconscious mode of syncretism “would rarely be registered as an innovation but rather be considered an adaptation, amalgamation, or assimilation” (Leopold and Jensen 2004, p. 4). However, how would we then discern conscious from unconscious rapprochement? If a Chinese Buddhist emphasizes that his religion is very filial, how do we know whether or not he realizes that “filial piety” is not originally a Buddhist concept? Then there is also the possibility of dissimulation: when a Buddhist says his values are really the same as Confucianism, how do we know that he is not simply “donning a tolerant posture”, as William Chu puts it (Chu 2006, p. 65)? Because of this suspicion regarding motives, Chu regards syncretism as mere posturing, and uses the term “synthesis” for a conscious, sincere amalgamation of various elements.

Perhaps it is only anthropologists who feel truly comfortable in using the term straightforwardly, and although their models, being based on fieldwork, are not necessarily useful for this text-based study, they do offer some firmer models. In particular, research on the so-called “cargo cults”, which emerge when a hitherto fairly closed-off religion undergoes the influence of a dominant culture from which it takes over especially the material aspects, should be mentioned. An interesting application of this model of dominant vs. subordinate religion is found in James Grayson’s article on the interaction between Buddhism and Shamanism in Korea. Defining Buddhism as a missionary religion and Shamanism as a “religion indigenous to a particular people”, Grayson discerns two major forms of syncretism, which he calls high syncretism and low syncretism. Low syncretism occurs when the world religion adopts external elements of the local religion, but retains its fundamental values; the examples he gives are those of Korean Buddhist temples incorporating shrines for the mountain god (Grayson 1992, pp. 202–6). High syncretism by contrast occurs when the native religion adopts elements of the world religion, “without altering its essential character” (Grayson 1992, p. 206). Because it runs counter to the normal process of syncretism, he also refers to it as “reverse syncretism”. While not without its problems,⁶ Grayson’s theory is useful for bringing into focus the power relations in the process of religious exchange.

The term syncretism is indeed laden with negative connotations and has many other drawbacks, yet at the same time there is no good alternative. Taking into account the state of the source material

⁴ See, for example, the following: “Syncretism in religious contexts is the bringing together of elements from different religions, belief systems, or symbol systems. Concern about syncretism generally stems from the idea that it is bound to create a new ‘religion’ that belongs authentically to neither tradition. It is fair to say that syncretism is a dirty word for most Christian writers on interreligious relations.” In (Muers and Highton 2012, p. 340).

⁵ For a good overview of various theories see (Choi 2007, pp. 40–50).

⁶ For instance, the phenomenon of building shrines to mountain spirits in temple compounds is historically a late phenomenon, as it emerges only in the nineteenth century (Choi 2007, p. 42).

for this study—mainly brief official statements that reflect the consensus of an elite group—we simply cannot employ a very precise definition; all that can be done is to stay attuned to some of the problems outlined above, e.g., discerning conscious efforts vs posing. In the end, for my own research framework, I found the research by Timothy Brook most helpful. His research focuses mainly on the Ming period (1368–1644), where numerous movements to actively achieve a synthesis of the three religions (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism) were taking place, mainly from the part of Buddhist monks. Both in terms of source material and in terms of strategies, this is the most similar to the material found in Korea.

Timothy Brook offers four cognate terms that are often mistaken for syncretism: ecumenism, inclusivism, compartmentalism, and eclecticism. Ecumenism rests on the understanding that truth is universal, and that different religions are permitted their own way of accessing that truth; hence, ecumenism does not necessarily imply syncretism. Inclusivism explains difference away by admitting it as a partial revelation of truth or an inferior method; thus, it amounts to a distortion of another religion from the perspective of the dominant religion's version of truth. Compartmentalism, then, recognizes that different religions have their own fields of specialization, which are mutually not overlapping. Eclecticism, finally, is the willing adoption by one religion of elements from another religion that it finds useful. Since these elements may be brought in without an actual blending from the different traditions, Brook seems to differentiate it from syncretism (Brook 1993a, pp. 14–15). However, if those four phenomena are not syncretism, then what is? This is not explained clearly by Brook. In my view, any of these four categories could actually be seen as distinct forms of syncretism, and therefore, I want to retain them as useful tools of analysis for this paper.

3. Choe Chiweon's Theory of the Mutual Unity of Buddhism and Confucianism

The late-Silla intellectual and statesman Choe Chiweon (b. 857) was the first to formulate a theory of the fundamental unity of the "Three Teachings" (*samgyo ilche* 三教一體) (Choe 1990, p. 62) in Korea. This is most clearly expressed in a passage from a now lost stele, cited in the twelfth-century history of Korea, the *Samguk sagi* (Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms):

In [our] country there is a wonderful way called "pungnyu". The origins of instituting this teaching can be found in the history of the immortals. In fact it comprises the three teachings, which are fused to edify all beings. Thus when entering [the home] being filial to your family, and when going out being loyal to the country, these are the instructions of the Minister of Justice of Lu [Confucius]. Dealing with affairs through non-action, and implementing the teaching of non-speech, this is the school of the Archivist of Zhou [Laozi]. Not doing any evil deeds, and upholding only what is good, this is what the prince from India [Buddha] taught.⁷

This is a famous passage that has been parsed in different ways in Korean scholarship; notably the term *pungnyu* 風流, and whether or not it denotes a native religious tradition, has been the subject of controversy.⁸ However, it should be clear that Choe is here claiming that his country had a system that combined the three teachings of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Since, however, he gives examples of the different specialties of each, it seems to be close to what Brook has described as compartmentalism—where each has its own field of specialization without much overlap or interchange (Brook 1993a, p. 15).

⁷ (Kim [1145] 1512), book 4: 37th year of King Jinheung. The original stele, the *Nangnang-pi*, has not been preserved.

⁸ The term was originally associated with a group of Chinese literati from the third century AD who rejected conventional life and sought refuge in poetry, drinking, and aesthetic witticisms. *Fengliu*, literally "wind and streams" denotes their free-flowing, Taoism-inspired lifestyle. Many Korean scholars have argued that the term, as used by Choe Chiweon, denotes a native religious tradition, but there is very little evidence to back this up.

Perhaps this might best be regarded as Choe’s own ideal of a kind of condominium of the three teachings, to borrow Brook’s terminology again, where each is treated as equally important. However, in the inscriptions he wrote for Buddhist monks and temples (the so-called *sasanbi*), we find something different, namely ideas that are derived from Chinese Buddhist apologetics, i.e., strategies to defend Buddhism against Confucianism. We find, in fact, very little evidence for the existence of Taoism as a practice-oriented tradition in Korea, lending further evidence to my assertion that in advocating the combination of the three teachings; Choe is not describing the actual situation in Korea, but rather his own ideals.

Thus, in the stele inscription for the monk Hyeso (774–850), the *Jingam seonsa bi* (887), we find the following passage:

Therefore master Huiyuan from Mt. Lu argued “Although the origin and development of the Buddha [on the one hand] and the Duke of Zhou and Confucius [on the other] is different, they return to the same principle.” Those who fail to completely realize this at the same time, can therefore not grasp these two [teachings] simultaneously.⁹

Borrowing the words of the famous Chinese Buddhist apologete Huiyuan (334–416), and more specifically words from his famous tract “Monks do not pay respects to the ruler”, Choe seeks to argue that though Buddhism and Confucianism are different, they work towards the same goals. Here, we approach the kind of ecumenism that typifies Choe, and that would also recur throughout the Goryeo period. Huiyuan wrote his essay at a time when the place of Buddhism in Chinese society was heavily debated; whereas the emperor argued that monks were subjects of the emperor like anybody else, Huiyuan successfully pleaded that Buddhist monks, having left society, are loyal only to the Buddha, and hence should not pay obeisance to the temporal ruler. However, while Huiyuan may have had the upper hand in this debate, in general, Buddhism was in a weaker position vis-à-vis the state and its officials, so mostly Buddhist apologetics tried to justify its existence on Chinese soil by emphasizing its fundamental similarity with Confucianism (Kaplan 2019). Differences were only superficial; the basic principles and values upon which they were based, it was claimed, were the same.

That this strand of apologetics was also espoused by Choe is clear from the following selections from his work. In the biographic stele for the monk Muyeom (799–888), the *Nanghye hwasang bi*, he writes as follows:

King T’aebu (=K. Heongang, r. 875–885) saw this and told his younger brother, the officer of the Southern Palace [Minister of Rites]: “The [Confucian] Three Things to be in Awe of [Heaven’s mandate, the words of great people, and the words of the wise] can be compared to the [Buddhist] Triple Refuge [in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha]. The [Confucian] five constants [humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, trust] are equal to the [Buddhist] five precepts [not taking life, not stealing, not engaging in licentiousness, not lying, not taking intoxicants]. The capable performance of the kingly way lies in matching the Buddha’s mind, the great master’s words are right!”¹⁰

Choe is here basically putting words in the mouth of King Heongang. Matching the fundamental Confucian virtues with Buddhist precepts might seem far-fetched, but this was a common strategy since at least the fifth century. The apocryphal scripture *Sutra of Trapuṣa and Bhallika* already claimed that the five Buddhist precepts match the five Confucian virtues (Ch’en 1973; DDB). For example, the precept of “not taking life” can be interpreted as the fundamental aspect of humanity; not stealing is the most basic part of righteousness, and so forth.¹¹ Although it came forth from the need to match Buddhism

⁹ “Ssanggye-sa Chingam seonsa bi”, (Yi Jigwan 1994a, p. 129); (Choe 1926), 2.18b. This text is based on Huijiao’s (*Liang*) *Gaoseng zhuan* (Lives of eminent Monks (from the Liang Dynasty)) (T. 2059.50.361a7), which in turn is based on Huiyuan’s essay “Shamen bu jing wangzhe lun” (monks do not pay respects to the ruler) (T. 2012.52.29c-31c).

¹⁰ “Seongju-sa Nanghye hwasang bi”, (Yi Jigwan 1994a, p. 162); (Choe 1926), 2.11b-12a.

¹¹ The origins and logic of matching the “three things to be in awe of” with the triple refuge are not clear to me.

with native Chinese, especially Confucian, concepts, and thus reduce the alien nature of Buddhism,¹² it was widely employed, even by prominent Buddhist scholiasts. Thus, the Tiantai founder Zhiyi (538–597) also referred to it in his works, which are not of an apologetic nature (Ch'en 1973, p. 57).

Thus, Choe's assertion is not new, yet, he gives it a twist by also linking the five precepts and the five constants to the five directions. Strictly speaking, this too is not new, since this kind of correlations between numbered sets has deep roots in China, and can also be found in the above-mentioned *Sutra of Trapuṣa and Bhallika*. However, Choe tries to bring his homeland, Silla, into the equation, as is evident from the following passage in the stele for Doheon (824–882), the *Jijeung daesabi*:

The introduction states: If we divide the five constants according to the directions, then the eastern direction is said to be the "humane mind". Among the three teachings, the one that sets up its name as the pure land is "Buddha". The humane mind is nothing but Buddha, and this is why Buddha is called "the one capable of humanity". The way flourishes among the Eastern Barbarians [ie Silla, Korea], whose soft and compliant character has its origins in Kapilavastu; the teaching of compassion is settled here as naturally as a stone thrown into water, or as the rain gathers the sand. Thus it goes without saying that apart from the governors of this eastern land, none upholds the teaching as much as we do. The spirit of this land takes loving life as its basis, and the customs are all about yielding to others."¹³

So, not only is "non-killing" paired with "humanity", it is also paired with the east: the direction where the sun rises is associated with spring and the renewal of life. Since Silla is to the east of China, it is often referred to simply as the Eastern Country (Dongbang, Dongguk), and Choe adroitly uses this to suggest his country is thereby the country of "humanity" (i.e., the Confucian virtue of *ren* (Ch.)/*jin* (K.) 仁) par excellence, as can be seen in the soft and yielding nature of its people. This trope likely predates Choe, since Silla was referred to as the "country of gentlemen" (*gunja ji hyang* 君子之鄉) in China since at least the seventh century, but Choe is the first to give this religio-spiritual explanation.

As an émigré who left his country aged twelve to take the civil service examination in China, only returning to his home country after almost twenty years, it is not clear in how far Choe's thought is representative of his country's elites. The idea that Korea was the country of humanity par excellence seems to have found some resonance in China, since it chimed with an ancient legend that if Confucius' teachings one day disappeared from China, they could later be retrieved from a country in the East (Jorgensen 2005). In general, the end of the Tang Dynasty (618–907) was a period of both chaos and intellectual ferment. In particular, in the period before the founding of the Song Dynasty (N. Song, 960–1127), many of the states that emerged from the debris of the Tang were eclectic in their religious support. In particular, the state of Wu-Yue (907–978), located in the area of modern Zhejiang province, gave lavish support to Buddhism, especially schools of Buddhism that were eclectic in using many elements of different Buddhist schools.

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to unravel all the possible strands in Chinese religious life of the ninth-tenth centuries, but it is certain that they exerted great influence on Korea, where a new dynasty was just emerging (Vermeersch 2018, p. 280). It is indeed a distinct possibility that some of the religious trends fostered in Wu-Yue were denied by the Song dynasty when it reunited China (Welter 1999), but were continued in Goryeo. An interesting example of this could be the so-called Fayen 法眼 (Dharma-eye) school of Chan. Not only did it advocate the joint practice of various strands of Buddhism, such as Chan (J. Zen, K. Seon) Buddhism and Pure Land practice, but

¹² Uri Kaplan also points out the existence of other interpretations, notably that this could also be seen as a mark of superiority of Buddhism: since the five precepts belong to Hinayana Buddhism, matching Confucian virtues with the inferior Hinayana teachings would then also serve to downgrade Confucianism from the perspective of Mahayana Buddhism as the self-proclaimed superior teaching. However, I find this doubtful, since the Five Precepts are fundamental to all Buddhism. By fitting Buddhism into a Confucian paradigm, it actually implies Buddhist subservience to Confucianism (Kaplan 2019, p. 48).

¹³ "Seongju-sa Nanghye hwasang bi", (Yi Jigwan 1994a, p. 162); (Choe 1926), 3.14b.

one of its main protagonists, Yongming Yanshou (904–975), in some of his works also advocated the unity of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, albeit from a position of Buddhist superiority (Kim 2011, pp. 39–40).¹⁴ The Fayan school was indeed also popular in early Goryeo (Vermeersch 2018, p. 279) and may have formed an important impetus for Goryeo to espouse the joint origin of Buddhism and Confucianism as official ideology.¹⁵ That the Fayan remained an important force in Goryeo, where it was known as Beoban, is seen in a rare description of a Beoban text by the Chinese visitor Xu Jing, who saw it in 1123. The text describes the fundamental Chan tenet that truth cannot be expressed in words, but justifies it through references to the Chinese classics, including the *Book of Odes*, part of the Confucian canon (Vermeersch 2016, p. 142).

4. Theories of the Fundamental Unity of Confucianism and Buddhism in the Goryeo Period

Previous research has already suggested that Choe Chiweon's intellectual heritage helped to lay the ideological foundations of the subsequent Goryeo Period (918–1392). The eight stelae for Buddhist monks erected by dynastic founder Wang Geon (r. 918–943, posthumously styled Taejo) between unification in 936 and his death in 943 reveal this particularly well. Even though there is little explicit mention of the relation between Confucianism and Buddhism, we see a lot of the same themes and discursive strategies appearing in these eulogies for Seon monks. For example, the fact that Buddhism is a legitimate tool of governance (see above: "The capable performance of the kingly way lies in matching the Buddha's mind")—normally the domain of Confucianism—is found in the stele inscription for Ieom (870–936), Wang Geon's first royal preceptor, where the king puts a pertinent question to the monk:

"Your reverence did not consider ten thousand leagues too far to come and convert the Three Han [Korea]; to save us from the raging fire [of war] that is spread across all the hills and mountains, I await your instruction" [Ieom] replied: "The way is found in the mind, not in external affairs; dharma likewise comes from oneself, not from others. [The dharma] practiced by emperors and kings may be different from what ordinary people practice, but even though a king may command an army [into battle], he will always take pity on the people. How so? A king is someone who takes [the area between] the four oceans as his home, and the myriad people as his children. He does not kill the innocent yet punishes those who are guilty. Thereby he practices all the virtuous deeds and widely saves the people."¹⁶

It should be emphasized that this is not a record of an actual dialogue that took place, but rather a representation of the desired role of Buddhism. We know this because the dialogue is actually taken almost verbatim from a Chinese biography of monks from the early sixth century (Vermeersch 2020, pp. 28–29). As such, it can be taken to be the official ideology of how Buddhism should operate. Buddhism is employed here to legitimate Wang Geon's violent means of achieving unification. This has antecedents in ancient India, where a theory of the "two wheels of dharma" was formulated to explain how a king's actions should be judged differently from those of ordinary people. Operating in the secular world, the king's "dharma wheel" merely carries out what was ordained by the laws of karma (Gokhale 1966, p. 22).

Thus, while monks may be seen to take an advisory role, this does not mean that the king's policies were thereby Buddhism-inspired. Other texts make it clear that the royal way and the Buddhist way were considered different yet complementary, and that the royal way was based on Confucianism.

¹⁴ It should also be kept in mind that Chan Buddhism itself is the form of Buddhism that is most adapted to the Chinese cultural climate, so a case could be made for the syncretic aspects of Chan Buddhism itself.

¹⁵ As Albert Welter has argued, the early Song dynasty did not follow the advice of Zanning (919–1001), a monk from Wu-Yue, to include Buddhism as an equal to Confucianism in the Song civilizational project. (Welter 1999, p. 42). See also (Welter 2016) for a more nuanced view of Zanning's influence on the Song court, which retained some of his proposals.

¹⁶ "Gwangjo-sa Jincheol daesa bi", (Yi Jigwan 1994b, pp. 21–22).

This is clear from a text composed by the official Min Ji (1248–1326) at the occasion of the consecration of a new statue at Gukcheong temple:

There are no two paths of kingship. Yet the Rites and Music under the Five Emperors and Three Kings [of Chinese antiquity] differed depending on the times being orderly or confused . . . As for a king of the people and a king of the dharma [i.e., a Buddha], although the way of the former is secular and the way of the latter is transcendent, there is no real divergence: it is just that by uniting [the aggregates] into one, one becomes king, whereas by returning to the one, one becomes Buddha.¹⁷

It is typical of this material to take examples from Chinese antiquity to justify the need for Buddhism in the state apparatus, using the edifying/didactic aspect of Confucianism to argue, for example, for the need of a Buddhist preceptor to edify the king and the officials. During the Goryeo period, every king appointed a royal preceptor (K. *wangsa*). Their concrete role is not known, but they played a very important part in legitimating the role of the king, acting as ritual or ethical complement and corrector to the king.¹⁸

This should not be taken too literally as an actual spiritual preceptor, but rather as a philosophical/ideological argument for the ideal relation between Buddhism and Confucianism, which were regarded as two sides of the same coin. At the same time, that this was not just a mere ideal but an actual division of different spheres of influence can also be seen in the fact that there was an expectation of officials to cultivate Buddhism at home. Thus, a common theme is often that a certain official was Confucian at court but Buddhist at home: “For the country he was a loyal official, at home he was a Buddhist disciple; in praising Confucius he was like [Confucius’ favorite disciple] Yan Yuan, in serving Buddha he was in the same class as Ānanda”.¹⁹ That this was also societal custom can be seen in the fact that official historiography praises the official Yun Eonhui (1090–1149) as the “Confucius of Korea”, yet his epitaph, a private burial document, refers to him as “layman Vajra”.²⁰

This kind of juxtaposition of very different ideals might seem strained, yet it is clear that in the Goryeo worldview these were not mutually exclusive positions; from a universalist position, Buddhism and Confucianism were seen simply as different roads to arrive at the same truths. Traditionally, this has been explained through the “pluralist” worldview (Breuker 2010; Park 2017) of Goryeo, which did not favor one tradition over the other. However, seeing this only in terms of tolerance misses an important dimension: that there were attempts at rationalizing this mutual interchangeability shows that there were efforts at reducing the dissonance engendered by such multiple worldviews.

The strongest statement to this effect can be found in the stele erected at Hyeonhwa Temple in 1022. The temple was founded by King Hyeonjong (r. 1009–1031) as a memorial temple for his deceased parents. Having survived devastating invasions by the Khitans between 1010 and 1019, after 1020, he sought to rebuild the country and his legitimacy. The Ten Injunctions of the founder Taejo were rediscovered during his reign (and were probably redacted to suit his circumstances: See Breuker 2008), and in many ways this was a second start for the country. Although nominally dedicated to his parents’ merits, the stele actually emphasizes the filial devotion of Hyeonjong, and the heavenly responses this generated. In the correlative thinking characteristic for pre-modern Sinitic culture, the universe was thought to respond to human actions: kings and emperors therefore often performed

¹⁷ “Gukcheong-sa geumjang jubul Seokga yeorae sari yeong-i gi”, (Seo [1478] 1994), book 68. This translation was adapted from (Vermeersch 2008, p. 138).

¹⁸ The office of *wangsa* (royal preceptor) and *guksa* (state preceptor) were justified by reference to ancient Chinese classics, which mention the existence of the *shibao* as a scholar of high moral integrity and learning to edify the king and keep him on the right moral path. See, for example, the stele for the monk Geungyang (878–965). When King Gwangjong (r. 949–975) wanted to appoint him as royal preceptor, he justified this by referring to the example of ancient Chinese sage kings, who existed long before the advent of Buddhism. “Bongam-sa Jinjeong daesa bi”, (Hanguk yeoksas yeonguhoe 1996, p. 271). See also (Vermeersch 2002).

¹⁹ “Jeongto-sa Beopgyeong daesa bi”, (Yi Jigwan 1994b, p. 216).

²⁰ (Jeong [1453] 1990), 96.32a; (Kim 1997), p. 115.

abstinence or rituals of forgiveness to counter natural or human calamities. The reverse inscription of the stele, written by the official Chae Chungsun, is a wonderful expression of the syncretic attitude towards Buddhism and Confucianism in Goryeo:

Thus I heard: As for the utmost mirror for a worthy man, the Confucian books contain the purpose for diligent cultivation, so as to make politics and education flourish; the Buddhist dharma lies in humble reverence of the mind, so that fortunate causes may be obtained. What is meant with the statement that there are three teachings in name, but that they have the same source, is that the true principle is fused from within, and transformed to manifest [itself] outwardly. Therefore in Confucianism nothing is more important than benevolence and filial piety. Thus the kings of yore said “filial piety is the root of virtue, and that through which the teaching is established”. Thus the kings of yore ordered the universe through filial piety. Their teaching is accomplished without pomp, their government organized without adornment, and the universe made peaceful and disasters prevented. In Buddhism too similar instructions are found in the *Sutra on the Importance of Parental Grace*, so it is not necessary to elaborate this further here. We can say that the two ways, Confucianism and Buddhism, both stem from filial piety; if filial piety is optimized, virtue then expands.²¹

Again, we see a very ecumenic statement, based on a shared understanding of the cosmos. William Chu interprets similar statements of syncretism in the Chinese context, as a conscious or unconscious working towards a middle ground in the course of mutual interactions between Buddhism and Confucianism. However, while “donning a tolerant posture” towards the other, he argues, the point of such syncretistic efforts is really to prove the superiority of one over the other, or to strengthen one’s religion in areas where it is weaker compared to the other (Chu 2006, p. 65). This also goes for theories of a common origin: Chu gives the example of the common origin of Taoism and Buddhism, which are actually subtle (or not so subtle) struggles for determining “who was first”. (Chu 2006, pp. 68–69). Yet, in the case of Goryeo, the common origin theory is based on common values and ends, rather than a shared origin.

Arguably the biggest difference with China is that the terms “Confucian” and “Buddhist” do not make much sense for Goryeo. While Chae Chungsun was an official, unlike China, there does not seem to have been any sense that the public persona of an official was “Confucian”. Since filial piety had been appropriated by Buddhism from the earliest stages of interaction with Chinese society, Chae was actually justified in claiming a common origin, and is not necessarily trying to put a Confucian gloss on Buddhism. Of course, both were systems originating outside Korea, and it was only after Joseon that Buddhism would be labelled “foreign” and become the target of exclusion.

Goryeo people were fully aware of the history of Confucianism and Buddhism in China, including the fact that Buddhism entered China later, and was often the object of attacks by Confucianism. However, they seem to have been genuinely convinced of the necessity of the complementary roles played by each, and did not find Buddhism in any way inferior because it entered China in a later stage and was of “barbarian” origin:

Thus our Confucius, when the Zhou order decayed, established his teaching through Benevolence and Righteousness. After this the teachings of Yangzi, Mozi, the Yellow Emperor, and Laozi emerged one after the other, with their strange words and extravagant arts. They branched out everywhere, and their harmful ways remained till the Qin and Han dynasties, there was nowhere they did not reach; it was insufferable. Then the teachings of Śakyamuni reached China, teaching people that purity of mind comes first, and then also taught them compassionate ways so as to save the people, something that did not

²¹ “Hyeonhwa-sa bi” (eumgi), (Heo 1984), pp. 447–48. Note that there are some difficulties in the edition of this text leading to slightly different readings.

come one moment too soon. Therefore Liuzi thought that the teachings of Buddha were no different from the way of Confucius. He also said, “the dharma seal of the true vehicle [i.e., the tripitaka] should be used together with the Confucian canon, and then the people will know the right direction [for their life].” If then they are put together and mixed up, the two teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism will achieve the same goals.²²

Interestingly, this passage suggests that Buddhism came just at the right time, because China had been led astray by the speculative teachings of Yang Zhu (440–360 BC), Mohism, internal alchemy, and Taoism. Bringing people back to their senses, it matched Confucianism perfectly. In other words, without Buddhism, it is implied, Confucianism would not have been able to implement its moral teachings in China.

During the period of Mongol domination (ca. 1270–1356), Goryeo started interacting proactively with Chinese culture again, and one of the results of this was the introduction of a militant Neo-Confucianism that unsettled this understanding of mutual reliance and common origins and goals. The exact reasons for this are outside the scope of this paper; but, as Choi Jong-Seong has pointed out, the important result was an anti-syncretistic reaction: in other words, the vehemence of the Confucian reaction was due in large part because of the commonalities with Buddhism and were an explicit rejection of this earlier syncretism (Choi 2007).

It was thus about reclaiming territory occupied by Buddhists, and it was arguably because Buddhism had occupied the moral high ground that so much invective was aimed at the supposed moral corruption of Buddhism rather than at its metaphysics. One of the most famous critics, Jeong Dojeon (1342–1398) thus wrote essays denouncing Buddhism in almost caricatural terms (translated in Muller 2015). Whereas the founding father of Neo-Confucianism, Zhu Xi, had still taken the trouble of reading actual Buddhist sutras and criticizing them on their contents (Kaplan 2019, p. 18), Jeong Dojeon simply rallies at what he regards as the absurdity of Buddhism.

But despite some sharp attacks starting in the late fourteenth century, many officials remained in the traditional Goryeo mold, valuing Buddhism and Confucianism equally, with Buddhism often being preferred for moral cultivation. This can be seen in the following statement by the famous statesman Yi Saek (1328–1396):

Human nature is originally quiescent and unmoving, pure and untainted, embracing the fulness of the five constants. This nature is what I should cultivate, and for this end there is not the slightest difference between Confucianism and Buddhism.²³

For this, he was heavily criticized by the new generation of Neo-Confucian scholars, even though many had been his disciples. After the founding of the Joseon dynasty, no Confucian scholar could afford to make similar statements again.

Buddhists for their part, even in Joseon, maintained that their religion was fundamentally the same as Confucianism, or working to achieve the same ends. In the early Joseon period, the defense by the monk Gihwa (Hamheo Deukteong, 1376–1433) is the most noteworthy. In fact, it is the first systematic treatise setting out the arguments for the defense of Buddhism in Korean history. Although it is principally written in response to Jeong Dojeon’s essay *Bulssi japbyeon* (various arguments against

²² Im Chun, “Sorim-sa jungsugi”, (Seo [1478] 1994), book 65.

²³ (Jeong 2015, pp. 239–40). According to John Goulde, Yi Saek also considered filial piety to be common to Confucianism and Buddhism, but it is not clear on which sources he bases himself: “... [Yi Saek’s] view that Buddhism and Confucianism were the same, especially with regard to filial piety, earned him the scorn and condemnation of later Confucian exclusivists.” (Goulde 1985, p. 180). Although he refers to sources such as the *Goryeosa* and *Taejong sillok*, I could not trace it there. Perhaps he is relying on an article by An Gyeheon mentioned on the same pages (An Gyeheon, Yi Saek ui Bulgyogwan, *Bulgyo sahak nonjeok* (Seoul: 1975), 99–127), which I could not trace.

the Buddha), it is also still grounded in the Goryeo worldview of Buddhist-Confucian complementarity, where Buddhism is, however, superior in cultivating people morally.²⁴

5. Conclusions

One of the biggest differences in debates about the syncretism of Buddhism and Confucianism between China and Korea is that they peaked earlier in Korea, i.e., during the Goryeo period of Korea vs. the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) in China. Moreover, while in both cases, we can ascertain what Brook refers to as a “division of labor”, whereas in China Buddhism specialized in the metaphysical and Confucianism in the ethical,²⁵ in Goryeo, Buddhism embraced far more than the metaphysical. Besides the metaphysical, Buddhism was also considered more suited to ethical cultivation, effectively relegating Confucianism to the political domain only.

The arguments for the fundamental equivalence of Buddhism and Confucianism in Goryeo as analyzed in this paper do not suggest that there was an actual syncretism (in most senses of the term) taking place. At the same time, simply characterizing this process as harmonization also does not do full justice to what was taking place. The basic arguments for the similarity of Buddhism to Confucianism started from a tradition of apologetics that revealed Buddhism’s weaker hand: Buddhism had to prove its similarity to Confucian values, not the other way around. We see this in the discourse built up by Choe Chiweon. Yet, it appears that in Goryeo Buddhism encroached on the domain of Confucianism, to the point that it was thought essential to the cultivation of human nature, i.e., ethical cultivation. Thus, we have a kind of ecumenism in which Buddhism and Confucianism are seen as complementary systems that point to the same universal truths, but also with inklings of inclusivism, as Buddhism takes over quintessentially Confucian elements, while claiming to be better at them. The genuine convergence of Buddhism and Confucianism was perhaps not put into practice, but was definitely conceived of among the elites of Goryeo.

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Abbreviations

DDB: Digital Dictionary of Buddhism; <http://buddhism.dict.net/ddb/>; T. Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaikyoku ed. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* [Newly corrected edition of the Buddhist canon from the Taishō era]. Tokyo: Daizōkyōkai, 1924–35.

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²⁴ See e.g., (Muller 2012, pp. 456–57), where Gihwa skillfully uses Confucian texts to show that Buddhism is superior in giving moral guidance to people.

²⁵ (Brook 1993b, p. 15); at least until the Song there was this balance, Brook argues, but with the rise of Neo-Confucianism this division of tasks was challenged.

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Article

The Basis for Coexistence Found from within: The Mystic Universality and Ethicality of Donghak (東學, Eastern Learning)

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Abstract: The rush of Western civilization, headed by Christianity, caused a considerable identity crisis in the 19th century Joseon dynasty. The founder of Donghak 東學, Suun Choe Je-u 水雲 崔濟愚, sought a way out of the crisis through religion. Suun contended that the religions of both east and west are grounded in the same Way of Heaven, and that it can be ascertained through an experience of mystical union induced by chanting a 21-character incantation. He also emphasized the importance of practicing this Way of Heaven in real life. According to him, the Western invasion is an act of selfishness, and goes against the Heavenly Way. The Heavenly Way is considered a foundation that enables communication and coexistence in a religiously diverse society. Despite the fact that his belief in the universality of the Heavenly Way is based on a personal experience—which is problematic to all mysticisms—Donghak provided a powerful discourse to deal with a variety of challenges of his time. In this age of religious pluralism, Suun’s universalism is significant in exploring the intellectual and spiritual foundation of the modern pluralistic thoughts of Korea.

Keywords: Suun Choe Je-u; Joseon dynasty; Donghak; religious pluralism; mysticism; universalism; ethics; perennial philosophy

1. Suun Choe Je-u 水雲 崔濟愚 and Donghak 東學 or Eastern Learning

During the 19th century, the Joseon dynasty was going through a number of problems both domestic and foreign.¹ From within, it was suffering from political chaos; from without, stronger nations such as Russia, China and Japan were out to exploit it. The introduction of Christianity and other western civilizations to what will later be called the hermit nation caused disruptions that shook the traditional world view to its very core. Suun Choe Je-u (1824–1864) is a figure that sought a way out of this chaos through religion.² Based on his own unique religious experience, he founded Donghak, a new religion whose name means “Eastern Learnings” as opposed to the “Western Learnings 西學,” which was the name for Christianity at the time.

Suun was executed in 1864 for his radical belief that all humans are equal. His successor, Haewol Choi Si-hyong (海月 崔時亨, 1827–1898), used the phrase ‘Serve others as you would Hanullim (事人 如天)’ to proselyte Donghak. The Donghak Peasant Revolution developed later into an uprising using force in the name of equality and resistance against foreign invasions. However, they were soon overcome by forces from the Joseon and Japanese governments, and Haewol was arrested and executed.

¹ Joseon is the name of the ruling dynasty in Korea from 1392 to 1910.

² Suun Choe Je-u was born in 1824, into a ruined but aristocratic family. He wandered all across Joseon, practicing religious asceticism until he was thirty. In 1859, when he was thirty-five, he settled in his hometown Yongdam 龍潭 to continue asceticism, then had an encounter with the Sangje 上帝 in a religious experience the following year in 1860. After that, he founded Donghak 東學 and spread the teaching, but was arrested under the charge of “deluding the world and deceiving the people,” and was executed in 1864 at the age of 40 (Pyo 2004).

The third religious leader, Uiam Son Byeong-hui (義菴 孫秉熙, 1861–1922), changed the name of their religion to Chondogyo (天道教 Teaching of the Heavenly Way) in 1905, and strove for modernization of the organization and religious doctrines. In the spirit of Donghak's anti-invasion sentiments, Chondogyo played its part in Joseon's fight against Japan during colonial times. Chondogyo still has a strong presence in Korean religion.

This paper focuses on Suun's religious solution—Donghak—to the social problems of Joseon. The paper consists largely of two parts. The first deals with what kind of religious solutions Suun was seeking while being faced with such heterogeneous worldviews as Christianity, while the second part examines critically how those solutions also functioned as the basis for interreligious communication and co-existence of cultures in his philosophy. Most of the previous research on Suun and Donghak in Korea have focused on historical themes (Yim 2015, pp. 61–92). There is not much research done on this topic in the discipline of religious studies, and even less from a religiously pluralistic point of view.

Research on the religiosity of Donghak has, in general, taken two different paths. The first is an analysis on the relationship between Donghak and other preexisting Asian religions—namely, the effects Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism had on Donghak. Since Confucianism was the most dominant religion of the time, research on the relationship between Confucianism and Donghak takes up the majority.³ The second is research that focuses on the relationship between Christianity and Donghak. Most of these works were conducted by Christian theologians and focused on the comparison of the concepts of gods.⁴

In other words, not much research has been done on Suun's religious universalism as a response to contemporary religious pluralism.⁵ This paper will focus on this point to show how, in an extremely chaotic era, Suun intertwined mystical universalism and ethicality to communicate with heterogeneous worldviews and sought common grounds on which all religions can co-exist in peace.

2. The Age of Turbulence—And Seeking a Way Out through Religion

Suun lived in an era when foreign countries with superlative military forces invaded his country. When western culture, with Christianity at the forefront, was introduced to Joseon, some people could no longer hold on to the familiar worldview they had taken for granted for literally thousands of years—a worldview that had China in the center of the world—and it was as if Joseon was shaken from its foundations. The following is Suun's description of the chaotic times, as quoted from the Donghak Scripture, the *Donggyeong Daejeon* 東經大全.

Recently, our country has been filled with evil things. The people live in a time without peace. This is an indication of the bad fortune of our nation. The Western powers are victorious whenever they fight, and they succeed and takeover wherever they attack. There seems to be nothing that they cannot achieve. I am worried that if China is destroyed, Joseon may be next. Where can we find a way for supporting the nation and comforting the people?⁶

Suun wished to find a way out of this crisis. According to him, the problem was one of 'identity' (Pyo 2004, pp. 54–63). He also believed that selfishness of both individuals and groups was the root

³ Major works include the following: Yim (2003); Cha (2003); Cho (1990); Park (2000); Kim (2002). According to research, the consensus is that Donghak was greatly influenced by Confucianism. However, there are varying opinions, such as the view that Donghak is a creative reinvention of Confucianism seeking social changes (Cho 1990).

⁴ Major literature are as follows: Kim (1974); Kim (2003a); Kwon (2004). Conclusions differ from views that claim Donghak's god was outright influenced by the Christian god (Kwon 2004), to the idea that Suun reached an understanding of god that is similar to the Christian god but only through his own, personal religious experience (Kim 1974).

⁵ Lee (1996) is the only research in this category. Lee defines Suun's religious belief as 'Universalism centering on the Heavenly Way'.

⁶ “是故 我國惡疾滿世 民無四時之安 是亦傷害之數也 西洋戰勝功取 無事不成而 天下盡滅 亦不無唇亡之歎 輔國安民 計將安出,” (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 5).

cause of the problem—Western invasion being an example of such selfishness.⁷ That is why religion, as a doctrine that strives for completion of one's inner self, appealed to him as a solution. Suun believed that the religious solution of realizing and practicing the Will of Heaven could resolve the problem.

Suun insisted that the Will of Heaven could be practiced by overcoming fear and selfishness. The following are his three solutions. First, all cultures of the world, both east and west, share the same Heavenly Way (*Chondo* 天道), the universal truth. Secondly, the Heavenly Way is open to all beings, so it can be found within each and every one because Hanullim, the Supreme Being, exists within all of us.⁸ Thirdly, we must actualize the universal Heavenly Way that we have attained through practice of ethical values, which is the most crucial.

3. The Heavenly Way, the Core Concept of Suun's Religious Solution

3.1. The Universalism of Truth: All Cultures Share the Identical Heavenly Way

Suun was a universalist—he asserted that oriental and occidental cultures all shared the same Heavenly Way, and that is the ground on which he understood other religions. It is in this context that Suun claimed Donghak, the religion he founded, was a synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.⁹ According to Suun, the three main religions of East Asia, namely Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, all contain parts of the Heavenly Way. The same applies to Donghak, his own teaching. He argues even Christianity shares the identical Heavenly Way.

The Western religion (Christianity) is similar but different. It has the appearance of worshipping God, but has no substance. They both have the same destiny as religions and their Way (Truth) is identical, but their doctrines are different.¹⁰

The phrase “their Way is identical” signifies that Christianity also partakes in the Heavenly Way that transcends time and space whereas the description “their doctrines are different” means that the Heavenly Way, although identical at root, may manifest in different ways.

Suun's contention is similar to Aldous Huxley's concept of perennial philosophy. Per Huxley, there is an unchanging religious truth called perennial philosophy, and different religions are but particular manifestations of the same truth for different cultural contexts (Huxley 1945, pp. vii–viii). This point of view is widely shared by many religious universalists such as H. Blavatsky, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan and Ken Wilber.¹¹ These scholars agree that mysticism is the proof that religions of the east and west are identical at the roots. William James, who claimed mysticism is the core of religion, was also of a similar opinion (James 1994, p. 413). The four defining characteristics of the mystical state of consciousness as recounted by James well reflect the universalist point of view.¹² He claims that mysticism transcends cultural contexts such as doctrines or organizations.

⁷ “However, in current times the people of the world have selfish minds, and do not follow the Principle of Heaven nor care for the Will of Heaven. Therefore, my mind is always anxious and fearful, and I don't know what will happen in the future”.

“又此挽近以來 一世之人 各自爲心 不順天理 不顧天命 心常悚然 莫知所向矣,” (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 4).

⁸ Hanullim or Hanul is Korean for God. Suun has many names for the Supreme Being—Sangje 上帝 (Supreme Being), *Choenju* 天主 (Heavenly Lord, or God), *guisin* 鬼神 (ghosts) or Hanullim 韓 允 禮 姆. *Choenju* or Sangje appear mostly in the *Donggyeong Daejeon*, recorded in Chinese characters, and Hanullim is used in *Yongdamyusa* which is written in Korean, but other than that, there is no difference in the significance of these expressions. *Ju* (主) in *Choenju* or *lim* in Hanullim (pronounced *nim* when by itself) signify that the Sangje is a personified, sentient being who should be respected and revered.

⁹ “My Way is a unification of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. The Heavenly Way itself is not originally Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, but Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism are partial truths of the Heavenly Way—they are ethical codes of the past. The Three Bonds and Five Relationships of Confucianism; Cultivation of Nature and Enlightenment of the Mind of Buddhism; Nurturing of one's Energy and Nature of Daoism are all parts of my Way. My Way, founded on the deepest foundations of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, has its principle in the Heavenly Way and its applications in Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism—so be careful not to misunderstand this.” (Park 1921).

¹⁰ “曰：與洋道無異者乎？曰：洋學如斯而有異，如而無實，然而運則一也，道則同也，理則非也，” (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 9).

¹¹ For perennial philosophy and its religious significance, see Ferrer (2002).

¹² The four defining characteristics according to James are ineffability, noetic quality, passivity and transiency (James 1994, pp. 414–17).

However, it is not that Suun considered all religions to be entirely identical. According to him, religions differ by methods of expression and the virtues they value most. For example, Confucianism stresses the practice of humaneness, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, while Christianity emphasizes the importance of praying. On the other hand, according to the doctrine of Donghak, the believer can become one with God that resides within themselves through the practice of incantation. Despite all this, says Suun, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Donghak fundamentally all teach of the same Heavenly Way. In this aspect, Suun's universalism functions as a basis for both understanding and reconciling with other religions, highlighting the uniqueness of Donghak's teaching and religious practice.

However, his universalism inevitably leads to the following questions. First of all, how could he ever be certain whether all religions are manifestations of a single Heavenly Way? In other words, what is the rational basis for his universalism? Suun asserts that this is possible through the personal experience of 'my mind is your mind' (*Osimjeukyeoshim* 吾心即汝心)—an individual's experience of learning the Heavenly Way. It is a mystical claim that a transcendental, Supreme Being may be known through personal experience.

3.2. Personal Mysticism: Heavenly Way Can Be Discovered within Everyone

Mysticism may be defined as "a religious tradition that believes a person may experience union with the ultimate being, deliberately pursues practice to change one's consciousness, and is of a religious thought that explains the integrating relationship between the ultimate being, the universe and humankind based on the knowledge gained through said experience" (Seong 2014, p. 169). In short, mysticism has three components—experience, practice and thought—of which, an experience of mystical union is the core concept. Practice is the method with which to achieve that experience, and the thought is the theoretical effort to articulate the relationship between the ultimate being and the phenomenal world based on the knowledge gained through that experience (Seong 2014, pp. 169–72).

Suun contended that we could all become one with the Supreme Being, Hanullim. His core teaching is based on the mystical declaration that humankind and the Supreme Being are fundamentally identical.¹³ Suun's religious experience, as illustrated in Donghak literature, is roughly threefold—the first encounter with Hanullim in 1860, then conversation with the Heavenly Master (*Chonsamundap* 天師問答) and finally, the experience of 'my mind is your mind'.¹⁴ In 1860, Suun has an encounter with the Supreme Being that introduces itself as Sangje 上帝. However, this encounter leaves Suun flustered and fearful as he had never expected to meet a personified god.¹⁵ To him, a personified god that explicitly expresses his own will appeared Christian. Suun, when asked to spread the Teaching in the world, demands immediately whether he should 'teach the Western (Christian) truth'.¹⁶

Compared to Christianity, the appearance of a personified god that talks to him as a teacher and imparts incantations are relatively rare in eastern religions such as Buddhism or Confucianism.¹⁷ The interaction with the Supreme Being itself sets Suun's earlier religious experiences apart from traditional eastern religions. Nonetheless, the fear and doubt Suun had for Sangje during the first encounter developed into trust after going through an intimate conversation termed *Chonsamundap*.

¹³ The identity between a person and God is expressed as *Innaechon* 人乃天 (All humans are divine). For the concept of human being as appears in Donghak, see Kim (1978, pp. 31–32).

¹⁴ Kim Yonghwi also analyzes Suun's religious experience in context of mysticism, and discusses the process from the first encounter with the Sangje to the experience of 'my mind is your mind' (Kim 2007, pp. 64–65). He also contends that Suun's religious experience lasted for several months until he realized that 'my mind is your mind' (Kim 2003b, pp. 217–42).

¹⁵ "不意四月, 心寒身戰, 疾不得執症, 言不得難狀之際, 有何仙語忽入耳中, 驚起探問, 則曰 "勿懼勿恐, 世人謂我上帝, 汝不知上帝耶?" 問其所然, 曰 余亦無功, 故生汝世間, 教人此法, 勿疑勿疑." (Kim and Yoon 2007, pp. 4–5).

¹⁶ 曰, "然則西道以教人乎?" (Kim and Yoon 2007, pp. 4–5).

¹⁷ Christian theologians including Gyeongjae Kim especially focus on the fact that an andromorphous god is Donghak's greatest peculiarity that sets it apart from other eastern religions. For comparison between Buddhism and Donghak, see Han (2009, pp. 251–68).

It is a form of channeling, with Suun asking the questions and Hanullim answering them. Channeling is a very common religious experience—it is a phenomenon of communicating, in diverse ways, with a non-material being in an altered state of mind.¹⁸

However, the Supreme Being, as described in Donghak, does not stop at having a conversation, distinctive from the self. The declaration that the mind of God is in fact the mind of a human transcends such duality. Suun's experience of mystical union, after he has gone through *Chonsamundap* and Hanullim's test, is illustrated as follows.

The *Chonsamundap* took place from fifth of April of year 1860 to the twentieth of September of the same year. Among the many questions and answers that took place during that period of time, there was one time when Hanullim tested the Great Divine Teacher (Suun). The Sangje asked, "... Thus, I will give you the position of Minister, even though you have no title now, to save the world." ... "As even the Sangje teaches with the wrongful Way, I will never listen to the Sangje's order or teaching again," he vowed to himself, and did not listen even when the Sangje gave lessons, fasted for eleven days and did not change his mind. The Sangje declared, "Your will is good to behold, and your integrity is commendable! Your study has already reached its peak, your practice is already at the highest level and your behavior is nearly perfected—now I will grant you perpetual harmony". (Lee 1970, pp. 14–15)

The gift of the perpetual harmony that Sangje gave unto Suun after passing the test was the experience of mystical union with the Supreme Being.

The moment the Great Divine Teacher heard this, a new energy circulated in his consciousness and new thoughts arose in his mind, and the words of the Sangje that were heard from out of the air was now resounded from within the Great Divine Teacher's mind—it became the teaching that had descended from above, and he wrote down a lengthy script. He asked himself then answered himself, recited the eternal then sung the eternal; the Heaven and Earth, Sun and Moon, the stars, grass and trees, animals and beasts, humans and things all answered to the song; millions and billions miles of space spread before the eyes; millions and billions of years spread before the eyes so there was no space far or close and no time past or coming, so millions and billions of innumerable hours and space drifted inside the single piece that was my mind. (Yoon 2000, pp. 36–39)

The above passage is an illustration of a typical mystical state of consciousness. Such consciousness of infinity and perpetuity is representative of the extraordinary insight that comes with this state. Additionally, the defining characteristics of this state is that there is no longer a differentiation between the self and other, or the relativity of time and space.¹⁹ Suun's religious experience began with the first encounter, continued throughout several months of *chonsamundap*, and ended with an experience of mystical union. This process can be characterized by its shift from dualistic to monistic experience.

The incantation in 21 characters is the basic religious practice that Suun suggests in order to achieve mystical union. It consists of the incantation which prays for the descent of the Spirit—至氣 今至 願為 大降 *jigi geumji weonwi daegang*—and the main incantation—侍天主造化定永世不忘萬事知 *si cheonju johwa jeong yeongse bulmang mansaji*. Suun interprets the incantation as follows.

They asked, "What is the meaning of the incantation which prays for the descent of the Spirit?" I answered: "the ultimate (*ji* 至) means the highest and extremely great. The [ultimate] vital force (*ji-gi* 至氣) is like the mysterious Spirit, and it is vast and full in the universe. It touches

¹⁸ For different sorts of channeling and its religious significance, see Brown (1997).

¹⁹ James (1994, pp. 423–60) describes monism as all barriers between the individual and the real disappearing, or being absorbed by the One.

and governs all things. It looks like it has a form, but it is difficult to describe. It seems to have sound, yet it is difficult to understand. It is the one Ultimate Energy of the vast universe. *Geum-ji* 今至 means that now one joins the church (Donghak/Chondogyo) and understand the meaning of uniting with the vital force (of God), *Weon-wi* 願為 means hoping and praying. *Dae-gang* 大降 means uniting with the Ultimate Energy. *Si* 侍 means having the Divine Spirit within and expressing the vital force in life. When people realize this, they will keep it in their hearts without change, *Ju* 主 refers to respecting, honoring and serving God like one's own parents. *Johwa* 造化 means natural becoming and transformation. *Jeong* 定 means oneness with the Divine Virtue and deciding to have the mind of God. *Yoengse* 永世 refers to the long life of humankind. *Bulmang* 不忘 means thinking about God always without forgetting. *Mansa* means many things. *Ji* 知 means understanding God's way and achieving wisdom. Thus, if one would think about and never forget the bright Truth and Virtue of God and the incantation, one will unite with the Ultimate Energy (*ji-gi* 至氣) of God and attain the perfect sagehood.²⁰

Incantation which prays for descent of the Spirit is literally that; by the recitation of the incantation, one is praying that the Hanullim will descend upon him or her. Reciting the main incantation is a religious practice that creates the mystical union of the individual with Hanullim. It also contains the explanation on the relationship between Hanullim and humankind. At the moment of mystical union, our minds transform into something limitless and perpetual, and we learn firsthand that our minds are identical to that of Hanullim.²¹

It is interesting that Suun claims that this incantation appears “in the literature of the present and those of the past.”²² This belief is in agreement with Suun's universalism—that the Heavenly Way is captured in different forms in different times and places. While talking of the incantation, he stresses that the essence of reciting the incantation lies in sincerity. There may be many methods to discovering the ultimate truth, but he is of the opinion that the mindset of the practitioner is key. When we “preserve the good mind, rectify the vital force (守心定氣)” “naturally (無為而化)”, the Hanullim within us will manifest himself (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 10). He stresses repeatedly that without sincerity, the recitation of the incantation will be utterly useless.²³

The key is to preserve the good mind and to have sincerity. Suun insists that this emphasis on preserving the good mind is what differentiates his teaching from Confucianism and makes it unique.²⁴ Then, what is the standard with which one can judge if the good mind is being preserved? It is the presence of selfishness. Suun criticizes that the doctrines of Christianity are hollow because Westerners might claim they have the Way of Heaven, but in truth, they treat other human beings with utter

²⁰ “曰降靈之文何為其然也曰至者極焉之為至氣者虛靈蒼蒼無事不涉無事不命然而如形而難狀如聞而難見是亦渾元之一氣也今至者於斯入道知其氣接者也願為者請祝之意也大降者氣化之願也侍者內有神靈外有氣化一世之人各知不移者也主者稱其尊而與父母同事者也造化者無為而化也定者合其德定其心也永世者人之平生也不忘者存想之意也萬事者數之多也知者知其道而受其知也故明明其德念念不忘則至化至氣至於至聖”(Kim and Yoon 2007, pp. 10–11).

²¹ Choi Donghwi also asserts that “To have God within you is the mystical state of the human body and mind becoming one with God” (Choi 1999, pp. 1–21).

²² “曰文之意何也曰至為天主之字故以言之今文有古文有”(Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 10).

²³ However, in order to realize the Way and to establish Virtue, one must have the genuine sincerity and learn from the right person. Some people hear bad rumors and believe them, and some people hear the wrong kind of incantation and recite it. Isn't it a terribly wrong and sad thing? “雖然道成德立 在誠在人 或聞流言而修之 或聞流而誦焉 豈非哉 敢不憫然”(Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 19).

²⁴ “仁義禮智 先聖之所教 修心正氣 惟我之更定 (Humaneness, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are the virtues taught by the former sages. Keeping a good mind and having the right spiritual force are the virtues established only by me),” (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 18).

contempt—only as means of achieving selfish ends for the individual or otherwise.²⁵ A good example would be how they invaded other nations.

By the same token, Suun argues that Confucianism also stresses the importance of virtues such as humaneness, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, but the problem is that they fail to put these truths into practice, all owing to selfishness. Suun claims that without getting rid of this selfishness, there is no way to achieve sincerity or to preserve the good mind. When they discard selfishness and pursue sincerity, the Sangje—the Supreme Being—will emerge naturally from within themselves and become one with them. When that happens, religious practices and teachings that may appear outwardly different, will be proved to be identical as a universal Way of Heaven. In the end, the process of religious practice and the key of the conclusion is that one must discard selfishness.

It is limiting that Suun’s only criticism is selfishness. As previous research shows, Confucianism greatly influenced Donghak in that Suun’s religious thought was built upon Confucian ideas and worldview. Donggyeong Daejeon, the central Donghak scripture, borrows heavily from Confucian concepts, and Suun does not have any discord with the details of Confucianism (Yim 2003). Rather, he focused on the fact that even though other religions of his time share the foundation on the universal Heavenly Way, they have yet failed as a motivation to make the world a better place.²⁶ Suun’s expression that they have ‘outrun their fortune’ is not a criticism of other religions’ doctrines, but the fact that they are no longer equipped with the force to change reality.²⁷ These are the reasons that Suun finds that it is important to change the realities of ‘right now, right here’. He offers an inner-worldly mysticism that emphasizes the ethical relationship with others. He stresses that one should become more sensitive to the relationship.

3.3. The Ethical Relationalism: We Must Practice the Heavenly Way within Our Relationships

The mystical belief that humans can learn the universal Way of Heaven leads to the necessity that one must become more sensitive in relationships as a moral being. There are three different kinds of relationships that Suun finds are important—the relationship between a person and God, the relationship between a person and another person, and the relationship between a person and the world.

In Donghak, this relationship may come down to a single concept; to serve God (*sichonju* 侍天主). The verb *si* 侍 which means to serve, is ostensibly an action that presupposes a dualistic distinction between the person that serves and Hanullim that is served. However, Suun stresses that Hanullim, who is the object of this act of serving, in fact resides within the self, so the one who serves also becomes the one that is served. Suun insists that people’s faith should not be in Suun himself, but Hanullim that resides in each one of them.²⁸ Put differently, when Hanullim becomes manifest in ourselves, the self and the absolute become one. Therefore, the significance of “serving (侍)” is only completely realized in the dynamic moment when the distinction between man and God disappears.

It is the same within the relationship between person and person. Treating man as God (*sain yeocheon* 事人如天) is the Donghak virtue that regulates the relationship between people (Yoon 2014,

²⁵ “曰吾道無爲而化矣 守其心正其氣 率其性受其教 化出於自然之中也 西人 言無次第 書無皂白而 頓無爲天主之端 只祝自爲身之謀 (I answered, “Our Way is the Natural Way. If each person preserves a good mind, rectifies the vital force, follows their original nature, and receives the Divine teaching, all will turn out well naturally. The Westerners have no order in their words and no logic in their writings. There is no genuine service for God but they only pray for selfish ideas.” (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 10).

²⁶ Christianity, with its faith in equality of all humans, also a great force of social reform—it was persecuted by the Joseon government along with Donghak. However, Suun’s opinion of Christianity was that it was the backdrop to Western invasion of other cultures. He also criticized the fact that the church was against some of Joseon traditions such as ancestral rituals (Cho 2003).

²⁷ “Confucianism and Buddhism may have outrun their fortune of several thousand years,” (Yoon 2009, p. 325).

²⁸ Do not have faith in me. Are you acting out of faith in me? He resides in you; should you leave something close and take from afar? The only thing I hope for is that [you] would only have faith in Hanullim, that those of you who have not yet escaped from ignorance should discard books pour your efforts in ascetic practice—that is also ethics (Yoon 2009, p. 358).

p. 45). To treat, as in the case of to serve, is a verb that assumes there is a distinction between the one that treats or serves and the one that is treated or served. It signifies that since the self and the other are all in service of Hanullim, one should respect the other as Hanullim. However, if we are ontologically identical within Hanullim, then there is no duality in ‘treat’ either. The action of serving each other becomes an action between Hanullim within the self and Hanullim within the other—it becomes a paradoxical relationship within the single absolute being.

This paradox of relationship is expanded into the relationship between a person and the world around them. *Ichon sikchon* 以天食天, the doctrine suggested by the second leader Haewol, literally means ‘Heaven devouring Heaven’ (Yoon 2014, pp. 284–85). Because food is another life form outside the self, on expanding its meaning, it could stand for the relationship between the self and all of nature. The act of eating, at first glance, requires a dual distinction between the self and object. However, when seen from the point of view that all things come from an identical root, it may be understood as Heaven eating itself, as Heaven is all of being in its entirety. As the distinction between the subject and the object is rendered moot in ‘serve’ or ‘treat’—the one serving is in fact the one being served, the one treating is the one being treated—the same would be true for the verb ‘eat’.

Now, each individual action, when seen from this point of view, is movement of the infinite Hanullim confirming the eternity of the self and the whole within the infinite Hanullim.²⁹ When I am forming a relationship with Hanullim, other people or things, I must treat (侍, 事, 食) them as Hanullim; that is when the actions within these dual relationships become an action within the infinite Hanullim. Suun stresses that monistic factors are present in all dualistic relationships—and that only by realizing this will it be possible to sincerely respect one another within a dualistic relationship. This ethical aspect of Donghak originates from its unique concept of god—that Hanullim embraces all beings within it, and simultaneously can become personified to form close relationships with beings within it, as it did with Suun.³⁰

Furthermore, the fact that Hanullim did not remain a mere metaphysical principle, but revealed Himself to Suun as a personified being, also played a part in fortifying the ethical aspect of Donghak. From their first encounter, Hanullim regrets chaos in the human world, and expresses its wish that things were better.³¹ Suun takes this to formulate a strong code of ethics for social participation. In short, in Donghak, being ethical involves being socially active—and this code of conduct is the combination of the revelation Suun received from Hanullim and his mystical experience.

It is from this particular point of view that Suun criticizes Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism and Christianity—can they actually ease the pain that the world suffers? Christianity claims that one should love one’s neighbor as one loves God—so, it apparently has the Heavenly Way. However, it came as a shock to Suun that Christians do not actually practice this Heavenly Way. For Suun who believed that Hanullim, who had appeared before him, and the Christian god were one and the same, the fact that Westerners would build churches on the land they had brutally invaded seemed to be contradictory to the divine will.³² Especially, the Christian belief that god only resided in heaven went against his own mystical experience.³³

²⁹ “We search infinitely, and know infinitely, so within this infinite boundary of God, isn’t this the infinite me?” (Yoon 2009, p. 520)

³⁰ Suun’s panentheistic divinity simultaneously maintains a dualistic relationship and a monistic identity with humankind. For Donghak’s unique concept of god, see Seong (2009).

³¹ “余亦無功, 故生汝世間, 教人此法, 勿疑勿疑 (I have not been able to find anyone to teach the Truth. Thus, I am sending you to the world to teach the Truth. Therefore, do not ever doubt it.),” (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 4).

³² “至於庚申 傳聞西洋之人 以爲天主之意 不取富貴 功取天下 立其堂 行其道故 吾亦有其然豈其然之疑 (In 1860 there were rumors that in order to serve God’s will, the Westerners were not seeking wealth or glory, yet they attacked and conquered the world, and built their churches and spread their religion. I also wonder whether it was true and why they did that),” (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 4).

³³ “It is as if they believe that the Supreme Being above only resides in [the specific place of] Heaven. It is unnecessary even to discuss the principles of yin and yang—it is just all futile talk,” (Yoon 2009, p. 477).

In the end, Suun decided that practice was more important than the mere awareness of the Heavenly Way. The core concept is whether one respects all humans as beings that serve Hanullim—as Hanullim itself. Suun’s teaching did go beyond mere words. Suun, after coming out of the period of religious asceticism, bowed down to his wife, freed two female slaves, adopted one as his daughter and another as his daughter-in-law—all unprecedented behavior at the time. His actions were proclamations of defiance against the contemporary social inequalities. His determination to put his beliefs into action was how his teachings expanded into a full-blown social movement—the Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894.³⁴

4. Suun’s Religious Solution and Religious Pluralism

After the introduction of Christianity, Joseon went through an era of religious pluralism. Some became entirely infatuated with Christianity and idolized all its aspects, while others perceive them to be hatred and violent oppression. Suun, based on his universalism that all religions are expressions of the Heavenly Way, avoided either extremes and took the middle path.³⁵ It was his belief that no particular religion could monopolize the truth. It was not that eastern religions were simply inferior to Christianity, nor was it exclusively superior to it. Neither extreme laudation nor hatred was acceptable to Suun.

However, Suun’s universalism leads to the following three questions. One, if the Heavenly Way is identically manifest in all the religions, then is he ignoring the individual characteristics of different religions? If it is Suun’s belief that each and every religion is an expression of the identical truth of eternity, then it might be criticized that distinctive uniqueness of each religion may be overlooked. Two, by sticking to the belief that all religions are equal as manifestations of Heavenly Way, would not there be a risk of relativism of values? If all religions were reflections of a universal truth, it might not be possible to pass even the slightest judgement on any religion. Three, how can the universality of the Heavenly Way be confirmed by an individual experience such as mystical union? It is a question of whether a personal experience can be an epistemological proof for a claim of transcendental truth. Surely it is not that Suun formulated the questions in this way, but taking his philosophy into consideration, one might come up with the following answers.

First, Suun did claim that all religions come from a single Heavenly Way, but it does not mean that he disregarded any difference between the religions. He explained that religions are clearly distinguishable from one another by their characteristic methods of practice, emphasis on teachings and the degree of ethical practice.³⁶ For example, while Confucianism stresses the importance of humaneness, righteousness, propriety and wisdom (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 18), the Eastern Learning, on the other hand, places importance on ‘preserving the good mind and rectifying the vital force’ and ‘serving God’ (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 10). This is because all religions are reflections of particular times and circumstances. In this context, he believed that Donghak is a more fitting teaching for his contemporaries in Joseon. By the same token, he also claimed that although there are incantations for every era, the incantations of Donghak will be more useful for the people of Joseon. In short, despite his universalism, he did not completely disregard the differences in religions.

³⁴ After the death of Suun, the ideals of Donghak were inherited and put into practice in the real world by the Donghak Peasant Revolution. It began in January of 1894 and took place in two waves, ending in defeat for the peasant army in November of the same year. The leader of the revolution, Jeon Bong-jun, was arrested and executed the following year, in March. (Pyo 2014, pp. 429–35).

³⁵ John Hick offers the concept of ‘the Real’ as basis for communication between religions. If different religions are diverse manifestations of the ultimate being, it is his belief that a reality-centered approach can form a basis for inter-religion communication and understanding (Hick 1983, p. 133).

³⁶ Hick claims that religion as a manifestation of the ultimate being inevitably has its limits and other unique characteristics, so intercommunication between religions deepens the understanding of the ultimate being (Hick 1982, p. 117). Hick’s understanding is similar to Suun’s claim that religion is a unique expression of a universal Way of Heaven, in several aspects.

Second, against the risk of Suun's universalism falling into an extreme form of relativism that believes 'everything is right', he offers a solid standard particularly of ethical practice. All individuals and groups are equal in the aspect that it may approach the Heavenly Way. However, there are differences in the execution of their moral ideals. For example, invading other nations by force against their will for selfish purposes are definitely behaviors that go against the practice of the Heavenly Way, which presupposes mutual respect and love.³⁷ This standard should be applied to both individuals and groups. Donghak's anti-foreign influence, anti-feudalism stance has its foundation on the imperative that the Heavenly Way must be practiced on both personal and group levels. The practice of the Heavenly Way is the standard by which a religion may be judged to be good or bad. Especially, when selfishness is functioning as a motivation for certain behavior, it is difficult to respect others' intent. Suun's religious universalism forms an intimate pair with the moral code of conduct that builds the society upon the mutual respect of individuals and groups.

Thirdly, Suun did not provide a clear answer to the question of whether a personal experience can function as the epistemological foundation for universal truth. He declares that because all human beings have Hanullim within them, this may be learned through incantation practice (Kim and Yoon 2007, p. 10). In other words, the possibility of mystical insight is the basic prerequisite for Donghak. Furthermore, those who accepted Suun's teaching took this for granted—Suun, although he declared that the experience of 'my mind is your mind' was how he confirmed the truth of the universal Heavenly Way, but never went on to discuss it in detail.

However, this question is the most fundamental dilemma that all mystical traditions face and does not pertain only to Donghak. Mysticism claims that the existence of the ultimate being can be perceived through an extraordinary experience, the mystical union. The vehicle that makes one awaken to the ultimate being is personal experience. Surely, numerous methods are offered as ways of achieving the experience by mystical traditions, such as incantation, prayer or meditation. It is also the case with Donghak. An earnest practice of incantation, discarding all selfishness, leads to the experience of union with the inner Hanullim.

It is true that Suun's mystical claim cannot be proven. The contention that personal experience functions as a confirmation for a transcendental Heavenly Way belongs to the realm of faith. Within a religious faith system, which Donghak is, this may be convincing enough for the believers that accept this prerequisite. However, for those who do not, this will not have any influence. This fact becomes apparent during the course of Donghak's ideals manifesting itself in the real world. The government of Joseon and contemporary Confucians regarded Donghak as a Christian teaching, incompatible with Confucianism, and executed Suun.³⁸ It is ironic that those who opposed Donghak thought that Donghak's Hanullim was identical to the Christian god.

5. Conclusion: The Paradoxical Center That Can Be Found from Within

Suun Choe Je-u strove to find a way out of the chaos, formed by the encounter of eastern and western cultures, through religion. After intense religious asceticism, Suun reached the conclusion that all cultures share an identical Heavenly Way—his universalism. He believed that anyone can tap into the universal truths from within the self, and that this religious experience is the bridge of coexistence and communication that makes it possible to overcome any gap. From a universalist point of view, the West is not just an object of marvel, or something to disparage as simple owners of tools but without soul. Hanullim had allowed the universal Heavenly Way to everyone, so the dual distinction between the superior 'center' of the world and the inferior 'edges' did not mean anything to Suun. According

³⁷ Hick also asserts that the standard for 'grading' the values of religious traditions is how they transition from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness (Hick 1981, p. 451).

³⁸ “今此東學之稱，全襲西洋之術，而特移易名目，眩亂蚩蠢耳 (This title 'Donghak' is just another name for the tricks they use in the West, to confuse the foolish),” Seungeongwonilgi [承政院日記],” (National Institute of Korean History 2020), <http://sjw.history.go.kr/>.

to him, any Eastern person speaking of Western culture as ‘ignorant of humaneness or righteousness’ or any Westerner speaking of Eastern culture as barbaric are both going against the Heavenly Way.

Nevertheless, Suun’s universalism is far from extreme relativism that claims everything is right—it is because Suun emphasized the moral practice of the universal Heavenly Way in historical reality rather than a simple intellectual enlightenment of it. Suun’s universalism does not lose its meaning because it stresses the importance of ethical practice. Hanullim that resides within every one of us is the foundation of the communication of Eastern and Western culture, and the emphasis on practice functions as a mutual foundation. Suun, by discovering the center of the universe within the self, strove to overcome the duality that were immensely popular at the time. Because Hanullim is within all of us, it is not possible for a certain individual or a culture to be at the exclusive center. On the contrary, any individual or group that practices Hanullim’s will the best is closer to becoming the center of the universe. It is Suun’s core teaching that we become the center when we respect God, another person, or the world around us ‘right now, right here.’

Even though the ideals of Donghak failed to realize itself in the real world, Suun’s insight can still shine a light on the modern world. Donghak declared on mystical grounds that all human life is precious—and made an effort to actualize these principles in the world. We are living in an age when religious pluralism is more valued than ever before in human history. Suun’s claim, although it is limited by the premise of a personal experience, is worthy of attention. What he had offered was a vivid example of religious pluralism seeking communication and coexistence, based on his experience of mythical union.³⁹

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³⁹ Kim Gyeongjae declares that Donghak originates from Suun’s experience of ‘my mind is your mind’ or the experience of ‘serving God’, and that these experiences are Donghak’s central core (Kim 1999, pp. 22–43). Kim Yonghwi also contends that Donghak is not a mere amalgam of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism and Christianity, but a unique religion that was formed in the active process of reevaluating his own religious experience (Kim 2009, pp. 36–67).

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Article

Similar but Superior: Rhetoric of Coexistence Employed by Religions in Jeju Island, Korea [†]

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[†] This article relies on many of the materials that I used in a paper that was published in Korean in a Korean journal (Yoo 2012). Unlike the former work that devoted many pages to a general explanation of religious topography of Jeju Island, this article focuses on the rhetoric of coexistence employed by Jeju religions.

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Abstract: Religions in Jeju, South Korea, have sometimes been in conflict with each other, but have generally coexisted peacefully. In a situation where diverse religions share an island that is isolated from the mainland, they have emphasized that they are similar yet superior to their rivals. Religions that were imported to Jeju, including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity, have tried to make themselves look familiar to Jeju people on the basis of people’s knowledge of preexisting religions. These religions sometimes embraced rituals of preexisting religions to which people were strongly attached. The Jeju indigenous religion has also acknowledged that the ideas and practices of Buddhism and Confucianism have remarkable similarities to those of its own. Simultaneously, each religion in Jeju has claimed its superiority over others. Religions in Jeju have argued that other religions’ partial truth and limited value are in sharp contrast with the complete truth and superior value of their own. They have asserted that only they can provide the proper way of keeping the order of the universe or attaining salvation of human beings. This common rhetoric that “my religion is similar but superior to other religions” has been repeated in Jeju, in order to persuade people outside the religion to accept or at least approve it on the one hand, and to maintain the peaceful coexistence with other religions on the other hand.

Keywords: religious conflicts; coexistence of religions; Korean religions; Jeju Island

1. Introduction

Jeju-*do* (Jeju) is the largest island in Korea and one of the nine provinces that constitute the country¹. It is the smallest province, with a population of about 583 thousand people over 1848 square kilometers, as of 2015. Considering the entire South Korean population of about 50 million over 99,373 square kilometers, Jeju Province is quite small. As Jeju is an island that is about 100 km away from the mainland, its religious tradition has developed its own distinctive features. Most notably, the indigenous shamanic religion is still strong and active. The official Korean census does not indicate the number of people who profess the indigenous religion because the questionnaire of the census deals only with so-called institutionalized religions. Those who regularly participate in communal or family shamanic rituals that are mainly performed or led by *simbang* (Jeju shaman), often about half of the inhabitants in villages in the countryside, have no option but to state that they have “no religion” on the census form if they do not go to church or Buddhist temple. A large portion of those who claim to have no religion, about 58% of the whole Jeju population according to the November 2015 census,

¹ The Korean word “do” means both “province” and “Island” without any change in pronunciation; therefore “Jeju-do” refers to Jeju Island as well as Jeju Province. When the word Jeju-do is used to designate Jeju Province, it includes the main island, namely Jeju Island, and 63 smaller nearby islands among which eight are inhabited.

believe in the efficacy of the rituals and the divination practiced by *simbang*. In addition, many among those who identify themselves as Buddhists, 23.9% according to the same census, also often participate in the indigenous rituals (Statistics Korea 2016).

Another important feature of the religious topography of Jeju is the relatively weak influence of Christianity. Christianity is the biggest religion in South Korea as shown in the November 2015 census that reports 27.7% of the population as Christian. The rate of Buddhists stands at 15.5% throughout the country. But in Jeju, the number of Christians is much smaller than that of Buddhists. Christians in Jeju make up only 17.9% of the whole population, while Buddhists constitute 23.9%. In addition, Protestantism in Jeju has not been as successful as on the mainland. While Protestants constitute 19.7% of the national population, the rate of Protestants in Jeju stands at 10.0%. The Catholic population was the same, 7.9%, in the national population and in Jeju.

Therefore, the indigenous shamanic religion, Buddhism, and Christianity now coexist without serious trouble in Jeju, showing the conspicuous characteristic of its religious topography as there is maintenance of a range of religions, including the strong indigenous shamanic religion, fairly strong Buddhism, and relatively weak Christianity. Though few people identify themselves as Confucians, the influence of Confucianism still remains in the ways of thinking and acting of Jeju people, which should be also considered when research on Korean religion is carried out.

In this article, I will focus on the rhetoric that has been often employed by religions in Jeju to convince people of their similarity to others and at once to claim their superiority over others. They have emphasized both common elements of themselves with others and their own superiority when they try to explain their relationship with other religions. Imported religions, especially Buddhism and Confucianism, have acknowledged some important elements of the indigenous shamanic religion and appropriated them for the purpose of making themselves look familiar to residents who have been holding fast to shamanism. Religions in Jeju selectively borrowed certain elements from other religions which they recognized as true or valuable, and appropriated them as effective tools for broadening their influence.

This rhetoric is based on comparisons performed by religions, which “tells us how things might be conceived” rather than “how things are,” and which is in fact very often “apologetic” though it is seemingly made for intellectual understanding (Smith 1990, pp. 52, 143). Apologetic rhetoric of a religious tradition employs a way of comparison that highlights the commonality between itself and other religions in order to make itself look familiar to others. In Jeju, the common elements that were found in other religions helped a religion make itself look familiar to its possible future adherents. This comparison also emphasizes the comparing religion’s superiority over the others. Religions of Jeju that came into contact with other religions acknowledged and appreciated some elements of other religions for the purpose of accentuating their own superiority over others. While other religions vaguely showed the “partial truth” from the common elements, the religion persuading others often argues that only it manifests clearly the whole truth. As Jonathan Z. Smith indicates, religions often stress sameness in comparing themselves with others in order to justify themselves and underscore others’ inferiority (Smith 1990, pp. 54–84).

I will demonstrate that this rhetoric of commonality and superiority has been employed not only for attracting people adhering to other religions but also for maintaining the peaceful coexistence with others. In the second section, the “similar but superior” rhetoric of Confucianism and Buddhism will be examined. Religions in Jeju have needed to convince Jeju people of their similarity to others because it was the most efficient way to be incorporated in the cosmology shared by Jeju people. Furthermore, they needed to prove their *raison d’être* and to differentiate themselves. In the third section, it will be shown that the “similar but superior” rhetoric is also to be found in Christianity in Jeju. This rhetoric has been needed to attract people outside the religion, to manage its adherents, and to maintain a peaceful state of coexistence. In the fourth section, views of the indigenous shamanic religion on other religions will be described. Though Jeju shamans clearly recognize the similarity of the Jeju

indigenous religion to Buddhism and Confucianism, they also emphasize the superiority of their own religious system.

To demonstrate the commonality and superiority employed by Jeju religions, I tried to examine related written materials as thoroughly as possible, ranging from Jeju indigenous myths to books written by Confucian scholars during the Joseon period, and to a book written by the first Korean native Catholic priest in Jeju. At the same time, I tried to observe what religious people in Jeju think about other religions, spending quite a long time with them. I also interviewed four Jeju shamans, two Buddhist nuns and one monk, a Protestant pastor, and two Catholic priests working in Jeju. Though the interviews may not be ideal for a source, they are very useful for the aim of this article.

2. “Similar but Superior” Rhetoric of Confucianism and Buddhism in Jeju

2.1. A Short History of Religions in Jeju

The indigenous shamanic religion is more alive in Jeju than in any other Korean provinces and plays the most important role in Jeju, even though Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity have entrenched themselves in Korea through a long history. Confucianism and Buddhism have not had serious problems with the Jeju indigenous religion, in spite of their effort to exhort Jeju indigenous people to accept their ideas and practices. A short history of Buddhism and Confucianism in Jeju would be helpful for understanding this situation (for more information, see (Yoo 2012)).

It is believed that Buddhism started to penetrate Jeju in earnest in the 12th century, whereas Buddhism was imported into Korea in the 4th century. Jeju people were not pressured to convert to Buddhism or Confucianism during the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392). Buddhism began to influence Jeju people under the direct rule of the Mongolian Empire for about 100 years from 1273, when Mongol style Buddhism (Lamaism), which originated in Tibet, was brought into Jeju when the Mongols dispatched approximately 1700 soldiers to the island. Many Jeju people must have had experiences with the Buddhism professed by the Mongol soldiers, considering that the number of Jeju people working for the temple Beophwasa was 280 and that for the temple Sujeongsa was 130, both of which were built by and for Mongol soldiers.² The influence of the religion rapidly weakened after the Mongols had retreated. Buddhism at an institutional level seems to have virtually disappeared in Jeju by the early 18th century. According to magistrate Yi Hyeongsang, who proceeded to his Jeju post in 1702, though there existed many ruins of old Buddhist temples, there were only three standing temples in which no monks resided (Yi 2009, pp. 113–14).

The Joseon Dynasty, established in 1392, espoused Neo-Confucianism, which was developed by Chinese scholars of the Song Dynasty and especially systematized by Zhu Xi (Smith 1995, p. 284; Tu 1993, pp. 180–82). Confucianism was imported in earnest to Jeju by local officials who were Confucian scholars dispatched by the Joseon government. To Confucian elites of Joseon, rituals of both Buddhism and the indigenous shamanic religion were *eumsa*, a word referring to rituals conducted against the proper procedure, practiced by a person of an inappropriate hierarchical position, or offered to undeserving spirits (Choe 2007, p. 48; for the importance of rituals for Confucian scholars of Joseon, see (Smith 2004, p. 170)). Confucian scholars disapproved of Buddhist and shamanic rituals and tried to replace them with “impeccable Confucian rituals” (Walraven 1999, p. 195).

However, in spite of this effort of the Korean scholar-officials to assign an exclusive position to Confucianism from the late 14th century onwards, it was only by the mid-17th century that the domestic and communal rituals, which used to be performed in shamanistic ways, were Confucianized in the mainland. In Jeju, it was not until the early 19th century that Confucian rituals became common. Ancestral rites began to follow the Confucian way, *poje*, Confucianized fertility rites, were adopted and

² The population of the island in the early 15th century is estimated to be around 60,000, according to *the Annals of Joseon Dynasty*. Though there is no document regarding its population in the previous century, it is thought that it was less than that, of the 15th century. See (Cho 2005, pp. 53–55).

seen as proper communal rituals by most villages, and the family and marriage system came to follow Confucian rules (Hyeon 2009, pp. 192, 210–11, 276).

2.2. The Rhetoric of Confucianism in the Late Joseon Period

Though it is true that Confucianism, Buddhism, and the indigenous shamanic religion were also in competition with one another during the Joseon period (1392–1910), they also took different complementary roles at times (Choe 2007, pp. 48, 62, 66, 69–70, 73). The ruling class of Joseon, which firmly espoused Confucianism, not only tolerated but also accepted Buddhism and the indigenous religion at least in part. The elites of Joseon subordinated Buddhism and the indigenous religion to Confucianism in the Confucian world order system and secured the superiority of Confucianism over these two preexisting religions, for which the “similar but superior” rhetoric was employed, though generally implicitly.

Reliance on the indigenous shamanic religion by the commoners was heavier in Jeju than in the mainland, whereas the influence of Buddhism was small during the Joseon period. It was, therefore, that Confucian elites in Jeju in the late Joseon period mainly emphasized the similarity and superiority of Confucianism over the shamanic religion rather than Buddhism. In 1702, magistrate Yi Hyeongsang estimated the power of the indigenous religion to be 100 times stronger than that of the mainland. He said that the number of shamans amounted to 1000, which was quite huge considering that the number of households in Jeju at that time was about 9200 (Yi 2009, p. 117).

Of course, the indigenous religion experienced intermittent persecutions in Jeju. Magistrate Yi, who was a very faithful Confucian scholar, tried to repress the shamanic religion during his short incumbency of one year and three months. He strictly prohibited shamanic rituals, destroyed 129 shamanic shrines that fell under his jurisdiction, and forced 285 *simbang* to work in agriculture. This action is understandable because during the Joseon period, Confucian scholars considered rituals performed by shamans to be of the lowest kind among non-Confucian rituals, *eumsa*.

However, the persecutions were temporary. Magistrates who came to Jeju after Yi rebuilt shrines and resurrected shamanic rituals. Most officials approved indigenous rituals and some officials even supported or hosted them. For example, some shamanic rituals including *ipchungut*, which is performed to celebrate the beginning of spring, were supported by magistrates and performed within the government building and its yard. A shamanic shrine that is called “the shrine for the goddess of the government office” was built in the courtyard of a local government building complex of the Joseon period. As they were integrating shamanic rituals into the Confucian system, the Confucian officials did not consider it wrong to revere the local deities. By invoking the similarity of the two religions, they could reach and edify the indigenous people.

It should be noted that the Confucian officials of Joseon, including those of Jeju, could approve the shamanic religion because they regarded its view of the universe as similar to that of Confucianism. The indigenous religion was accepted as tolerable and controllable within the ritual system unified under Confucianism. Walraven rightly points out, “The cosmology of Neo-Confucianism does contain elements that might provide a basis to harmonize Confucianism and popular religion.” He continues,

Confucian concepts, sophisticated as they might be in their full philosophical elaboration, were expressed at times in simple terms hardly different from popular beliefs. The popular view of the universe is less systematized, less ordered, but basically it is similar: the world in which humankind live and the world of spirits and gods operate according to the same principles, and there is no great transcendental divide between the two. In both the Confucian and the popular visions, human fortune and misfortune are linked to the invisible other sphere. (Walraven 1999, pp. 166–67)

As it was recognized that Confucianism and shamanism have similar perspectives on the universe, the Joseon government, while officially disparaging the latter, allowed common people to resort to shamans and perform shamanic rituals, which were given a lower hierarchical position beneath

Confucianism. On the other hand, because of this similarity, common people could easily replace their traditionally conducted shamanic rituals with Confucian ones. The similar but superior rhetoric employed by the Confucian elites of Joseon is based on this firm belief in the hierarchical relationship between religions, in which Confucianism, Buddhism, and the shamanic religion were considered similar but Confucianism was superior to the others.

Most commoners in Jeju who had not been acquainted with Confucianism could accept it because to them it was not totally different from the shamanic religion. They started to perform Confucian rituals since the early 19th century. The indigenous rituals of Jeju have often become a part of the Confucian ritual, demonstrating that the similar but superior rhetoric of Confucianism was successful. Some rituals that have been performed for generations clearly reflect the coexistence of the two religions and the superior status of Confucianism. For example, Confucian-style domestic offering rituals include not only an ancestral ceremony but also offering rituals for shamanic household gods. The head officiant offers a table of food to the god of the main gate of the house. The goddess of the kitchen is also the recipient of a small food offering by the wife of the head officiant. In some families, the serpent gods enshrined in the backyard and the storeroom are also served, though this practice is getting rare nowadays (Hyeon 2009, pp. 226–27). In this ritual, indigenous gods are celebrated but they are not the main object of worship. They are supposed to share the food that is prepared for ancestors. Indigenous rituals are manifestly incorporated into the Confucian ancestral ceremony. It shows that the two religions can coexist in the same ritual and also that Confucianism is superior.

Another example can be found in many villages that have accepted the complete Confucian way of community rituals. Here, male members take charge of the Confucian ritual *poje* and most female members of the villages still participate in shamanic community rituals (Hyeon 2009, pp. 253–54). Just as in other regions, only male members of a community or family can become officiants or celebrants of Confucian rituals. Females are supposed to support rituals by preparing food or cleaning afterward. But women take the lead in shamanic rituals as lay leaders.³ In Haeandong, Jeju City, the shamanic community ritual *dangje* (or *danggut*, ritual of Shamanic shrine) is conducted by women in January and the Confucian community ritual *poje* by men in July. In Aewolli village, right after the Confucian *poje* is finished, women carry out *dangje*, reusing the food offered during the former. The two villages show the realization of “similar but superior” rhetoric of Confucianism.

In both villages, males, who were regarded as superior to female members and were representatives of families and communities during the Joseon period, take charge of the Confucian ritual, while females take on roles in the shamanic ritual. In Aewolli, food is not separately prepared for the shamanic ritual but the food for the Confucian ritual is reused. It can be said that people of these villages accepted not only the similarity between Confucian rituals and shamanic ones but also the superiority of Confucianism over the indigenous religion.

Confucianism and shamanism managed to coexist under one unified ritual system because they basically shared the same cosmology. Confucian officials often officially recognized this similarity, and Jeju people easily accepted Confucian ideals and its ritual system. In a sense, officials from Seoul who tried to propagate Confucianism exploited this similarity for their agenda. Most of them not only allowed but also supported some shamanic rituals. Shamanic rituals were even performed in the government building, unimaginable on the mainland. In Jeju, where shamanism was said to be 100 times stronger, borrowing magistrate Yi’s description, than on the mainland, simple expulsion or repression of it would not be the wisest solution when proselytizing Confucian values. Confucianism was likely to have been able to spread in Jeju because people were persuaded that it was not fundamentally different from the indigenous religious tradition. Furthermore, Confucianism extended its power most

³ Both men and women participated in the shamanic community ritual *dangje* before the Confucian culture took root in Jeju in the early 19th century. It is thought that due to Joseon’s policy of repressing shamanism, men started to avoid becoming shamans and as a result, women came to constitute the majority of shamans. In Jeju, however, the number of male *simbang* was higher than that of female *simbang* until recently, although nowadays the ratio of the latter is increasing.

efficiently by accommodating the similarities it shared with the indigenous religion and by having people participate in the unified system. Therefore, the Confucian officials' acknowledgement of similarity was necessary for its existence and coexistence with the indigenous belief.

In addition, in this integrated system, of which Confucian officials approved and even made use of, Confucianism was granted a higher status than the indigenous religion. They argued that shamanism was not considered appropriate in representing truth, since it represented only "partial truth." While recognizing that there was at least some truth in the indigenous religion, Confucianists did not fully accept the shamanic indigenous religion as a true and proper way for maintaining order of the universe. Though it was not completely wrong, and thus not absolutely intolerable, it was surely not the proper way for serving gods or spirits. The superiority of Confucianism was firmly articulated. Confucian officials used the similar but superior rhetoric for coexistence with the indigenous religion.

2.3. The Rhetoric of Buddhism in the 20th Century

Following the downfall of Joseon in 1910, Confucianism was no longer officially supported. Though Confucian rituals still survive to this day, the influence of Confucianism became quite minimal in Korea including Jeju. In contrast, Buddhism has been flourishing in Jeju since 1908, when a Buddhist temple was established by a monk named An Bongnyeo. Buddhism was not a totally new religion to Jeju people at that time. As will be explained further, the influence of Buddhism has remained in myths and rituals of the indigenous Jeju religion, which may be one of the reasons why Buddhism could grow rapidly, whereas it was almost unseen in Jeju during the late Joseon period. It should also be noted that Buddhism's characteristic of readily adapting to indigenous beliefs and rituals helps indigenous people feel friendly toward Buddhism.

In addition, Buddhism is an institutionalized religion that looks much more advanced and sophisticated than the indigenous religion. Many people who used to consult *simbang* and invite them for shamanic rituals have gradually converted to Buddhism, and now go to Buddhist temples to consult monks. A nun of Bultapsa Temple said during an interview that more and more people who had been going to both Buddhist temples and shamanic shrines nowadays come only to the temple.⁴ She told of an old female lay member of Bultapsa who quit going to a shamanic shrine of the village and stopped seeing a *simbang* because her son and daughter-in-law did not want her to be "superstitious." A monk of Haeunsa also said that people often come to him instead of going to a *simbang* because he takes charge of traditional indigenous ritual services that used to be performed by *simbang*.

When a Buddhist monk undertakes an indigenous ritual, the original purpose of the ritual remains as it is but the monk performs it in a Buddhist way. For instance, the monk of Haeunsa often officiates *antaekgut*, which is a domestic shamanic ritual conducted for the purpose of worshipping and appeasing the indigenous household gods by offering food to them. Instead of worshipping and offering food, he recites Buddhist sutras in some parts of the house, where important gods are believed to reside, such as the front entrance, kitchen, and main room. The monk said that some Jeju people have asked him to perform *jae*, a kind of Buddhist service, not for the original purpose, which is to pray for the repose of the dead people's souls, but for good fortune and wellbeing of the living family members. According to him, many monks of Jeju acknowledge that if a monk is to become successful in Jeju, he should become half shamanic. It seems that some Jeju people expect Buddhist rituals to replace the indigenous rituals and to assume the roles that the indigenous rituals have played.

There are many examples of indigenous shamanic rituals that have been modified in a Buddhist way (see Kim et al. 2007, pp. 31, 33, 36, 75, 93, 100, 105, 111, 133, 184). When a family decides to remove

⁴ The interviews cited in this article were conducted between March and July 2010. All of the interviewees cited in this article were aware that I would use the interview for academic research. All of them were religious specialists, including two Buddhist monks, two Catholic priests, two Protestant pastors, and four *simbang*.

a representation of the serpent god, which is usually made of bricks and straw and enshrined in a backyard or storehouse,⁵ traditionally a *simbang* had been invited to perform a ritual for sending away the spirit to the otherworld. But nowadays, many households that decide not to keep the symbolic bodies invite a Buddhist monk. The monk performs a ritual for sending the spirit to the otherworld and keeps the symbolic figurine in a temple along with mortuary tablets of dead persons. Many domestic rituals, including *antaekgut* for asking domestic gods to give the family peace and safety, funerary rites, building rituals for inducing the homesite god to enter a newly built house, and *tosinje* for serving the homesite god to ask him to guarantee fecundity of the household, are often officiated by Buddhist monks in a syncretic form born from the fusion of Buddhism and shamanism. Buddhist monks sometimes perform *neokdeurim*, which is a ritual for recalling a part of the soul that has gone out of the body of a person who experienced a shocking accident. Furthermore, when a person or family gets *dongti*, pollution or danger that results from violating taboos, nowadays Buddhist monks perform a kind of purification ritual that used to be conducted only by *simbang*. In some villages, even community rituals like *yowangje*, which used to be carried out by *simbang* and villagers for the purpose of worshiping the sea god and praying for a good haul, are now performed by reciting a Buddhist prayer asking the Buddha to command the sea god to give abundant seafood to the villagers.

The indigenous rituals could have been replaced by Buddhist rituals because Jeju people recognize continuity between the indigenous religion and Buddhism. Buddhism, like Confucianism, has a cosmology that is not distinctive from that of the indigenous religion. Buddhism and the indigenous religion have in common the idea that fortune and misfortune of human beings are influenced by the gods and spirits. Above all, they emphasize a smooth transfer of a dead person's spirit to the other world and claim that its status and wellbeing can be promoted by rituals performed by the living. On the basis of these similarities, Buddhism has accepted many deities and rituals of the indigenous religion in Korea. Buddhism has removed Jeju people's reluctance to invoke blessings and perform rituals in Buddhist ways by spontaneously switching indigenous rituals to Buddhist ones. In other words, Buddhism made many Jeju people convert to Buddhism without discarding the old way of thinking and behaving by approving the indigenous religion.

While Buddhism recognizes the similarity between itself and the indigenous religion, it also emphasizes its superiority over the other. Monks approach people of the indigenous religion spontaneously by making use of the already familiar views of spirits and the otherworld. But they eventually differentiate Buddhism from the indigenous religion, which Buddhists claim to be insufficient and inadequate, and proclaim Buddhism to be the true and perfect way. Buddhist priests whom I met argued that the shamanic religion offers neither a true understanding of the world nor a proper way of salvation. They asserted that the indigenous religion misses the essentials that are necessary for helping people become free from suffering and that people can obtain these essentials only through Buddhism. For them, Buddhism offers the real truth that the indigenous religion does not have.

It should be noted that the rituals transformed into Buddhist style declare the superiority of Buddhist cosmology and theology. The performance of these rituals in a Buddhist way is based on the idea that the Buddha or other Buddhist sacred beings are more powerful than the gods of the indigenous religion. While converts to Buddhism in Jeju do not deny the existence of the indigenous gods, they believe that reciting Buddhist sutras and praying to the Buddha are more effective than offering services to indigenous gods. Though they acknowledge myths and rituals of the indigenous religion, they regard it as inferior to those of Buddhism. *Yowangje* performed in a Buddhist style is based on the assumption that Buddha can be implored to command the indigenous sea god. People who have domestic rituals conducted by Buddhist monks believe that the old gods of the house can be controlled or even sent to the other world by reciting Buddhist sutras.

⁵ Removing the symbolic body of domestic gods from the house was very rare before the modernization movement in 1960s and 1970s. Since the modernization movement, people of Jeju began to build houses without backyards and storerooms where important domestic gods were thought to be reside.

Buddhism has the most powerful mechanism for proselytizing because it has similar cosmologies to those of the indigenous religion and also because it successfully persuades people to recognize Buddhism as an institutionalized “higher” religion, not “superstition.” Buddhism is the most powerful challenger to the indigenous religion due to these similarities. Some scholars point out that it is Buddhism rather than Christianity that weakens the indigenous religion in the rural areas of Jeju (Cho et al. 2003, p. 375). They indicate that the influence of the indigenous religion began to wane from the period when the intensive construction of Buddhist temples began in Jeju and more conspicuously in areas where the number of Buddhist temples increased. It is obvious that Buddhism has had more converts from the indigenous religion than any other religion over the last 100 years.

It is obvious that Confucianism and Buddhism, the former in the past and the latter recently until the present, have successfully persuaded Jeju people to accept their similarity to the Jeju shamanic religion. In other words, they have succeeded in persuading people to acknowledge the value of the new religious teachings and rituals. It was not difficult for them to appreciate the indigenous religion because they shared similar cosmologies. Nonetheless, simultaneously, these two religions did not forget to differentiate themselves from the indigenous shamanic religion by emphasizing their own identities.

3. “Similar but Superior” Rhetoric of Christianity in Jeju

Unlike Confucianism and Buddhism, Christianity in Jeju has not directly argued for similarity between religions. However, we can find its “similar but superior” rhetoric in the two cases I will describe. First, Kim Wonyeong, the first Korean parish priest in Jeju (1899–1901), introduced and propagated Catholic doctrine by emphasizing its similarities to Confucian ideas while articulating Catholic superiority. Second, contemporary Catholics and some Protestants in Jeju try to develop ritual processes that are similar to those of the traditional Korean religions to approach Jeju people and lower their resistance to these rituals.

3.1. The Rhetoric of Catholicism in the Early Years

Unlike Confucianism and Buddhism, which share a similar ritual system and worldview with the indigenous shamanic religion, Christianity, which has totally different rituals, cosmology, and soteriology seemed very unfamiliar to Koreans. Naturally, in Korea, Christianity that came from the West has been considered relatively more foreign than Buddhism and Confucianism that have been coexisting harmoniously with the indigenous religion for a long time. That is why the first Korean Catholic priest of Jeju, in his treatise *Susin yeongyak*, which can be translated as “miraculous medicine for cultivating the body,” had to remind his readers in Jeju who criticized Christianity for being a foreign religion that Buddhism and Confucianism also came from abroad.

Christianity was first introduced to Jeju when the court of Joseon persecuted Catholics and exiled some of them to Jeju in 1801. Due to continual persecutions by the government, however, it was not until 1899 that a Jeju Parish was founded, which was raised to the Jeju Diocese in 1977 (Jeju Seongyo Baekjuneon Ginyeom Saeop Wiwonhoe 2001, pp. 31–71). The Protestant mission work began in earnest in 1908 when one of the first seven ordained Korean pastors was sent to Jeju as a missionary. Prior to this period, it is believed that there had been only a few Jeju indigenous people who converted to Protestantism during their visit to the mainland (Yi 2008a, pp. 30–31; Park 2008, pp. 138–45).

From the outset, the Christian method of proselytizing the indigenous residents involved encouraging them to give up traditional local customs and accept the Western Christian worldview. For the first two years after the parish was founded, the Jeju parish church engaged in very aggressive proselytism. But this aggressive way of proselytization caused many people’s antipathy toward the Catholics. Some early Catholics of Jeju not only felt superior to non-Christian residents but also regarded the indigenous religion as evil and something to be eliminated. This arrogant attitude of Catholics roused the antipathy of many Jeju people. Conflicts between the Catholics and those

opposing it led to a popular armed uprising in 1901 (Go 2000, pp. 335–44). According to several records of that time, many people in Jeju thought that the early Catholics of Jeju were very arrogant and often harassed people by relying on the power of foreigners from the West (see Park 2008, p. 112). When Catholics were hired for collecting tax from the indigenous people, resistance against the former reached its peak. Catholic tax collectors were being unfair, harassing many people. The uprising that resulted in the death of about 350 Catholics demonstrates how arrogant the first generation of this religion in Jeju had been perceived and how aggressive their way of propagation had been felt to be (Jeju Seongyo Baekjuneon Ginyeom Saeop Wiwonhoe 2001, p. 89; Park 2008, pp. 117–22).

But the early Catholics of Jeju were very successful in converting many people in a short period of time. Just two priests, one French and one Korean, converted more than 1500 people in less than two years. It would have been impossible for the Catholic church to grow if it had not been so persuasive in convincing people of the rightness of its teaching, though some converts may have been attracted by the powerful authority of the priests.

The persuasive arguments of the Catholics for proselytizing Jeju people are most clearly seen in *Susin yeongyak*, which was written by Priest Kim Wonyeong (see Kim 2001, pp. 757–99). In this writing, while Kim firmly criticizes preexisting religions, he also tries to show that Catholicism is not very alien to Jeju people but based on the familiar worldview that they can accept without difficulty, by emphasizing some common ground between Catholic doctrines and Confucian ideas.

Among the preexisting religions, the indigenous shamanic religion is most harshly attacked by him. While he categorizes Confucianism and Buddhism as “*do*” (way, principle) or “*gyo*” (teaching or religion), the indigenous religion is called “heathenism” (Kim 2001, p. 792).⁶ To him, shamanic rituals and divinations are noted as neither trustworthy nor efficacious. He gravely condemns the practice of worshipping the serpent god and respecting serpents. He maintains that the people of Jeju have been deceived by *simbang* even though they claim to have been relieved of illness after healing rituals performed by them. According to Kim, expected results become actualized only sporadically and by accident. Giving a detailed description of 21 domestic and communal shamanic rituals, which continue to be conducted in Jeju at present, he strongly criticizes the procedures and related myths of each ritual. Purity and pollution rules associated with shamanic rituals are also criticized.

He also criticized customs of Jeju that he thought were immoral from the perspective of a Catholic priest. He especially attacked the practice of keeping many concubines as well as drinking alcohol. He claimed that drinking a very small amount of alcohol is permissible but it is better to completely stay off alcohol.⁷ He argued that people should be eager to get the faith which is the medicine for the soul, not just medicines for the body that come from the West. It appears that he gave medicines and other goods from the West to the people, though he rebuked some people who wanted to get only the benefits including money from the church without any interest in conversion.

Priest Kim repeatedly cites Confucian classics in order to persuade readers to believe in the Christian God and cosmology. This was a common strategy for Catholics when proselytizing East Asians. It is well known that European missionaries who had come to China from the 16th century tried to explain the existence and attributes of God by comparing Christian doctrine with Confucian classics. In mainland Korea in the late 19th century, Priest Choe Yangeop and several other priests often cited Confucian classics in order to introduce the Catholic doctrine. It was possible because Korean priests including Kim Wonyeong were well versed in Confucianism.

Priest Kim appropriates the ideas of Confucianism and its traditional cosmology that sound similar to those of Christianity. He uses the concept of “the Great Emperor of Heaven” or “heaven”

⁶ It is noteworthy that Kim did not directly attack Buddhist rituals or doctrines though he mentioned Buddhism a few times. For instance, he talked about Buddhism when he pointed out that Buddhism and Confucianism were originally from foreign countries, as well as Christianity. I think this proves that Buddhism was not influential around 1900 as I said above.

⁷ Later the Korean Catholic church became more flexible regarding the drinking of alcohol. It is not uncommon to see priests drink alcohol with members of their parish churches.

from the Confucian classics and Korean traditional proverbs to persuade people to believe that there is one supreme God who is the master of the universe. When he explains the relationship between human souls and bodies, he quotes Mencius and mentions three basic principles in human relations and five constant virtues. He supports his criticism against indigenous rituals and customs by suggesting examples of Confucius and some ancient Chinese sage kings.

Priest Kim repeatedly suggests facts, concepts, and terms that are familiar to Koreans in *Susin yeongyak* to make his arguments sound persuasive. He supports his assertion that it is possible to undermine the indigenous religion by suggesting examples of two officials of Jeju, Yi Hyeongsang and Seo Rin, who persecuted and tried to weaken the indigenous religion. To refute the criticism that Christianity was a foreign religion, he recalled that Buddhism and Confucianism were also imported from foreign countries to Korea. In addition, he mainly emphasized the Christian doctrines concerning the Lord of Heaven and referred to the Holy Mother Maria several times. But he does not explain about the son of God, Jesus. He mentions Jesus once very briefly in a prayer in the introductory part and twice when he refers to “the miracles of the name of Jesus” (Kim 2001, pp. 758, 773, 777). It seems that he wanted to avoid a difficult explanation about the son of God who was born as a human being, a concept which does not have any parallel in traditional Korean thought. Kim was trying to persuade Jeju people by appropriating traditional oriental cosmology and theology.

Though Priest Kim appropriates Confucianism for the basis of his argument, he makes a clear differentiation between Catholicism and Confucianism, declaring the superiority of Catholicism over Confucianism. While defending Christian doctrines against the criticism that Christianity does not practice filial piety, which is one of the most important elements of Confucianism, he asserts that believing and serving the master of heaven is the real filial duty. He also criticizes the ancestral rites, harshly attacking processes of calling and sending back spirits of the dead and bowing down to these spirits. He argues that the contemporary people are not obeying the teachings of ancient Confucian saints to serve a “great parent” of heaven and that Jeju people should serve the heavenly Lord if they want to attend to their dead parents. According to him, true offerings should be dedicated only to the God of heaven, which is possible only through the Catholic Church (Kim 2001, pp. 764–66, 777–78).

3.2. The Case of the First Protestant Pastor in Jeju

As we have seen, in *Susin yeongyak*, Priest Kim not only criticized the practices and ideas of preexisting religions that the Catholic church could not accept but also tried to introduce Christian doctrine to Jeju people by using traditional thoughts that were familiar to Jeju people. The Protestants also, from the first, articulated that only they could offer the way to salvation. But the Protestants did not emphasize similarities between Protestantism and preexisting religions, as witnessed by the ministry of Pastor Yi Kipung, the first Protestant missionary of Jeju. Pastor Yi went to Jeju nine years later than the Catholics did. He went there by himself without any foreign missionary to rely on. And as Japanese colonization of Korea was just beginning at that time, he could not rely on the government’s respect for the West and Christianity either. In addition, many indigenous people of Jeju had antipathy against Christianity since the conflicts with Catholics that had reached their peak during the popular uprising in 1901. Therefore, he could not be as influential as the first Catholic priests and was more vulnerable to harassment by those who were against Christianity. He was attacked many times, and once narrowly escaped from being killed when people assaulted him for disrespecting traditional Jeju practices including shamanic rituals (Yi 2008b, pp. 98–100; Seongan Gyohoe Baeknyeonsa Pyeonchanwiwonhoe 2010, pp. 104–18). Pastor Yi strictly disapproved of the indigenous and Confucian rituals that were against the Christian doctrine. That is why the first lay members of his church who refused to participate in ancestral rites experienced severe hardship in their family (Yi 2008b, pp. 107–8). He developed a movement for removing serpent figurines from houses, reproaching the shamanic tradition of serving the serpent god and actual serpents (Yi 2008b, pp. 93, 97; Chang 2008, pp. 78–104).

This aggressive attitude of Pastor Yi does not look so different from that of the early Catholics of Jeju. However, there is no evidence that shows Pastor Yi's appropriating Confucian or traditional worldviews in order to explain Christian doctrines as Priest Kim did. The common theme of three sermons by him, of which manuscripts were handed down to his daughter Yi Sarye, is the matter of human sin and atonement by Jesus Christ (as included in (Yi 2008b, pp. 213–34)). Pastor Yi Dojong, whom Yi Kipung converted to Protestantism from the Jeju indigenous religion, said that Yi Kipung preached about Jesus Christ (Park 2009, p. 100). Yi Sarye also remembered that the main focus of her father's sermons was "Jesus Christ, the only way of our salvation" (Yi 2008b, pp. 103–10). Pastor Yi's sermons contrast sharply with *Susin yeongyak* in which Priest Kim scarcely mentions Jesus and explains Catholic doctrines by comparing them with traditional ideas on the world and the gods. Pastor Yi, who was an evangelical Protestant missionary, directly dealt with a theoretical theme that was unfamiliar to Jeju people.

Pastor Yi did not try to make Protestantism look familiar to Jeju people by emphasizing its similarity with preexisting religions. But because he was a very enthusiastic and charismatic evangelist, he could gradually proselytize Jeju people. In 1913, after five years of missionary work, there came to be eight churches and an average of 400 regular church-goers in Jeju (Park 2008, p. 174).

3.3. Developing Ritual Processes Similar to Those of Traditional Religions

Catholics could be comparatively more successful in Jeju than on the mainland, partly because of their contribution to the development of the economy and the welfare of Jeju people. The Jeju Parish has been running schools since 1946, and now the Jeju Diocese runs six kindergartens, a middle school, and a high school. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Priest P. J. McGlinchey, who came from Ireland, conducted a campaign for agrarian development, under the motto "Preventing Poverty: A New Way of Mission." He helped the people of Jeju receive financial support from European and American Catholic organizations. His campaign led to improvements in land and livestock, and the development of various domestic industries. It was also Priest McGlinchey who introduced credit unions to the local communities of Jeju. Though the number of Catholics did not explosively increase during this period, the public image of Catholicism remarkably ameliorated. Since the campaign of McGlinchey, the Catholics of Jeju have developed "many new ways of mission." For the inhabitants of Jeju, they have founded many welfare facilities including a clinic and community center for senior citizens, nursing homes, farms, and fertilizer plants (Jeju Seongyo Baekjunyeon Ginyeom Saep Wiwonhoe 2001, pp. 169–71, 206–11, 218, 260–300).

Another reason, which is more important for the theme of this paper, is that Jeju people have been impressed by indigenized Catholic rituals. Not only in Jeju but also in the whole of South Korea, Catholics have accepted important elements of central rituals of preexisting religions, especially those dealing with the dead. These indigenized rituals have accommodated many elements of Confucianism, Shamanism, and Buddhism. Many Jeju people who had cherished the traditional ritual system and worldview could approach the church without feeling guilty.

First, ancestral rites were approved by the Catholic church after the Second Vatican Council. Even before the council, during the first half of the 20th century, these rites were beginning to be accepted by the church as some kind of expressions of filial piety. After the council, only the ritual procedure of calling spirits of the dead and sending them away became prohibited and Catholic participants have been asked to recite Psalms and prayers instead. Other important procedures including offering food while bowing down to dead ancestors remain in Catholic ancestral rites. This was a great change considering that the principal reason for the Joseon government's persecution of the Catholics was their refusal of ancestral rites.

Second, the Korean Catholic church offers a funeral service that appeals to many Koreans. The church says that this indigenized funeral service makes great contributions for the Catholic missionary work. It is natural for Jeju people who are very concerned about the life after death and ancestral rites to come to have interests in Catholic funerals. Many non-Catholic Koreans think highly

of Catholic funerals in which priests and lay persons devotedly assist in proceedings and burials. It is remarkable that most parish churches in Jeju have a funeral hall. According to Hyeon, not a few Jeju people who cannot afford to have a family burial plot decide to become a member of Catholic church without knowing even “The Lord’s Prayer” or “The Ten Commandments” in order to be buried in the cemetery of a parish church (Hyeon 2009, p. 205).

The Catholic funeral service is said to have the most indigenized form among the Korean Catholic rituals. Church members ceaselessly recite prayers in turn in a rhythm and tone that resemble traditional Korean chanting. Respecting a Buddhist tradition of sending spirits of the dead to the otherworld on the 49th day after death, Korean Catholic churches hold a mass on that day in memory of the deceased. If the family of the dead person wishes, performing any type of the traditional funeral process, including bowing down to the dead body, is allowed as long as it is not manifestly against the Catholic doctrine. According to the two Jeju native Catholic priests I interviewed, the Catholic funeral service that meets people’s tastes and needs has helped increase the number of Catholic converts in Jeju.

The Protestant church in Jeju has not been as successful as in the mainland. As I mentioned above, the Protestants have neither exerted any effort to make Jeju people feel familiar with Protestantism nor contributed to improving the quality of their life. Until recently, Jeju was the only province with neither a hospital nor authorized school established by protestant organizations. By contrast, many schools and hospitals have been founded on the mainland since the first hospital and the first modern school of Korea were founded by a protestant denomination in Seoul in 1885. Jeju has been excluded from the support of Korean protestant churches.

Some protestant pastors of Jeju, nevertheless, try to find ways to approach people by making Christianity look familiar to Jeju people. They argue that the Protestant church should try to use ideas familiar to Jeju people in order to explain doctrines, to accommodate where possible traditional rituals, and to seek out ways to contribute to Jeju society. I interviewed one of these pastors, a Presbyterian, who wanted to follow the example of the Catholics.

The first aim of this pastor is to find ways to contribute to Jeju society to win Jeju people’s favor. He is an award-winning painter, with a Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union in the United States. He is well known to Protestants in Jeju for his public lectures and local newspaper columns. In spite of this distinguished career, he has been carrying out his ministry only in rural areas. He wants to use his career to find “a new way of mission” just as the Catholic priest McGlinchey did. He has been very successful multiplying the number of members by five-fold at two churches that he had taken over from other pastors. “Preventing poverty,” the slogan with which priest McGlinchey rallied the poor of Jeju right after the Korean War, is outdated now since Korea has achieved great economic growth. Hence, my interviewee has decided to appeal to the cultural and educational interests of the people. He invites artists to his church to hold free music concerts and art exhibitions for community people. He offers free art classes at times and free English classes regularly to the children of the community. His wife, who studied the violin at college, also teaches villagers music. The Protestant church will surely have to do more voluntary service to expand successfully in Jeju.

Furthermore, he seeks for ways to attract people who cannot easily give up rituals of the preexisting religious tradition, as the Catholic church has been doing. First, he holds wedding ceremonies as well as celebration parties at the church yard, which look similar to the traditional Korean wedding ceremony. Second, he recognizes a need to design and wear a special funeral robe that looks like a garment worn by officiants of Confucian–shamanistic funerals. Finally, he argues that Protestant churches, especially those of Jeju rural areas, have to develop a memorial service which reminds people of traditional ancestral rites. For instance, on the anniversaries of ancestors, the Protestant church can encourage the people of Jeju to prepare the same food that is put on the ancestral rites table and to place the dead person’s portrait on the table. More and more Protestants in Jeju, including conservative ones, support his attempts to approach non-Protestant people.

However, he and other Protestants of Jeju make it clear that they can accommodate indigenous or traditional elements in ancestral rites and funerals as long as Protestant doctrines are not undermined. Namely, though he is willing to accept some aspects of preexisting religions, he also wants to articulate the difference and superiority of Protestantism. In this sense, he is repeating the rhetoric that has been employed by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Catholicism.

4. View of the Indigenous Shamanic Religion on Other Religions

Simbang have not systemically explained the relationship of the indigenous religion with other religions in Jeju. *Bonpuri*, Jeju myths that *simbang* recite during indigenous rituals, should be referred to in order to understand their attitude to Buddhism and Confucianism (for recorded texts of recited *bonpuri*, see (Hyeon 2005; Kim et al. 2006; Hyeon 2007; Mun et al. 2010)). *Bonpuri* reflect the thought and customs of Jeju people, not only of the period of Mongolian rule and the early Joseon Dynasty but even of the early 20th century. It is believed that the current shape of *bonpuri* has usually been composed by putting together various stories, from ancient myths to anecdotes of the late 19th or the early 20th century (See Hyeon 2009, pp. 65–66).

But *bonpuri* is not sufficient material for understanding shamanic views on other religions. They do not mention Christianity at all and include only fragmentary ideas of Buddhism and Confucianism. For this reason, I tried to gather the opinions of *simbang* on this matter. I found that the four *simbang* I met for this purpose suggested roughly similar ideas on other religions. They recognized the similarity between the indigenous religion, Buddhism, and Confucianism but they expressed a strong sense of incompatibility with Christianity. Though they acknowledge the social coexistence with Christianity, they regard Christianity as having a different worldview that they cannot share. Some of them said that Jeju indigenous people would be in trouble if they go to a Christian church and follow its teaching. *Simbang* have not given consideration to ways of accepting or recognizing any elements of Christianity, while some Catholic and Protestant leaders of Jeju have tried to do so.

The view of the indigenous religion on Buddhism and Confucianism is more complicated than that on Christianity. Of course, there are not a few passages in *bonpuri* that not only acknowledge the existence of Buddhism and Confucianism in Jeju but also seem to recognize their advantages. The social order and virtues that Confucianism emphasized during the Joseon period are appreciated in many *bonpuri*. Loyalty to the king, filial piety, authority of magistrates sent by the government, male-centered ideas and practices, and many other Confucian virtues are in the background of most *bonpuri*, which of course are often satirized from the people's viewpoint. Some *bonpuri* show more direct influence of Confucianism. For example, the name of the father of the Jetbugi (errand boy) three brothers, the main characters of *Chogong bonpuri*, is "Juja seonsaeng," which means Mr. Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi, one of the sages revered by Korean Confucian scholars, is accepted as the father of indigenous gods in Jeju mythology. Another example is to be seen in *Sehwa bonhyangdang bonpuri*, in which Cheonjatto, the main god of Sehwa village, is described as an excellent student of Confucianism. After finishing the Thousand-Character Classic at the age of seven, he masters a textbook for children written by several Confucian scholars in the mid-Joseon period, a Chinese history book from the 11th century, and finally the Four Books and Five Classics. This story of mastering of Confucian texts, which the general people of Jeju of the Joseon period seldom heard of, seems to be inserted in order to emphasize the god's outstanding knowledge. Influential *simbang* of the late Joseon period, who played roles in the formation of *bonpuri* as they are now, took the coexistence with Confucianism for granted.

Though Buddhism was not active in Jeju during the Joseon Dynasty, the indigenous religion must have been influenced by Buddhism from the period of Mongolian rule which was before Joseon was founded (Hyeon 2009, pp. 86–87, 147–48, 170–72, 261–66). Seeing that the influence of Buddhism is repeatedly mentioned in *bonpuri* (see Hyeon 2005, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 9, 11; Mun et al. 2010, Chapters 2, 3, 6, 9, 11), it is clear that Buddhism was not a new and unfamiliar religion to Jeju people in the early 20th century when Buddhist monks recommenced establishing temples and propagating them. We can

easily find the examples of Buddhism's influence on the indigenous religion in *bonpuri*, which indicate Jeju indigenous myths.

First, the Buddha appears as the ancestor of the indigenous deities or the name of the Buddha is used for the indigenous deities. The ancestors of the main characters of *Chogong bonpuri*, *Chilseong bonpuri*, and *Handong bonhyangdang bonpuri* are said to be the Buddha. The genealogy of the Jetbugi brothers in *Chogong bonpuri* is especially noteworthy. I already wrote that their father is said to be Zhu Xi. And the name of their grandfather is introduced as Seokga yeorae (*Sakya-tathāgata*) and that of their grandmother as Seokgamoni (*Sakyamuni*). The highest being in Buddhism is invited to become ancestors of the indigenous deities. In that the two different names of the identical being, the Buddha, are used to indicate two distinct god and goddess, it can be said that exact knowledge of Buddhism was not important to both those who inserted these names and those who accepted them in their myth. Another example of the Buddhist influence is witnessed in the nickname of the childbirth goddess Samseunghalmang, which is "the living Buddha king (or queen)."

Second, Buddhist monks are often regarded as sacred beings. They are depicted as having supernatural power that ordinary people do not have in *Chasa bonpuri* and *Godaejang bonpuri*; according to *Namdang bonpuri*, the main god of Haengwonli village was originally a Buddhist monk; stories of a childless couple, who come to get children by offering a Buddhist service, are often included in introducing parts of some *bonpuri*, such as *Chogong bonpuri*, *Igong bonpuri*, *Segyeong bonpuri*, *Chilseong bonpuri*, and *Woljeong bonhyangdang bonpuri*. It is clear that these indigenous myths recognize the effectiveness of Buddhist rituals.

While individual *simbang* are usually aware of the similarities between the three religions, they put more stress on their superiority. I interviewed a *simbang* who has been working as a shaman for about 40 years and whose grandfather and father had also been *simbang*. Though he acknowledges the abovementioned similarities between the three religions, he deplores the situation in which Buddhist monks are taking over the works of *simbang*. He argues that it is not ritually proper for Buddhist monks to serve as an intermediary for worshipping shamanic gods. His criticism is similar to what had been pointed out by Confucian officials of Joseon, mainly in relation with the issue of *eumsa*, which, as mentioned above, refers to rituals conducted against the proper procedure or those offered to undeserving spirits. Other *simbang* that I met in Jeju likewise said that although Buddhism and their indigenous religion are similar, their religion is the right way to please the gods and goddesses of Jeju. All *simbang* I interviewed believe that Jeju people can be in trouble if they keep resorting to Buddhist monks instead of coming to *simbang*. Though they did not suggest any logical grounds, they claimed supremacy of the indigenous religion over other religions at least for Jeju people, in spite of the similarities. Their stance is not different from that of Buddhist monks who argue that the indigenous religion cannot offer the right way of escaping suffering or a proper understanding of the world.

The Jeju indigenous shamanic religion basically acknowledges the similarity of the indigenous religion to Buddhism and Confucianism, which are acknowledged in not a few indigenous myths. At the same time, *simbang* also argue that only their own religion can offer the perfectly true and right way for understanding the order of the world or for enjoying peaceful lives.

5. Conclusions

Having found ways to harmoniously coexist with the indigenous shamanic religions, Confucianism and Buddhism have been able to persuade many people, who used to solely rely on the indigenous religion, to accept their new ideas and practices. Confucianism did so in the 19th century and Buddhism since the early 20th century. That the indigenous religion and the two old, foreign religions have similar views on death and spirits has made it rather easy for the followers of the indigenous religion to convert to Confucianism and Buddhism. Furthermore, the communal and domestic rituals of each tradition can be conveniently replaced with one another's. Thanks to these similarities, the two religions could coexist with the indigenous religion without much difficulty. But Confucianism and

Buddhism have not regarded it as providing the proper way of keeping the order of the universe or attaining salvation. The two religions articulated their superiority over other religions in Jeju.

It is true that many elements of the preexisting religious tradition were unacceptable to the Christian worldview and vice versa. It is not only because Christianity came into Korea later than the two other imported religions, but also because the three religions share similar worldviews and a loosely unified ritual system. Thus, the two religious systems, namely Christianity and the three traditional religions, have rejected each other, marking a limit to the tradition of peaceful coexistence that has been characteristic for the island's religious communities. The Christian method of proselytizing the indigenous residents involved encouraging people to give up traditional local customs and accept the Christian worldview. However, Christianity has also tried to find and exploit the interface between itself and other religions. One way that this method has been carried out is through the missionaries' appropriation of the traditional Confucian worldview which resembles the Christian one. The Catholics gradually and successfully reduced their own antipathy against indigenous religious elements, by approving of domestic rituals and emphasizing the grandeur of their funeral ritual. Even though Protestants have been slow in accepting and appreciating traditional views and rituals, many of them nowadays agree that they should respect the religious sentiment of Jeju people and develop ritual processes that can appeal to them. It should be noted that this effort of Christianity to find ideas and practices that it can appreciate and accept has also been made for the purpose of proselytization. Though both Catholics and Protestants try to make themselves look familiar to the Jeju local people by emphasizing the similarities, both of them hold fast to the belief that only they can offer the right understanding of the world and the effective way for the salvation of human beings.

Therefore, religions of Jeju that try to make themselves look familiar to people often appreciate other religions and accept other religions' elements that may harmonize with their own ideas and practices. We can see that the outside religions have tacitly and indirectly appreciated certain elements of the indigenous religion. In order to attract the local population, which was strongly attached to this indigenous religion, the imported religions in Jeju have recognized at least some "partial truth" in shamanism and have appropriated it for the rhetoric of coexistence. Moreover, in one way or another, they have recognized the importance of some rituals of preexisting religions which were not easily separable from the people. Confucianism and Buddhism have accepted some ritual processes of shamanic religion into their own; Catholicism has approved of some traditional rituals which it used to reject and criticize harshly; even some Protestants have tried to accommodate or imitate traditional rituals. In short, religions of Jeju compare themselves with other religions, emphasize some elements of others that they can approve, and try to make themselves look familiar to the people they try to attract. Simultaneously, each religion differentiates itself from others and asserts its superiority over others, though it appreciates some partial value or truth of other religions. They have asserted that other religions' partial truth and limited value show the sharp contrast with the complete truth and value of their own, and that only they can provide the proper way of keeping the order of the universe or attaining salvation of human beings. This common rhetoric that my religion is similar but superior to other religions has been repeatedly emphasized in Jeju, in order to persuade people outside the religion to accept or at least approve it without compunction and at once to reinforce the insiders' conviction to stay in it.

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Article

Enlightenment on the Spirit-Altar: Eschatology and Restoration of Morality at the King Kwan Shrine in *Fin de siècle* Seoul

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Abstract: The period from the Treaty of Kanghai (1876) until the fall of the Korean Empire (1897–1910) is commonly characterized as a period of *kaehwa*—Enlightenment—in which the Chosŏn state strived to reform and modernize. This article complicates the notion of Enlightenment in the late Chosŏn context, arguing that it was a hybrid term concurrently connoting modernization and religious awakening. In particular, this article sheds light on spirit-written texts—so called ‘morality books’—employed by civil and military elites to participate in Enlightenment discourse. By the mid-nineteenth century, Guandi—the apotheosized version of the warrior Guan Yu—had emerged as one of the most popular spirit-writing deities in Qing dynasty China. This article explores the Korean faith and practice of spirit-writing centered on Thearch Kwan (Ch. Guandi) at shrines in Seoul. The King Kwan Shrines (Kwanwang myo) were the sites of production and publication of morality books during a critical period on the eve of modernization of Korea. Surprisingly, these texts were published with the sanction of King Kojong (reigned 1863–1907), the reformer who founded the new country. Kojong and his confidant servants were fully aware of the spirit-written texts and published them as the “Corpus of Enlightenment.” The corpus unintentionally emphasized the key term of modernization in their eschatology, urging enlightenment—conceived of as religio-ethical values—in order to resolve contemporary ills and bring about a new era of peace. This research will dissolve the sharp demarcation between premodern and modern in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Korea by illuminating the polyphony of Enlightenment ideas, conflicting and competing between the old and new.

Keywords: enlightenment; morality books; spirit-writing; Kwanwang shrines; Thearch Kwan (Kwanje/Guandi); Three Sages; Late Chosŏn; Korean religions

1. Introduction

The period from the Opening of Ports (*kaehang* 開港) (1876) until the fall of Great Han Empire (Taehan cheguk 大韓帝國, 1897–1910) is often characterized as a period of Enlightenment (*kaehwa* 開化) in which the Chosŏn state strived to modernize its social system. However, scholars have not questioned what *kaehwa* implied in the nineteenth century Korea. ‘*Kaehwa*’ consists of two Chinese characters: “to open (Ch. *kai*/K. *kae* 開)” and “to transform (*hua/hwa* 化).” The word was coined in late Edo Japan as a translation of “Enlightenment.” Did it mean “to open” the state to foreign countries and “to change” the overall system of governance by emulating the Japanese model of Westernization? This would be a widespread notion of *kaehwa* in modern understanding of Korean history. Given that

it entered modern Korean via the Japanese translation (*kaika*) of “Enlightenment,”¹ the term *kaehwa* deliberately invoked the values and ideas of the European Enlightenment that began in the seventeenth century: emphasis on human reason and the disenchantment and secularization of the world. Needless to say, in the project of the European Enlightenment, revelation was no longer considered a valid source of human knowledge and behavior. However, the Chinese term *kaihua* (K. *kaehwa*) has its own historical depth and strata of meanings. This article explores “Enlightenment (*kaehwa*)” in the late Chosŏn as a locus where the modernization projects and spiritual awakening met and conjoined.

This article aims to complicate our conception of “Enlightenment” in the late Chosŏn context through an examination of the spirit-written texts that civil and military elites employed to maintain Enlightenment discourse. Spirit-writing became a widespread practice since the Song dynasty (960–1279) China, where it served as a method of transmitting divine revelations and producing religious texts. By the mid-nineteenth century, Thearch Guan (Guandi 關帝)—the apotheosized version of the warrior Guan Yu 關羽 of the Three Kingdoms period (circa 220–280) in China—had emerged as one of the most popular spirit-writing deities. This research will elucidate the Korean faith and practice of spirit-writing centered on Thearch Kwan (Guandi/ Kwanje).

The King Kwan Shrines (Kwanwang-myo 關王廟) were the sites of production of morality books during a critical period on the eve of the modernization of Korea. Surprisingly, these texts were published under the explicit intention of Kojong (reigned 1863–1907), the last king of Chosŏn who pursued Enlightenment and Reform. Kojong and his confidant officials published these spirit-written works as the Corpus of Enlightenment (*kaehwa-jang* 開化藏). The corpus emphasized “Enlightenment”—the key term of modernization, but conceived of by them as ethical values—in their eschatology, deeming it the proper way to resolve disasters such as epidemics and military crises and bring about a new era of peace. This inquiry thus problematizes a binary conception of the modernization process in East Asia that draws a line between modern and pre-modern.

2. Enlightenment and Civilization

Scholars continue to debate exactly when the Enlightenment period of the late Chosŏn began, but there is broad agreement in placing it between the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The *Korean History*, edited by the National Institute of Korean History, provides apparently standard historiography of the period, from the well-known perspective of conflict between reformers and conservatives (NIKH 1999). It counts three important figures at the dawn of the Enlightenment Age: Pak Kyusu 朴珪壽 (1807–1877), Oh Kyŏngsŏk 吳慶錫 (1831–1879), and Yu Hong’gi 劉鴻基 (1831–1884?). Shin Ch’aeho 申采浩 (1880–1936), a famous early twentieth century historian, recounted the opening scene of the age as follows:

When Kim Okkyun 金玉均 (1851–1894) visited the Prime Minister Pak Kyusu, Pak took a globe of the earth, which his grandfather, Sir Yŏnam 燕巖 (i.e., Pak Chiwŏn 朴趾源) had brought after traveling to China, out of his closet and showed it to Kim. Turning the globe, Pak told Kim with a smile, “Where is the Central State (中國: i.e., China) now? If you turn it that way, the US is the center. Turn it this way, Chosŏn is the center. If every state becomes the central one, where is the fixed Central State today?” Although Kim read about new thoughts and claimed Enlightenment, he had been captured by hundreds of years of an *idée fixe* that the state located in the center is China; cardinal states placed its East, West, South, and North are four barbarians; thus, it is taken for granted that the four should worship China. He had never dreamt of going further and maintaining the independence of his state. Enlightened greatly by what Pak said, Kim slapped his knee and stood up. The Kapsin [1884] Regime

¹ As stated below, “enlightenment” was translated as *kaika* in late Edo Japan. On the other hand, Korean “*kaehwa*” was also rendered as “Enlightenment” in most modern English articles and books of Korean history. For example, see (Lee 1984, p. 297; Seth 2010, pp. 226–39).

Change was brought out at the end. (Shin Ch'ae-ho, "The Influence of Copernican Theory," quoted in NIKH 1999, p. 18)

Shin's reminiscence portrays the decisive moment that young Kim Okkyun, the future leader in designing an independent country from Qing China and the 1884 Regime Change,² liberated himself from the Sinocentric worldview by Pak's enlightenment. The memoirs of Pak Yŏnghyo 朴泳孝 (1861–1939), another participant in the regime change, also testified that "the new thinking" came from Pak Kyusu's school (NIKH 1999, pp. 17–18). However, one should be careful as to whether or not these young leaders identified the new thinking as Enlightenment (*kaehwa*) under Pak's influence.

Unlike the middle class Oh and Yu, Pak was an elite official from the *yangban* class who had received a classical education for the civil service examination. He is characterized in the secondary literature as the first Enlightenment thinker and the successor of the Practical Learning (*Sirhak* 實學) (M. Kim 2011), inherited from his grandfather Pak Chiwŏn that challenged the orthodox Neo-Confucianism and strived to reform social structures. Indeed, Pak Kyusu is a significant figure who claimed "to open the ports" (*kaehang*) to foreign countries, after he had gone through the clash and war with the US in 1866 and 1871. However, The word *kaehwa* itself never actually appears in Pak's writings. On top of that, no contemporary records affirm when precisely Kim Okkyun started representing himself and his allies as the "Enlightenment Party" (*Kaehwa-dang* 開化黨). The earliest source of this naming is in 1897 in *The Independent*, the first English newspaper of Chosŏn, well after the occurrence of the events discussed. Giacinti, a reporter of *The Independent*, wrote a memorial address on the death of Sŏ Kwangbŏm 徐光範 (1859–1897), the third member of the Kapsin Regime Change. Of Sŏ and Kim Okkyun he stated:

The two men quietly organized a party among their young friends for the purpose of studying the history, customs and geography of the Western countries and the name of Kaiwha [dang] or Progressive Party was coined in the Korean language. During the year 1880 the two pioneers of Western education secretly went to Japan with the permission of His Majesty and took with them some twenty young men to study the outside world. (Giacinti, 4 September 1897)

In this passage, Giacinti stated that Kim and Sŏ organized the *Kaehwadang* before 1880. However, the earliest sources referring to the group as *Kaehwadang* are mostly Japanese newspapers after 1881. For example, on May 6 1881, the *Chōya Newspaper* bore the headline "Yi Tongin: Assassinated for the Chosŏn Enlightenment Party."³ When the first inspectors were dispatched to Japan, *Tokyo Daily News* wrote that the Chosŏn visitors were composed of two groups—"one is the conservative party, and the other is the progressive party"—and used "progressive (*kaijin* 開進)" as a synonym for "enlightened (*kaika*)" in opposition to "conservative (*shukyū* 守舊)"⁴ On 15 March 1882, the *Chōsen Shinbō* wrote, "Kim Okkyun, the famous [leader of] Enlightenment Party of Chosŏn, arrived in Japan with the King's Order."⁵

² I used the term "Kapsin Regime Change" for Kapsin Chŏngbyŏn 甲申政變 instead of the "Kapshin Coup" or "Coup d'état" (Lee 1984; Seth 2010, pp. 237–39) because Kim Okkyun and his allies had no intention of eliminating their King. They launched a coup against the conservative pro-China faction, not against king Kojong. Although they maintained the equality of people, they planned to reform government as a constitutional monarchy under the rule of Kojong. After the failure, their opponents defined it as treason and called for punishment. Although Kojong bowed to pressure and gave a tacit admission of assassinating Kim Okkyun, Kojong took most of the members again as the leading party of the 1894 Reform. On the Kapsin Regime Change, see (Yi 1986; Shin 2000).

³ *Shinbun*, vol. 4, pp. 386–87. *Chōya shinbō* 朝野新報: Chōsen kaikatō no tameni ansatsu saretā Ri Tōjin 朝鮮開化黨の爲に暗殺された李東仁.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 393. *Tōkyō nichimichi shinbun* 東京日日新聞 7 May 1881. Chosŏn court officials came to study Japan: Enemies of the progressive and the conservative in the same boat (朝鮮國朝士日本の研究に渡來:開進守舊の吳越同舟). While it stated "Ichitō wa shukyū, ichitō wa kaishin 一黨は守舊, 一黨は開進," Yi Man-sŏn 李萬孫 and Sim Sang-hak 沈相學 were the representatives of the conservatives; Ō Yun-jung 魚允中 represented the Enlightenment Party (*kaikatō* 開化黨).

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 48. *Chōsen shinbō* 朝鮮新報, Kin Gyokukin ōmei o ukete Nihon e 金玉均王命を受けて日本へ: "朝鮮の開化黨の有名なる金玉均は今般王命を奉じ我國に渡航する."

The meaning of the Japanese word *kaika* 開化 is quite clear when Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 (1835–1901) translated “civilization and enlightenment” as “*bunmei kaika* 文明開化.” In his short essay, “Enlightenment of the World Civilizations” (*Yo no bunmei kaika* 世ノ文明開化) published in 1867, Fukuzawa stated: “If we review history, human life was unenlightened at the beginning, and gradually progressed toward enlightenment and civilization.”⁶ Since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, *bunmei kaika* in the Japanese context implied by and large Enlightenment by embracing Western civilization.

The same usage of *kaika* (K. *kaehwa*) is found in the conversation between Oh Kyöngsök and Japanese ministers in the naval vessel on 28 January 1876. Oh Kyöngsök, a capable translator of his time and an influential figure in the Enlightenment Party, closed the meeting by saying, “It was a great pleasure to meet enlightened people and talk about Enlightenment.”⁷ Jong-Hak Kim has confirmed that this was “the first case that *kaehwa* appeared in the modern texts related to Chosön” (J.H. Kim 2017, p. 40). From this, we can understand that Oh intended his efforts to open ports to be consonant with the Meiji concept of Enlightenment (*kaika*) before 1876.

Kim Okkyun recorded “our party” (*o-dang* 吾黨) had kept in touch with the Palace ten years before the 1884 regime change.⁸ According to this record, most Korean historians consider that the Enlightenment Party was organized around 1874 (Lee 1989). Yongha Shin gave more weight to Oh’s role in the formation of the Party (Shin 2000), and Jong-Hak Kim dated it upto 1871 when Oh Kyöngsök met Kim Okkyun for the first time (J.H. Kim 2017, p. 40).

However, it is still questionable whether the title of the Party was determined in the early 1870s. It is often called as the Reform Party (*Kachyök-dang* 改革黨) or Independence Party (*Tongnip-dang* 獨立黨). Meiji politicians identified Kim Okkyun as “the head of Enlightenment Party,” while the Qing government called him “the leader of Independent Party.” Many historical records, including *The Veritable Records of the Chosön Dynasty* (CWS), tell us their primary concern was Chosön independence from Qing China. In the 1870s, Pak Kyusu claimed to strengthen military power for the sake of independence rather than to enlighten the country. Particularly, Pak Kyusu had confidence in the superiority of an “Eastern value system” over that of “the West” (M. Kim 2011, pp. 144, 155). Certainly, the most important aspect of Kojong’s reform around the mid-nineteenth century was independence; in order to achieve this goal, military reform was the foremost priority.

Most scholars who have written on this period use the term *kaehwa* in the sense of Enlightenment toward Western civilization. However, Kwan Bum Noh investigated usages of the term in the relevant primary sources and concluded that *kaehwa* with such connotation did not appear in official historical records before 1882. According to him, “the first usage of *kaehwa* with the implication of Enlightenment and Civilization as a foreign-oriented term” is seen in an 1894 record in CWS and an 1882 record in the *Daily Records of Royal Secretariat* (SJW) (Noh 2019). The earliest case is from Chi Sökyöng’s 池錫永 (1855–1935) appeal to education in international law (such as the Chinese translation *Wanguo gongfa* 萬國公法 of Henry Wheaton’s (1785–1848) *Elements of International Laws*) and new technologies in fields such as agriculture, textiles, and weaponry. Chi asserted that if education in these areas proceeded:

We can expect the age of Enlightenment and the days of Great Peace within the near future. Isn’t it truly an excellent method to transform people and develop the culture, as well as the foremost strategy to promote beneficial utility and prosperous livelihoods?
(SJW 1882-8-28)⁹

開化之期, 昇平之日, 可翹足而待也. 茲非化民成俗之妙法, 利用厚生之首謀乎?

⁶ Fukuzawa 1867, pp. 10–11. 史ヲ察スルニ人生ノ始ハ芥味ニシテ次第ニ文明開化ニ赴クモノナリ.

⁷ NGB 9-1, No. 6, 38. 開化ノ人ニ遇ヒ開化ノ談ヲ爲ス情意殊ニ舒ブ.

⁸ There was a court lady, nicknamed the Lady Counselor (ko-daesu), who served to the Queen and communicated with Kim Okkyun’s party in secret. Kim O. 1884-12-01. 一宮女某氏(年今四十二, 身體健大, 如男子, 有力, 可當男子五六人. 素以顧大嫂稱別號, 所以得坤殿寵時得近侍, 自十年以前, 趨附吾黨, 時以密事通報者也).

⁹ I will use this date format (year-month-day) for the records of the lunisolar calendar type. In Korea, the Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1896.

There is a discord between what we expect as the “foreign-oriented term” and Chi’s thinking on Enlightenment. Noh also interprets Chi’s concept of Enlightenment as presenting the ideal state of the dynasty, achieved through overall strategies of strengthening the country. Noh pointed out: Chi did not separate the contemporary Chinese “Self-strengthening” (*zìqiáng* 自強) and modern Japanese “Enlightenment” (*kaika*). In addition, he tried to link them with the Confucian concept of “beneficial utility and prosperous livelihoods” (*liyong housheng* 利用厚生) whose *locus classicus* is in the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) and “Transforming people and developing culture” (*huamin chengsu* 化民成俗) in the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) (Noh 2019, p. 359).

In sum, except for the case of Oh Kyöngsök in 1876, the concept of Enlightenment as aspiring to Western civilization rarely appeared in intellectual documents before 1881, when Kojong despatched investigators to Japan. Oh Kyöngsök might be the earliest advocate of *kaehwa* in a strict sense, and the most progressive reformers, such as Kim Okkyun, might be located on this side. On the other end of the spectrum of Enlightenment ideas might be the concept that Chi Sökyöng mingled with Confucian values. The next section will bring to light the previously unexplored notion of a concept of Enlightenment which is heterogeneous and much older than the Meiji-oriented one, not as a temporary misunderstanding but as a noteworthy trend of all social strata in the late Chosön.

3. Spirit-Writing and Publication of the Scriptures of Thearch Kwan

The Studio of Collecting Jade (*Chibokchae* 集玉齋) was Kojong’s personal library in the palace: it was a room for diplomatic meetings and a symbolic space of state reform. The catalog of its book collection (*Chibokchae syojök mokrok* 集玉齋書籍目錄 1908) shows a quest for expanding newly available knowledge. Although a large portion is dedicated to contemporary Chinese translations of Western books of science and technology, some peculiar books draw our attention (Table 1): they belong neither to the category of new scientific works nor to the Confucian classics.

Table 1. Taoist Books and Morality Books in the Studio of Collecting Jade.

Titles in the Book Catalog of the Studio of Collecting Jade	Place of Publication
<i>Complete Works of the Patriarch Lü</i> 呂祖全書 (LZQS) <i>Complete Biography of the Patriarch Lü</i> 呂祖全傳 (LZQZ)	Qing China
<i>Folios on Retribution</i> 感應篇 (GYP) <i>Anthology for the Pious Faith</i> 敬信錄 (JXL) <i>Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievements</i> 聖蹟圖誌 (KJ) <i>Records of Sacred Achievements in the East of the Sea</i> 海東聖蹟誌 (HD) <i>Commentary and Images of Precious Admonition</i> 寶訓像註 <i>Scripture of Luminous Sacredness</i> 明聖經 <i>Enlightenment by Passing, Miracles by Presence</i> 過化存神 (KHJS) <i>Scripture of Admonition of the Three Sages</i> 三聖訓經 (SSHG)	Chosön Korea

Most of these books are categorized as “morality books” (*shanshu* 善書, or *quanshanshu* 勸善書) by their content in modern studies. They were mainly classified into the Daoism section (*daojia* 道家) by the four-division (*sibu* 四部) classification system in East Asia. However, these books cannot be purely attributed to Daoism. Rather, they represent the moral values of pre-modern China in which the Three Teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism converged (Sakai 1999–2000; Brokaw 1991). In most case, these books were produced by a particular mantic practice of spirit-writing called “descending brush” (*jiangbi/kangp’il* 降筆) or “grasping [wood-pen for] spirit-writing” (*fujū* 扶). Spirit-written texts were revelations from divine beings that were treated as sacred scriptures by those who received and propagated them.

How should we conceive of Kojong’s collection of these books? Some of them were imported from China, and many of them were published during the so-called Enlightenment period (*kaehwa-gi*) of Korea. Some were printed bearing an edict of endorsement by Kojong himself. Kojong’s possession of these books indicates more than the collection of books popular in contemporary China and Korea.

It demonstrates the stirring interaction with ideas and practices that prompt a reconsideration of the meaning of “Enlightenment” itself.

In 1876, the year of Kanghwa Treaty, *Complete Collection of Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievements of the Thearch Lord Sage Kwan* (*Guansheng dijun shengji tuzhi quanji*/Kwansǒng-jegun sǒngjǒk-doji jǒnjip 關聖帝君聖蹟圖誌全集, abbr. KJ/GQ), and its *Continuation* (*Sokchip* 續集, abbr. KS) and *Records of Sacred Achievements in the East of the Sea* (*Haedong sǒngjǒk chi* 海東聖蹟志, abbr. HD) were published in the same style (Figure 1, Tables 1 and 2).

Table 2. Publication of Scriptures of the Three Sages.

	Kwansǒng-Jegun (K.) Guansheng Dijun (Ch.) 關聖帝君 Thearch Kwan	Pu-u Jegun Fuyou Dijun 孚佑帝君 Thearch of Succour	Munch'ang Jegun Wenchang Dijun 文昌帝君 Thearch of Literature
Chinese Edition & Chosǒn Reprint Edition	<i>Kwansǒng-jegun sǒngjǒk doji jǒnjip</i> <i>Guansheng dijun shengji tuzhi quanji</i> 關聖帝君聖蹟圖誌全集 <i>Complete Collection of Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievements of the Thearch Lord Sage Kwan</i> [KJ] 1876 Chosǒn Reprint Edition of 19C Qing Edition Published in Kwanwang Shrine Pak Kyu-su, Preface Sǒ Chǒng, Preface Kim Ch'anghǔi, Postscript <i>Kwansǒng-jegun bohun sangju</i> <i>Guansheng dijun baoxun xiangzhu</i> 關聖帝君寶訓像註 <i>Commentary and Images of Precious Admonition of Thearch Lord Sage Kwan</i> 1882 Chosǒn Reprint Edition of [1731] 1850 Qing Edition <i>Kwansǒng-jegun myǒngsǒng gyǒng</i> <i>Guansheng dijun mingsheng jing</i> 關聖帝君明聖經 <i>Scripture of Luminous Sacredness of Thearch Lord Sage Kwan</i> 1883 Chosǒn Reprint Edition	<i>Yǒjo jǒnsǒ</i> <i>Lǐzu quanshu</i> 呂祖全書 <i>Complete Works of the Patriarch Lǐ</i> [LZQS] [1744] 1868 Chinese Edition	<i>Munje jǒnsǒ</i> /Wendi quanshu 文帝全書 <i>Complete Works of the Thearch of Literature</i> [WDQS] [1743] 1775 Chinese Edition <i>Munje sǒch'ŏ</i> /Wendi shuchao 文帝書 <i>Anthology of the Works of Thearch of Literature</i> [WDSC] (1768) 1882 Chinese Edition <i>Ŭmjǔlmun juhac</i> /Yinzhitwen zhujie 陰文註解 <i>Commentary on the Essay of Secret Virtue</i> [YZW] 1883 Chosǒn Reprint Edition Zhu Gui 朱珪, Commentary Yu Un, Postscript
	Chosǒn Anthology from Chinese Edition & Chosǒn Original	<i>Kwansǒng-jegun sǒngjǒk doji sokchip</i> <i>Guansheng dijun shengji tuzhi xuji</i> 關聖帝君聖蹟圖誌續集 <i>Sequel to Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievements of the Thearch Lord Sage Kwan</i> [KS] 1876 Published in Kwanwang Shrine <i>Haedong sǒngjǒk chi</i> <i>Haidong shengji zhi</i> 海東聖蹟志 <i>Records of Sacred Achievements in the East of Sea</i> [HD] 1876 Published in Kwanwang Shrine <i>Kwǎhwa jonsin</i> /Guohua cunshen 過化存神 <i>Enlightenment by Passing, Miracles by Presence</i> [KHCS] 1880 Published by Kojong's Edict (Ch. with K. Translation) <i>Kwansǒng-jegun myǒngsǒng gyǒng</i> 關聖帝君明聖經 <i>Scripture of Luminous Sacredness of Thearch Lord Sage Kwan</i> 1886 (Ch. with K. Translation)	<i>Simhak jongjon</i> <i>Xinxue zhengzhuan</i> 心學正傳 <i>Orthodox Transmission in Learning of Heart-Mind</i> [SHJ] 1878 Chosǒn Excerpt from LZQS Kim Ch'anghǔi, Preface (Ch. with K. Translation) <i>Chunghyang jip</i> <i>Zhongxiang ji</i> 紫香集 <i>Collection of Various Fragrance</i> [CHJ] 1881 Chosǒn Anthology of LZQS Kim Ch'anghǔi, Preface Yu Un, Postscript <i>Yagǒn bojǒn</i> /Yaoyan baodian 藥言寶典 <i>Precious Book of Remedial Advices</i> 1884 Anthology of CHJ
<i>Samsǒng bojǒn</i> /Sansheng baodian 三聖寶典 <i>Precious Book of the Three Sages</i> [SSB] 1877 Published by Formless Altar <i>Samsǒng hun'gyǒng</i> /Sansheng xunjing 三聖訓經 <i>Admonition of the Three Sages</i> [SHG] 1880 The same colophon with KHJS (Ch. with K. Translation)			

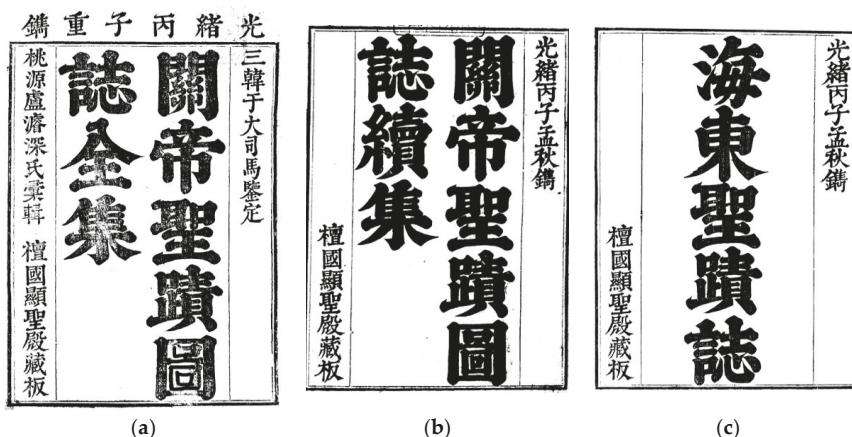


Figure 1. Publication of Guandi Texts in 1876. (a) *Complete Collection of Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievements of the Thearch Lord Sage Kwan*; (b) *Continuation of the Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievements of the Thearch Lord Sage Kwan*; (c) *Records of Sacred Achievements in the East of Sea*.

The *Complete Collection* (KJ/GQ) was initially published in 1693 by Lu Zhan 盧湛 in Qing China. Lu compiled historical records relating to Guan Yu, as well as canonical scriptures attributed to his deified form Guandi, divination texts, and miscellaneous works (Duara 1988; Goossaert 2017). Kojong’s collection was a Chosŏn edition of a nineteenth century Qing version. The *Continuation* collected the scriptures that were not included in KJ, especially the *Authentic Scripture of Awakening the World* (*Jueshi zhenjing/Kakse-jingyŏng* 覺世真經 (KS 1876, vol. 1),¹⁰ and other writings of Chosŏn literati, and anecdotal stories about miracles of Thearch Kwan in Chosŏn. The woodblocks of the series were stored in the Pavilion of Manifesting the Sacred (Hyŏnsŏng-jŏn 顯聖殿) at the East Kwanwang shrine in Seoul.

It is noteworthy that Pak Kyusu wrote the preface to KJ: this fact has been completely neglected in modern studies. In his preface, Pak stated admiringly:

The former general of the Han Dynasty, Marquis Kwan (kwanhu/guanhou 關侯), whose posthumous title is the Majestic and Sublime, became a King and a Thearch, with many honorable titles bestowed [from Chinese Emperors], so that he was worshipped in both Daoism and Buddhism, called as a Lord Thearch, a Heavenly Worthy, and a Bodhisattva.

(KJ 1876, vol. 1, 1a)

漢前將軍關侯諡壯繆，歷代屢加封典，爲王爲帝，而以至道釋二家，亦俱崇奉，稱帝君稱天尊稱菩薩。

Spirit-writing practice exploded since the Song (960–1279) dynasty period (Kleeman 1993) and became widespread in late imperial China, without respect for the domain of Daoist and Buddhist clergy, ordinary people and elite literati associations (Wang 2015; Kiely 2017). New teachings and religious scriptures were produced through the process of automatic-writing: Chinese characters were written while a spirit medium held a T-shaped or Y-shaped stick on a sandtray. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Three Sages—Guandi 關帝 (Thearch Guan), Lüzu 呂祖 (Patriarch Lü), and Wendi 文帝

¹⁰ According to the record of KS, *Jueshi zhenjing* was revealed in 1668 (the seventh year of Kangxi 康熙七年). KS 1876, vol. 1, 1a-b. Sakai pointed out its Japanese edition was circulated in the 1680s in Edo Japan without affirming the exact dating of the text (Sakai 1999–2000, vol. 2, pp. 184–85; vol. 2, p. 374). See also Goossaert 2017, pp. 512–13; Yau 2015, pp. 222–25.

(Thearch of Literature)—became the most popular spirit-writing gods (Sakai 1999–2000; Yau 2005; Yau 2010; Esposito 2013; Goooseaert 2015).

One of characteristics of the nineteenth century Chosŏn cult of Thearch Kwan was found in the worship of these Three Sages: Kwansong-jegun 關聖帝君, Thearch Lord Sage Kwan; Pu-u-jegun 孚佑帝君, Thearch Lord of Reliable Succour; Munch'ang-jegun 文昌帝君, Thearch Lord of Flourish of Literature.¹¹

According to the above Preface, the purpose of the 1876 publication of Guandi text was to enlighten the people from old customs and to become good. The Thearch of Literature also revealed that Sŏ Chŏng and the members of the spirit-writing altar are “the pivot of Enlightenment (*kaehwa ji chu* 開化之樞)” (KS 1876, vol. 3, 又51a-b). At that point, printing sacred books was a crucial element of their “Enlightenment” project. Sŏ Chŏng, probably a Chinese interpreter accompanying Chosŏn envoy to Qing China, was the core figure of the spirit-writing altar.

Recent studies provided an extensive investigation of the formation and development of the altar. Kim Yun Soo characterized it as “the first Korean Daoist organization of spirit-writing altar,” typifying “Popular Daoism” (Y.S. Kim 2008). Kim Youn Gyeong also regarded it as the “Daoist organization” and “Folk Daoism” (Y.G. Kim 2012; Y.G. Kim 2019). However, the faith and practices were not confined to Daoism or popular religion. The members related to the spirit-writing practice had connections with Buddhist associations and Buddhist text publications alike (Yi 1986; Park 2017; Seo 2017). The further investigation of a previously neglected source will serve as a link to connect the Three Sages cult with the royal family and the elite culture. This source is the *Collection of Sacred Spirit-writings* (*Sŏnggye-jip* 聖集, abbr. SGJ), a handwritten manuscript preserved in the Kyujang-gak Library of Seoul National University.

Thearch Kwan was at the center of the Chosŏn cult of the Three Sages. In this sense, it might be said to be the extension of the Guandi cult in East Asia. Prasenjit Duara analyzed the evolving myths and cults of Guandi in China in terms of “superscription,” meaning the layering of the contributions of rural cults and imperial liturgy, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and other popular faiths and practices. Duara asserted that “Superscription enabled the imperial state to create an authoritative image of Guandi with which rural elites could identify and which peasants and other social groups could acknowledge without renouncing the dimensions of Guandi that were more immediately relevant to them (Duara 1988, p. 791).” The Chosŏn cult of Thearch Kwan not only expands superscription of Guandi symbolism geographically and temporally but also shows its recontextualization in Korea.

4. Spirit-Writing of the Three Sages and Enlightenment

4.1. The Kwanwang Shrines and the Related Figures

The *Collection of Sacred Spirit-writing* (SGJ) is a chronological record of revelations dating from 1874 to 1880. The place of revelation was not fixed: spirit-writing sessions were mostly held at the East and the South Kwanwang Shrines (Figures 2 and 3), outside the gates of Hansŏng 漢城 (present Seoul), and sometimes in the houses of the shrine administrators and the spirit-mediums as well.

The South Shrine was built in 1598 at the request of the Ming general Chen Yin 陳寅 (?-1621), who fought with the Japanese army in the East Asian War (1592–1598) (CWS 1598-4-25, HD 1876, vol. 1, 1a). The East Shrine was built during 1600–1602 on the desire and funds of the Ming Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (Van Lieu 2014, pp. 56–57). Despite Guan Yu already possessing the title of Thearch at the end of the sixteenth century,¹² the shrine was titled the King Kwan Shrine because Chosŏn ruler had the title

¹¹ I will unify their titles in Korean texts as Thearch Kwan, Thearch of Succour, and Thearch of Literature.

¹² Guan Yu was given the rank of Thearch in 1590 for the first time, titled “xietian huguo zhongyi dadi 協天護國忠義大帝,” the Great Thearch of Loyalty and Justice Who Protects the State and Assists the Heaven” (SXTZ, vol. 167). He subsequently received the title, “the Thearch Lord Sage Guan, Heavenly Worthy of Overarching Suppression with Divine Power, the Great Thearch who Subdues Demons in the Three Realms (Sanjie fumo dadi shenwei yuanzhen tianxun guansheng dijun 三界伏魔大帝神威遠鎮天尊關聖帝君” in 1605 (KJ 1876, vol. 3, 12a).

of King (*wang* 王) in the Sinocentric tributary system. Kwanwang Shrines were thus the initial places to house the protecting god of the Ming army. After the withdrawal of the Ming forces from the Korean peninsula, they became centers of the indigenization of the Guandi cult.



Figure 2. The South Shrine (a) and the East Shrine (b). (photographs held at the Korean National Museum).

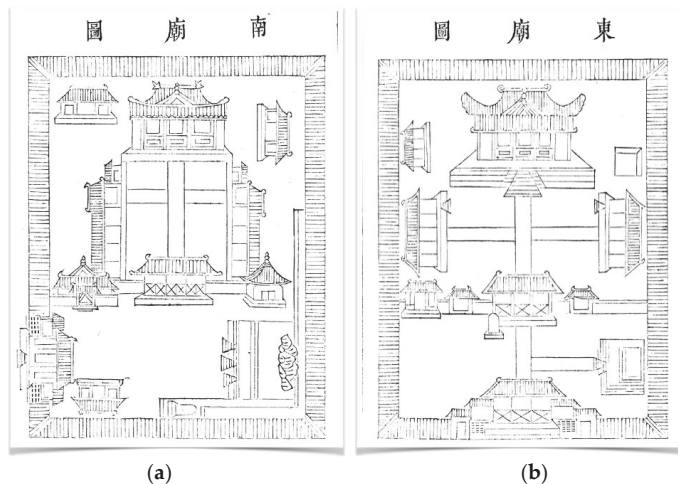


Figure 3. The South Shrine (a) and the East Shrine (b). (Continuation of the Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievements of the Thearch Lord Sage Kwan [KS] 1876, vol. 3, 11a-b).

It should be noted that Kwanwang Shrines were under the control of the state liturgical system in Chosŏn.¹³ The state worship of Thearch Kwan was elevated to the middle-rank in the eighteenth century (I. Kim 2014, p. 160). Each shrine had three *chuje-gwan* 主祭官, the Administrators of Sacrifice. Mostly the posts were occupied by the middle and lower ranks of Chosŏn officialdom, which was divided into an eighteen-rank system (from the top senior/junior first to the bottom senior/junior ninth) both in civil and military services.

¹³ Nevertheless, modern studies are inclined to discuss the Guandi cult as a popular faith (*mingan sinang* 民間信仰) (NIKH 1998, pp. 160–63). Youn Gyeong Kim categorized Kwanwang cult as “popular Daoism,” in the sense that the cult pervaded the broad social classes, albeit its origin was the state cult (Y.G. Kim 2012, pp. 312–13). Most researches agree that the characteristic of the Kwanwang cult was royal-initiated and became popularized in the entire state in the Kojong period (Murayama 1935; Jang 2004; Lee 2006).

The central figures who engaged in spirit-writing practice were the Administrator of Sacrifice at the East Shrine, Yi Chinmo 李瑄謨 (also called Chinsun 瑄淳 and Chunmo 駿謨) and his second son Kisŏn 基善. There were two known spirit mediums, Chŏn Chaesik 田在植 and Kim Hŭijŏng 金熙鼎. Other leading members of the Formless Altar (*musang-dan* 無相壇), such as Chŏi Sŏnghwan 崔煥 (1813–1891), Sŏ Chŏng, Yu Un 劉雲 (1821–1884), Chŏng Haku 丁鶴九, were also involved in spirit-writing practice and spreading the teaching of the Three Sages.

Sŏ Chŏng, who proceeded to publish the series of Guandi texts, was one of the three administrators of the South Shrine in 1876. Although he was the highest official among the three, holding the junior second rank title (*kasŏn-daebru* 嘉善大夫, Grand Master of Excellent Virtue), he was only in the senior fourth rank military office (*yongyangwi-hogun* 龍衛護軍, a deputy commander of the Left Guard). Yi Chinmo was the administrator of the East Shrine, with the same title (*kasŏn-daebru*) as Sŏ, and his actual post was in the junior second rank civil office (*tongji-jungch'u-busa* 同知中樞府事, a second deputy director of the Privy Council). The administrative office of the shrine seems to be a sinecure or a retreat place for elder military officials, usually former guard commander of Palace Guard (*wijang* 衛將), or remote relatives of the royal Yi clan.¹⁴ Other administrators were from sixth to eighth rank military officers who belonged to the Five Guard Armies (*owigun* 五衛軍) or lower rank officials who belonged to the Palace Supply Office (*naesusa* 內需司). In short, Yi was the highest official among the administrators of the shrine at that time.

The spirit mediums, Chŏng Haku, Chŏn Chaesik, and Kim Hŭijŏng were able to communicate with deities through their visions and dreams. Chŏn's role was crucial in the revelation of the East Kwanwang Shrine, but he was illiterate in Classical Chinese. The deities were perplexed because he could not write down oracles. On the 27th day of the 10th month in 1877, Thearch of Succour—Pure Yang Lü (Yŏ Sunyang 呂純陽)—came to dedicate a poem to Thearch Kwan, but Chŏn Chaesik could not write it because of his illiteracy, thus Lü returned in vain" (田生在植, 以無識之故, 不得作詩而歸矣) (SGJ, 12a). Chŏn usually transmitted divine messages by words of mouth (*kujŏn* 口傳) rather than by written text. Hence, Thearch Kwan ordered Chŏn to learn classical Chinese from Chŏng Haku (SGJ, 19b).

According to SGJ, the members of the Formless Altar received the Great Dharma (*taebŏp* 大法) (SGJ 1877-11-15, 14b) and Chŏng Haku was essential to "the Enlightenment of the Three Sages" (*samsŏng kaehwa* 三聖開化) (SGJ 1878-1-27, 21a). At the same time, Yi Chinmo and Chŏn Chaesik were blessed as "the most beloved disciples" of Thearch Kwan.¹⁵ In the latter part of SGJ, instead of the pair of Yi and Chŏn, Chinmo's son Yi Kisŏn became the central figure, and Kim Hŭijŏng transmitted his vivid dream revelations.

Outside of Kwanwang Shrines, King Kojong and state officials showed great interest in the unseen world. People were sent to the shrines to consult health problem of the Grand Royal Queen Dowager (*taewang taebi* 大王大妃) (SGJ, 9a; 52a; 65b) and the Crown Prince (*seja* 世子) (SGJ, 58b; 59b; 75b): The prince is Yi Tak 李 (1874–1926), who would be the next King Sunjong 純宗. The Grand Queen Dowager is the Queen Sinjŏng 神貞王后, the mother of the twenty-fourth king Hŏnjong 憲宗, from the Pungyang 豐壤 Cho 趙 clan, who had adopted Yi Chaehwang 載晃 (i.e., Kojong) to ascend to the throne of the twenty-sixth king of Chosŏn. SGJ reveals that Kojong himself was a main consultee (SGJ, 23a-b; 44a-b; 52a; 59a; 64a-b; 65a-66b; 69b; 71b).

Probably, when earthquakes occurred in the Ch'angdok Palace in the spring of 1879 (Sjw 1879-3-17), Kojong consulted to resolve "the outbreak of demonic spirits within the palace (闕內雜神發動之事)" (SGJ 1879-3-17, 44b). Kojong interpreted his oracle poem as an injunction to build a new shrine (*sŏngmyo*

¹⁴ About twelve names of Yi clan members appear in SGJ. Among them were: Yi Chunmo (i.e., Chinmo), the guard commander of Kyŏnghŭi Palace 慶熙宮衛將; Yi Hangyu 李漢奎 (48a); Yi Bonghwan 李鳳煥 (62a-63a), who held the post of the commander of Five Guards 五衛將; and Yi Wŏnsik 李源植 (68a), a commander of Palace Gate 守門將. The guard commander (*wijang*) had no fixed assignment.

¹⁵ SGJ 1880-10-24, 31a. 李生瑄淳也, 田生在植也, 我本最愛之人也。

ch'angkōn 聖廟創建) for Thearch Kwan.¹⁶ Kim Hūijōng made a divination to figure out the proper person to take charge of the construction¹⁷; he had a dream about the Prime Minister Yi Chōiūng 李最應 (1815–1882, Kojong's paternal uncle) and the Commissioner-Chief (*todok* 都督) Min Kyōmho 閔謙鎬 (1838–1882, Kojong's maternal uncle) and asked their fortunes (*sinsu* 身數) by the divinations.¹⁸ It seems that they proceeded with the construction of the North Shrine. Since the following year, the two had led the first administrative reforms as the Heads of Office for Extraordinary State Affairs (*Tongni-gimu-amun* 統理機務衙門), until both were killed by soldiers who opposed the military reform of 1882 (an event known as the Soldier's Revolt; *Imo-gullan* 壬午軍亂).

Another high-ranking court official present in SGJ is Kim Ch'anghūi 金昌熙 (1844–1890). He had been the secretary of the royal embassy to the Qing during Kojong's early reign period. He is the one who wrote a postscript for KJ, which he signed with the title of former President of the National Academy (*Sōnggyun-gwan Taesasōng* 成均館大司成). Kim was regarded as "a trustworthy official (*singwan* 信官)" (SGJ, 27b). As we will discuss later, he made a major contribution to the dissemination of the Three Sages' Teaching. Among the court servants, Kojong's closest eunuchs Ryu Chaehyōn 柳載賢 (?-1884) and Hong T'aekchu 洪宅柱 (fl. 1877–1907) also appeared in the records (SGJ, 15b; 31b).

The military elite figure Cho Yōngha 趙寧夏 had close relation with Yi Chinmo, who was deeply engaged in shrine affairs. Cho was a relative of the Grand Royal Queen Dowager and one of the main contributors to the coronation of Kojong. In 1874, after ten years of regency, Kojong began to rule directly; at that time, Cho became the Commander of Forbidden Guard (*kūmwi-daejang* 禁衛大將). In 1875, the following year, he was promoted to the position of Commander of the Military Training Corp (*Hullyōn-dogam* 訓練都監). According to Kojong's edict, the Commander was to lead the sacrificial rites to Thearch Kwan twice a year, in the spring and autumn. Even after Cho was promoted to minister,¹⁹ people at Kwanwang Shrines called him as the Commander, "*hunjang* 訓將" (SGJ, 9a; 10a; 24a; 24b) or "*hunjang-daegam* 訓將大監" (SGJ, 52b). Cho served as Kojong's right hand and trusted friend until he was assassinated in 1884 during the Kapsin Regime Change.

The most stirring document might be the divination records for the trifacta of Enlightenment Party figures: Pak Yōnghyo ("*Kūmrūngwi* 錦陵尉," the Royal son-in-law), Kim Okkyun ("*Kim Kyori Ok* 金校理玉"), and Sō Kwangbōm ("*Sō Sōbang Pōm* 徐書房範") (Figure 4). In 1879, the year specified in the transcript, most of them were in their twenties and the early stage of their careers.²⁰ It was about two years before Kojong dispatched them to Japan. The oracle poem for Pak Yōnghyo depicted him as a figure who would cross the sea of suffering and save his people (乘舟苦海濟斯民). The oracle for Kim Okkyun described him as a giant fish in the deepest ocean: a creature that would transform itself into something extraordinary and bring thunderstorms.²¹ It remains unknown whether it was Kojong or themselves, who asked to predict their destinies (SGJ 1879-3-28, 47a). Later, despite the failure in 1884, Pak was taken in again as a court official and promoted as a leader of the 1894 Reform.

¹⁶ SGJ 1879-3-22, 44b-45a. 上行十籤事, 三日晝夜研究後, 聖廟創建事, 伏祝矣。得六十一籤。

¹⁷ SGJ 1879-3-23, 45a. 聖廟事引道之人, 以何處可合之意, 伏告。得五十四籤。

¹⁸ SGJ 1879-3-24, 45b-47b. 夢認領相都統之後, 覺而即入殿內, 以周施之意, 而處身數, 伏告。得十八籤, 得二十籤。SGJ 1879-6-5, 47b. 領相直心職事, 伏祝。

¹⁹ Cho Yongha was Minister of Work (*kongjo p'ansō* 工曹判書) in 1876 and served as Minister of Rites (*yejo p'ansō* 禮曹判書) and Minister of Personnel (*ijo p'ansō* 吏曹判書) in 1877.

²⁰ Pak was nineteen years of age and married to the princess Yōnghye 永惠 (1859–1872). Kim Okkyun was twenty-nine and served as the fifth-rank official at the Office of Special Adviser (*Hongmun-gwan* 弘文館). Sō Kwangbōm was twenty-one; he had not yet passed the civil service examination. "*Sōbang*" is literally "a book-room," which is a common title for educated men preparing for the exams.

²¹ SGJ 1879-3-28. 魚千里大海千尋, 誰識深深經劫沈, 一得寶珠生變化, 雷聲天地氣嚴森。The oracle poem was No. 49 lot of the *Sacred Lots* in KS 1876, vol. 3, 68.

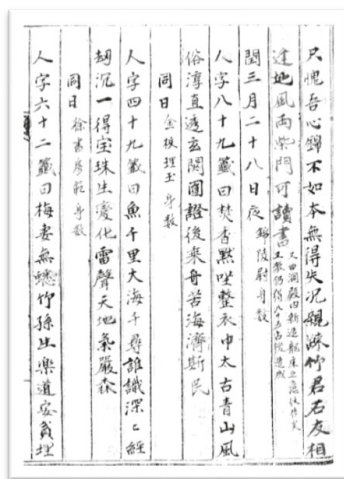


Figure 4. Oracle Poems for the Triad of Enlightenment Party (*Collection of Sacred Spirit-writings* [SGJ], 47a).

There was a notable association called “The Society of Spring and Autumn (*ch’unch’usa* 春秋社).” It seems to have been organized to support the official sacrifices in Kwanwang Shrine in March (*kyōngch’ip* 驚蟄, Insect Wakes) in the spring and October (*sang’gang* 霜降, Frost Descends) in the autumn. The name was taken from the Confucian classic *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which was utilized in putting Thearch Kwan into the genealogy of the Confucian lineage.²² It is said that the association had three hundred members, consisting of soldiers, court officials, and unknown ordinary people. Chōng Hakku and Yi Chinsun were declared as the spiritual leaders of this group (SGJ, 26a; 32b). They built a Kwanwang shrine at the garden of Yi Chinsun’s house following a revelation of Thearch Kwan (SGJ 1878-2-27, 24b-25b).

It should be noted that the Military Training Corps was the closest institution linked to Kwanwang Shrines. The Corps was the head of the Five Armies of the late Chosŏn, in charge of manufacturing and maintaining weapons. Every year, the generals of Three Armies—Military Training Corps, Royal Guard (*Ŏyōngch’ōng* 御營廳), and Forbidden Guard (*Kūmwiyōng* 禁衛營)—were appointed as the officiants at the rites. The Three Armies’ manpower was utilized not only for Kwanwang worship, but also for publishing books and the restoration of statues and shrine building (SGJ, 2b; SJW 1865–1893).²³

Cho Yongha, the former Commander of the Military Training Corps, kept in touch with the Shrine Administrators to discuss general administrative affairs of the shrine properties, as well as the health of the Royal family and even the diplomatic affairs.²⁴ In autumn of 1877, Japanese envoys planned to visit Seoul, which burdened Kojong’s court because of budget and security problems. (SJW 1877-9-28).

²² SGJ 1876-10-7. 學宗春秋, 直接孔門之道統。Guan Yu’s Confucian lineage has been built up in China, and became prominent in Qing texts. KJ 1876 (GQ 1693); JY261, 1a. 關聖帝君本傳: 帝字雲長, ... 為人義勇絕倫, 好讀左氏春秋, 諷誦略皆上口。It was already well known in eighteenth century Chosŏn (CWS 1730-12-6).

²³ Military Training Corps had a set of movable type (訓練都監字) since the sixteenth century, by which many books were printed.

²⁴ SGJ 1877-9-21, 9a. Yi Chinsun (i.e., Chinmo) made divination with the One-Hundred Lots inside a shrine in his house. He reported to Thearch Kwan, “Because the illness of the Grand Royal Queen Dowager was serious, I could not help but offering a prayer out of worry and informed the Commander of the Military Training Corp 大王大妃殿病患危重, 故不勝感懷, 以屬祈禱事, 告于訓將。” SGJ 1877-9-24, 9b. Thearch Kwan’s revelation: “Now the Japanese emissary’s affair is no need for doubt and worry. You discuss things fairly with ordinary minds and do not behave recklessly. The Vice Minister Cho Yōngha has various things to consult later, [thus if] he tells how things are going in person, sincerely serve him and perform without a doubt. 牛生瑄也, 丁生鶴也。兩人皆爲國之忠臣也。今倭使之情, 可無疑慮。汝等平心公議, 無妄作。又趙判書寧夏, 後日種種有相議之事, 親近吐於事理, 無疑慎謹奉行。” Japanese affairs are also seen in SGJ 24a; 44a. There is also a record that alludes to a consultation about a secret agent to investigate Japan (*wōjeōng* 倭情). SGJ 1877-10-6, 11a. 倭情之到京期約, 似在不遠矣。

SGJ indicates the consultation about Japanese affairs through Cho Yongha. Considering the liturgical system of the Kwanwang Shrines, the involvement of Kojong with the shrine was nothing out of the ordinary, but SGJ shows the deep interest of Corps members in the spiritual domain.

At this point, we must consider the meaning of Kwanwang shrines to kings and intellectuals of the mid- to late Chosŏn. After the East Asian War, Ming generals requested that king Sŏnjo 宣祖 participated in the sacrifice to Guandi. At first, Chosŏn people showed reluctance in regard to the shrine construction because of post-war fatigue; the Chosŏn literati evinced annoyance with the Ming general's request, protesting that there was no ritual protocol for their king to follow in relation to Guandi worship (Van Lieu 2014). However, after the foundation of Manchurian Qing, who invaded Chosŏn in 1627 and 1636 in the process of destroying the Ming, Sukchong 肅宗 (1660–1720) wanted to promote the “loyalty and righteousness” (*ch'ungŭi* 忠義) of Kwanwang (CWS 1691-2-27; 1703-6-18) and incorporated the ritual into the state liturgical system. In 1704, Sukchong ordered the construction of a shrine for Ming Shenzong 神宗—the Altar of Great Gratitude (Taebo-dan 大報壇)—in commemoration of the post-war reconstruction (*chaejo* 再造) of Chosŏn (CWS 1704-4-10). Chosŏn kings Sukjong, Yŏngjo 英祖 and Chŏngjo 正祖 all tried to strengthen the kingship through promotion of the ideal of “King's [righteous] governance” (*wangjŏng* 王政) and to maintain a distance from the “barbarian intruder” Qing. They each continuously used the Kwanwang shrines to express their Ming affiliation, under the slogan of “The Great Cause to Revere the Zhou” (*chonju taeŭi* 尊周大義), in which the Zhou symbolizes the essence of Confucian culture transmitted to the Ming dynasty.

The meaning of “revering the Zhou” or “Little Central Efflorescence” (*xiao Zhonghua*/so *Chunghwa* 小中華) has long been disputed among Korean scholars. The widespread understanding is that Chosŏn insisted to be the center and heir of Chinese orthodox culture succeeded to Ming, instead of barbarian Qing. Kim Youngmin suggested recently that, after the fall of Ming, “Central Efflorescence” (*Zhonghua*/*Chunghwa* 中華) lost its geopolitical significance and became “a theoretical placeholder,” which was opened to broaden interpretations and diverse utilization (Y. Kim 2013, pp. 224–26; Y. Kim 2019, pp. 93–99). What he called “placeholder” can be thought of as an empty signifier or an open symbol, which is also applicable to Kwanwang. Since the seventeenth century, Chosŏn kings and elite officials filled up the symbol with Chosŏn ideals, “the Zhou” with “King's righteous governance”; “Kwanwang” with “loyalty and righteousness”; “the Ming” with “the legitimacy of Chosŏn state.”

In the late Chosŏn context, Kwanwang has been officially commemorated as the deity who protected Chosŏn from the Japanese invasion (Figures 5 and 6), formulated as the protagonistic figure who embodies loyalty to the righteous governance of Chosŏn, and simultaneously as an antagonistic figure to the Qing and other foreign powers. Interestingly, the Qing dynasty also promoted the loyalty discourse of Guandi to consolidate the adherence of Chinese literati to the Manchu emperor, appropriating Guandi as the protective deity of the entire empire. In the broader East Asian context, Guandi was no longer a determinate signifier, fixed in a definite time or place, but the open symbol of universal justice and protection.



Figure 5. Thearch Kwan (*Complete Collection of Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievements of the Thearch Lord Sage Kwan* [KJ] 1876, vol. 1, 1b).



Figure 6. Manifestation of Thearch Kwan in Chosŏn (*Records of Sacred Achievements in the East of Sea* [HD] 1876, vol. 1, 1a).

Thearch Kwan himself deconstructed Sinocentrism, in declaring, “I am impartial from the outset, and just protect and bless the good. The Chosŏn state has great fortune on her side. Therefore, her near future will be prosperous” (吾本無私, 惟佑善人. 朝鮮國之運大通, 故年來豐也) (SGJ 1880-10-08, 76a). Spirit-written communication with Thearch Kwan was an important locus of the development of the imagination of Chosŏn’s place in a post-Ming order and the reformulation of Chinese deities into universal and transcendent standards of goodness.

4.2. The Three Sages and Revelations

As stated previously, an important feature of the Chosŏn cult of Thearch Kwan was the veneration of Samsŏng 三聖, Three Sages. In China, each of the three—Guandi, Lüzu, and Wendi—has his own deification history and independent sanctuary. Guan Yu, the war hero of the Three Kingdoms period,

was developed as the protector god of a local Buddhist temple and then of merchant communities, eventually to be incorporated into the Daoist pantheon and imperially sanctioned sacrifices (Duara 1988; Ter Haar 2017). Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓 is the legendary master of internal alchemy of the late Tang and a Daoist immortal, who became a very popular god of universal salvation and the patriarch of Quanzhen Daoism (Lüzü) as well as many spirit-writing associations (Katz 1996; Mori 2001; Lai 2016). Lüzü received the title of Thearch of Reliable Succour from the Yuan emperor in 1310. Wenchang, originally a deity of ancient Chinese astrology, evolved as a spirit-writing god who was worshiped by the literati class since the Southern Song period (Kleeman 1994). Wenchang received the title of Thearch from the Yuan emperor in 1316.

Each cult was not limited to Daoism but had developed in response to the spiritual needs of various social classes, including literati, warriors, merchants, and ordinary people, which resulted in multiple religious crossovers. In China, the three gods usually had individual shrines. In other cases, the pavilions for more than two deities—usually Lüzü and Wendi—are installed in the temple complexes of Daoism, local shrines, and charitable institutions called philanthropic halls (*shantang* 善堂) in the later period.

In contrast, except for the case of Thearch Kwan, no sanctuary dedicated to the Thearch of Succour or the Thearch of Literature has been reported in Chosŏn. SGJ is the only source that documented the process of the Kwanwang Shrine’s becoming a place of the Three Sages worship.²⁵ In 1879, spirit medium Kim Hüijŏng received detailed instruction from Thearch Kwan to make the images of the other two Thearchs (SGJ, 52b-54a).

[1879-9-13] (Instruction in the dream of Kim Hüijŏng).

The Sacred Thearch [Kwan] descended and instructed: “Did you look into the divine color of the Thearch of Literature in detail?” I replied that I had respectfully looked into it more closely. Then [the Thearch] gave me a plate. I reverently looked up, and [its surface] was multicolored and had a red spot in the middle. [The Thearch] gave another plate. I saw it was red-colored and had a black spot in the middle. Shortly afterward, the Thearch gave an instruction: “The divine colors are just like that.” I received the instruction.

The Sacred Thearch instructed: “Disciple Yi, use the portraits of Thearchs of Literature and Succour as they are. The most critical thing is to take the style of old versions. Then, you should describe completely according to what you’ve seen of the divine colors.” (SGJ, 52b-53b)

九月十三日(金熙鼎夢教) 聖帝下教曰, “爾果詳瞻文昌帝君神色耶?” 以詳細仰瞻對奏, 則下賜接匙一箇, 奉瞻則着彩而中點脂者也。又下賜接匙一箇, 又奉視則着石礪朱而中點墨色者也。仍下教曰, “神色若此也。” 承教。聖帝教曰, “李某, 仍用文昌帝孚佑帝影帖, 以舊本之意最緊, 則一從爾之仰瞻神色圖寫。”

Here, “the style of old versions” might designate the images inserted in the previous Qing versions of Lüzü and Wendi texts. Since 1877, Sŏ Chŏng and Yu Un began to make the two anthologies from their Qing collections (KGJ 1881, Preface), which contained the images of each deity (Figures 7 and 8). Yi Chinsun’s group completed a portrait of the Thearch of Literature in ten days and enshrined it at midnight on the 29th day of 9th month in 1879. They finished installing the images of the Thearch of Succour about a week later (SGJ 1879-10-7, 53a-54b). Thearch Kwan was placed in the middle of an offering altar, Thearch of Succour in the left (East) and Thearch of Literature in the right (West) (SGJ, 1879-11-9).²⁶

²⁵ Yun Soo Kim pointed out the images of Three Sages were installed at the Formless Altar in 1883 (Y.S. Kim 2008, p. 75), but the date of enshrinement at the Kwanwang Shrine precedes it by four years.

²⁶ SGJ 1879-11-9. 聖帝奠座于文昌帝孚佑帝兩聖奠座之中間。Based on another record, Thearch of Succour was placed in the East and Thearch of Literature in the West. SGJ 1878-1-27. 柱聯揭例, 東則孚佑帝聯, 西則文昌帝聯, 中則子聯。



Figure 7. Thearch of Succour [Patriarch Lü] (*Collection of Various Fragrance* [CHJ] 1881).



Figure 8. Thearch of Literature [Wenchang] (*Record of The Cassia Palace* [KGJ] 1881).

A difference in spirit-writing practice in Chosŏn from China was the absence of wood-pen and sandtray. Although the practitioners read about the spirit-writing tools and even received a revelation to prepare a sandtray (SGJ, 41b),²⁷ they could not make them. Eventually, Thearch Kwan instructed them to replace the sandtray with red square papers, and a wood-pen with a brush-pen, the pen-holder for which was made of copper and carved with a phoenix (SGJ, 75a-b).²⁸ It was apparent that in the late Chosŏn period, spirit-writing was performed with the medium of writing down directly on a paper with an inked brush-pen.²⁹ Not only that, the revelations were varied in type: they wrote down the spirit-medium's dream (*hyŏngmong* 現夢) and words that he heard from deities; they used

²⁷ SGJ 1879-2-13. 伏見救劫文中, 有木筆沙盤之句, 敢發愚意, 雖欲舉行, 知識暗昧, 敢此伏告伏侯聖旨. 卽因夢教, 設于香案之訓.

²⁸ SGJ 1880-10-2. 筆則以銅新造, 驚鳥則如鳳... 沙則以代紅紙, 長廣如席敷之, 甚好. 伏魔大帝示訓.

²⁹ Byounghoon Park informed me of the possibility that Chosŏn spirit-writing had a different type from Qing China, in referring to the earlier practice of spirit-writing in Tonghak 東學 (Eastern Learning) with ink-brush on papers. According to him, spirit-writing played an important role in formation of scriptures and incantations, as well as the establishment of Tonghak lineage since 1860s (Park 2020).

drawing a lot (*ch'u-ch'ôm* 抽籤) of fortune-telling poem (Figure 9). There were three kinds of Numinous Lots (*lingqian/yôngch'ôm* 靈籤): Numinous Lots of Thearch Guan (*Guandi lingqian* 關帝靈籤) in KJ vol. 2, Numinous Lots of the East of the Jiang River (*Jiangdong lingqian* 江東靈籤) in KS vol. 4, and the Chosôn original Sacred Lots (*Sôngch'ôm* 聖籤) in KS vol. 3.

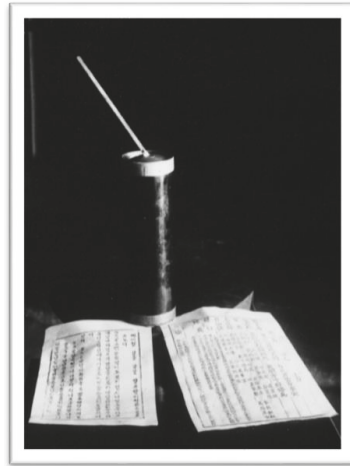


Figure 9. Numinous Lots at the East Shrine (No. 1027-1, National Museum of Korea).

Above the Three Sages presided the Jade Emperor (Yuhuang/Okhwang 玉皇), who was conceived of as the supreme ruler in the celestial realm. The deity was transmitted to the Korean peninsula in Koryô period. In SGJ, the Jade Emperor is depicted as the highest god, who resides in the heavens and issues his edict through the Three Sages, or sometimes through a Confucian sage such as Zengzi 曾子 (SGJ, 65b).³⁰ Such a hierarchy reflects religious interaction with Qing China. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the increasing spirit-writing texts featured the three—Guandi, Wendi, and Lüzü—as the Three Ministers (*sanxiang* 三相) of the Jade Emperor, and formed the narrative of the Three Ministers’ promulgating transformation in place of the Heaven 三相代天宣化” (Sakai 1999–2000; Yau 2010).³¹

Then, what was the main purpose of the Three Sages revelations in Chosôn? Thearch Kwan said:

I admonish you by descending edict, for I am desperate for the task of Enlightenment.

降之諭, 予切開化之事也. (SGJ 1878-12-27, 37b)

The most important keyword of *Sônggye-jip* was *kaehwa*, Enlightenment. Thearch Kwan was described as the “Jade Emperor’s envoy who enlightens and transforms the human world (玉皇勅使, 開化人間)” (SGJ, 3b). The most serious problem for which people needed to be enlightened was that people make their habituated tendencies become their true nature (*sûpki sôngsông* 習氣成性). In order

³⁰ The Jade Emperor rarely descends directly on earth, but Yi Chinmo was blessed that the Jade Emperor descended to his house and gave a sacred name to him. SGJ 1877-6-17, 6b-7a. 玉皇上帝上天, 伏魔大帝奉命, 李瑄謨下字, 以淳字賜下 玉皇上帝降坐于李瑄謨家示訓.

³¹ Besides, the Formless Altar has been influenced by the Altar of Awakening Origin (Jueyuandan 覺源壇), the early nineteenth-century spirit-writing altar of Qing elite literati, that contributed to the compilation of *Essentials of Daoist Canon* (*Daozang Jiyao* 道藏輯要) in the 1810s. They worshiped Lü Dongbin as the first Patriarch and Liu Shouyuan 柳守元 as the second Patriarch. The Formless Altar also received a revelation from Liu Shouyuan, and Wendi compared the spirit medium Chông Hakku with the Qing literati Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645–1719) and Huang Zhengyuan 黃正元 (fl. 1713–1755) (MC1, 1b). The altar members might be related to the reception of *Essentials of Daoist Canon*. As for the study of MC1, see (Y.S. Kim 2008; Y.G. Kim 2019). Huang Zhengyuan’s edition of *Yinzhìwen tushuo* 陰文圖說 explicitly influenced the creation of MC1, because major illustrations of MC1 are copies from Huang’s collection. As for Peng Dingqiu’s spirit-writing, see (Burton-Rose 2015).

to attain “Enlightenment,” one should not be contaminated by worldly dirt and commit oneself to the Learning of Heart-Mind (*simhak* 心學) and make one’s faith and goodness strong, bearing the two words “Loyalty and Righteousness” (*chungŭi* 忠義) in mind. Thearch Kwan emphasized that the true master is only inside the one word “sincerity” (*sŏng* 誠) (SGJ 1878-12-27, 37b). Their *kaehwa* conveys the Confucian ethos within the frame of Buddhist awakening. Thearch Kwan gave an interpretation to Kim Hŭijŏng’s dream that “he came out the worldly dirt and enlightened at the Jewel Mountain” (出於塵世, 寶山開化) (SGJ, 63b):

The constant ethical standard has been violated and transgressed. Thus, I entrusted Yi Chinsun and others with [the task of enlightening and] transforming this world into the state of the Jewel Mountain.

(SGJ 1880-2-10, 63b)

倫常乖舛. 故我托於李璿等, 此世化爲寶山之境.

The mandate that I received from the Highest Thearch [the Jade Emperor] is the edict to manifest myself in this world and broaden the enlightenment-transformation [to all beings] in the air and in the water. Thousands and millions of my sayings come from the two words, “constant morality.” (SGJ 1880-8-3, 74a)

吾之所奉上帝勅命, 諭顯此世, 敷化飛潛. 千萬其言, 皆由此倫常二字中也.

The state of the Jewel Mountain, “Enlightenment,” implies the restoration of the ethical norms among the Five Constant Relationships (*wulun/oryun* 五倫): ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, the elder and the younger, and among friends. It is clear that the term *kaehwa* is connected to the Confucian ideal of “transforming people and completing customs” (*huamin chengsu* 化民成俗), based on the Neo-Confucian rectification of the mind and self-cultivation of one’s nature. It also contains very old and serious meanings in the history of Daoism.

5. Daoist Eschatology and Publication of Morality Books

5.1. Apocalypse and Salvific Enlightenment

The Enlightenment of the Three Sages was predicated on the Daoist view of time. By combining the Buddhist concept of *kalpa* (*jie* 劫) with the Chinese notion of cyclical time, Daoism developed its own eschatology in which numerous universes repeatedly emerge one after another, but the great disasters will come and destroy everything to return to nothingness at the turning of a *kalpa*.

The Chosŏn editions of Guandi texts incorporated *Jiujie wen/Kugŏmmun* 救劫文 or *Writ of Salvation from the [End of] Kalpa* (KS 1876, 2: 11a-11b; KHJS 1880, 7b-8a), a scripture which predicts an imminent holocaust at the end of Great Kalpa (*dajie* 大). The synopsis is as follows: The Highest Thearch Jade Emperor commanded the destruction of the human world through wars and epidemic (*wenyi* 瘟疫) because of moral deprivation. At that moment, Guandi and other deities presented a petition to hold on a while in order to allow for the opportunity of enlightening people. The spirit-writing with wood-pen and sandtray (*mubi shapan* 木沙盤) was a method of Enlightenment (*kaihwa* 開化).³² In this context, Enlightenment was an urgent matter for survival at the turning of a *kalpa*.

The *Writ* was said to have been revealed in Xing Zhou 荊州, around two hundred years after the foundation of the Qing dynasty (KS 1876, 2: 11a). It was thus produced in mid-nineteenth century

³² KS 1876, vol. 2, 11a-11b. 嗚呼! 大臨矣. 吾等皆爲爾曹受罰, 爾等猶優遊自如耶? 恭惟帝心仁愛, 何忍以大荼毒斯民? 所以然者, 人心既壞, 王法難容, 地獄之說疑誕, 來生之報爲, 不得已假手凶神, 授之鋒刃, 使一切元惡大, 分受其罪, 庶足以剔邪蕩穢, 興起良善. 大清定鼎二百餘年, 昇平日久, 奸僞遂滋, 官吏紳民, 大率逆倫背理, 自絕於覆載. 上帝震怒, 已於數十年前, 令諸魔王降世, 流布瘟疫, 鋒起干戈. 爾時, 吾等聞命悚, 乃借諸神祇, 俯伏金闕, 哀懇暫緩, 容俟導化, 蒙恩准奏, 卽速開化. 於是遍處降, 不時降壇, 木沙盤, 千萬其言, 自謂可以普渡迷津矣.

China, probably during the period when the Qing was suffering through the Taiping Civil War.³³ The revelation sheds a shadow of the apocalypse, as Vincent Goossaert discussed its eschatological significance. Goossaert stressed that the characteristic of the eschatology lies in non-messianism and non-millenarianism (Goossaert 2014, p. 244); in other words, the scenario did not designate the time and place of the great end.

However, the spatial indeterminacy and temporal obscurity provides adaptive capacity and mobility to the narratives for spreading in East Asia. Afflicted with starvation and epidemic disease in the late 1850s–1870s and beset by domestic riots as well as foreign powers, Chosŏn figures shared in the atmosphere of crisis and insecurity of mid-nineteenth century China. The logic of Enlightenment with spirit-writing at the imminent crisis was recapitulated in the spirit-writing altars of Chosŏn.

Although modern scholars of Japanese studies did not pay much attention to the origin of the term *kaika*, its oldest usage is found in the Chinese Buddhist text, which means its ultimate goal, Buddhahood, and “to enlighten [with Buddhist teaching].” The second-century Chinese translation of Buddhist sutra, *the Scripture of Origin of Buddhist Practice (Xiuxing benqi jing 修行本起經)*, a Samarkand monk Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 (fl. 194–199) used *kailhua* in a passage describing Śākyamuni enlightening myriad beings: “After the attainment of Dao, he was called as Buddha, the Highest Worthy. The light of his divine virtue was illuminating day and night. With the sixty-two thousand followers of bhikshus, he traveled the world and *enlightened* the myriad of living beings.”³⁴ A Kashmiri monk, Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍, also used the term in his translation of *The Longer Āgama Sutra* in 413: “(The Bodhisatva) resided in the celestial hall and enlightened by [Buddhist] Dao 在天正堂, 以道開化” (T1, 6a).

In the Daoist context, particularly substantiated in the *Scriptures of Numinous Treasure (Lingbao jing 靈寶經)*, Enlightenment has simultaneous cosmological and soteriological meanings, because it implies the beginning of a new cosmos after the time of destruction and chaos. The fourth-century Daoist scripture stated:

[The True Writs of] *Five Ancients of the Primordial Beginning written in Red Script on Jade Tablets* emerged spontaneously from the midst of cavern-like emptiness (i.e., the Dao). It generated the sky and established the earth, and enlightened the luminous spirits [of all being]. (DZ22, vol. 1, 2b)

元始五老赤書玉篇, 出於空洞自然之中, 生天立地, 開化神明.

“Luminous Spirit (*shenming* 神明)” covers the spiritual, perceptive operations in nature and life. It claims that the True Writs (*zhenwen* 真文), the archetype of Daoist talisman and scripture, are the origin of heaven and earth, divine and human beings. It enlightened both realms of the human and the divine spirit (*kailhua renshen* 開化人神).³⁵ In this context, Enlightenment implies the beginning of the human world and consciousness. The explanation became a Daoist doctrinal discourse of canonical scripture (DZ1124, 8b; DZ1241, 9a). Such Daoist Enlightenment always began with the manifestation of scripture. From the Daoist perspective, the Dao unites in itself the whole universe, which was gradually differentiated in forms of *qi* 氣, being simultaneously spiritual and material, the *prima pnuma* and the *prima materia* of the universe. Based on the idea that the primordial *qi* congealed into the writs and scriptures, Daoism gave the cosmological ascendancy to the scriptures rather than to the subject of teaching, such as deity or founder (J. Kim 2019, pp. 127–31).

In other words, the substantial being of Daoist Teaching is the scriptures themselves, because those are the forms that Dao spontaneously has taken. Relatively, the deities, being themselves also certain

³³ The same passage was included in *Guandi quanshu* 關帝全書 edited and published by Huang Qishu 黃啓曙 in 1858 (GDQS 1858, vol. 24, 53b–55a; *Guandi wenxian huibian* 1995, vol. 6, pp. 662–65). Thus, the text was written between 1816–1858. See also (Goossaert 2017, pp. 520–22).

³⁴ T3, 461b. 道成號佛, 無上至尊, 神光明, 無書無夜. 從比丘衆, 六十二萬, 遊行世界, 開化群生.

³⁵ The quotation in the Tang period Daoist Encyclopedia, *shenming* 神明 was replaced with *renshen* 人神. DZ1124, 8b. 其五篇文合六百六十八字, 是三才之元根, 生天立地, 開化人神, 萬物所由. 故有天道地道神道人道, 此之謂也.

forms of Dao, are phenomenal agents that transmit the scriptures to the human world. Therefore, the scriptures and characters themselves were considered to be sacred. The spirit-writing practice is grounded in this tradition and developed the culture of revering written characters (*jingzi* /*kyōngja* 敬字). Therefore, the words and scriptures descending from spirit-writing could replace the messiah (Goosseaert 2014, p. 241).

In this sense, Daoist Enlightenment is interchangeable with its soteriological term, *kaijie duren* 開劫度人或 “opening of a [new] *kalpa* and saving the people.” Both imply the beginning of a new cycle of time and the transformation of humans from mortal error and death into immortal life. The salvific enlightenment was the prominent function of the Thearch of Literature since the twelfth century. The deity was destined to “enlighten nine heavens and redeem the world with flying phoenix” (開化九天, 飛鸞救世) (DZ29, 6a). The following description in the *Book of Transformation* (*huashu* 化書) was a precursor of the nineteenth century *Writ of Salvation from the Kalpa*.

Recommended highly by the Heavenly Mandate, my position was elevated to the Golden Gate. I usually take a stroll in the Purple Void heaven and fly my spirit for visits and inspections [on the human world]. However, I descended on earth increasingly as the world changed. [Human world] is full of moral degradation, greed, shallowness, and deceit. It is harder to extinguish them all, even when the catastrophe of *kalpa* is about to occur. Thus, I manifest myself and enlighten through the phoenix [of spirit-writing]. (JY255, 91b)

余以天命薦隆, 位登金闕, 逍遙紫虛, 遊神察訪, 而世變愈降. 薄鄙詐之風, 在在皆然. 況劫難將興, 未易消. 乃寓鸞顯化.

The celestial duty of the Thearch of Literature was versified as “to enlighten everywhere by the flying phoenix, and save every life at the turning of *kalpa* as he wishes (飛鸞開化於在在, 如意救劫以生生)” in the “Precious Declaration of Thearch of Literature” (*Munch’ang-jegun pogo* 文昌帝君寶誥) (SSHG 1880). The verse functioned as an invocation that was to be recited before chanting the scripture since the late thirteenth century in China, and it seems not to be much different in its recitation in Chosŏn. In nineteenth century Chosŏn, the Thearch of Succour expatiated on their duties as follows:

Human heart-minds become depraved every day, and enlightenment is seriously urgent. Although we could not secure three persons for the phoenix each time, we should transmit spirit-writing everywhere. Then, how can we wait for the wood-pen on the sandtray and the splendid phoenix of the beautiful pavilion? Sometimes we show dream revelations, and sometimes we give lessons by miracles. (KGJ, vol. 1, 28b)

人心日異, 開化時急. 每不擇三鸞之人, 而處降. 奚待沙盤之木筆, 畫亭之綵鸞乎? 或示夢諭, 或誠靈跡.

This explanation characterized the Chosŏn revelation of Three Sages. Among all of them, dream revelation is notable. In 1877, the Thearch of Literature revealed a series of scriptures (MC1, MC2, MC3, Table 2) to the altar members in the dream of the young spirit medium Yi To 李璿 (Y.G. Kim 2019). Spirit mediums Chŏn and Kim were also remarkable for their dream revelations.

5.2. Sacred Writs, Cure, and Distribution of Scriptures

Daoist ideas on scriptures and letters will help convey the significance of the “descending of the glyph (*haja* 下字)” in the Three Sages cult in Chosŏn: a belief in the sacredness of the Chinese characters or the hierogram. Thearch Kwan descended glyphs such as “*su* 壽 (longevity)” (SGJ, 4b) or “*pok* 福 (blessing)” (SGJ, 6a-6b), sometimes in a form of maxim—e.g., “Close your mouth three times (*sanjianqikou/sanham-kigu* 三緘其口)—and sometimes in verse. SGJ recorded the process of making the Chinese calligraphy panels for the shrine pillars. The couplet came down from the Three Sages; thus, every word it contained was treated as sacred.

We received the order at the time of republishing the *Illustrated Records of Sacred Achievement* in 1876 that the Three Sages descended the eight-line regulated verse by spirit-writing to make pillar couplet for the East Shrine. (SGJ 1878-2-10, 23b-24b)

丙子年《聖蹟圖誌》重刊時，三聖帝下律詩八句，以爲東廟楹聯事，奉命矣。

Since 1877, the Administrator of the East Shrine was granted an audience by his Majesty and seems to have secured a channel to deliver messages to him. Kojong directed Cho Yongha to manage with making the pillar couplet, supporting him by providing workspace at a palace agency, the Military Guard Office (Muwiso 武衛所), and bestowed his calligraphy for the divine poem. Royal Secretariats also recorded the event, and copies of the calligraphy were stored in Royal Palace and Library (SJW 1878-1-26, 1878-2-11).

Descending a hieroglyph or a sacred name was primarily a method of giving a new identity as “the Enlightened” (*kaehwa-ji-in* 開化之人) (SGJ, 6a), i.e., leaders in the process of Enlightenment. Yi Chinmo received a glyph “*sun* 淳” (honesty) which prompted him to change his name to Chisun (SGJ 1877-6-17, 7b). This was declared as “a grateful gift from the [Heavenly] Court of Jade [Emperor] (*okcho ūnsa* 玉朝恩賜)” (SGJ, 23b). In addition, he received a Daoist name,³⁶ Master of Pure Cloud (Ch’ongun-ja 清雲子), because “he purifies his heart-mind like water, and maintains his heart-mind as white cloud” (SGJ, 21a). Based on these records, we can infer how the Formless Altar members attained their Daoist names: Master of Pure Lotus (Ch’ongnyōn-ja 清蓮子) Yu Un; Master of Pure Void (Ch’onghō-ja 清虛子) Chong Hakku; Master of Pure Serenity (Ch’ongnyōng-ja 清寧子) Sō Chōng; and Master of Mysterious Void (Myohō-ja 妙虛子) Chōi Sōnghwan 崔煥。

Given that the glyphs and names transmitted through spirit-writing were so sacred and extraordinary, the scriptures—which are constituted of thousands of hieroglyphs—were regarded as having the salvific power to enlighten people and recover the essential energy of life. Curing was the foundation of the popularization of the shrine. Thearch Kwan gave medicinal prescriptions for smallpox, cholera, sterility, and other unknown illness. The Administrator of the South Shrine, Ko Sang-jin 高尚鎮, stated that he could beget his only son after printing one hundred copies of the *Anthology for the Pious Faith* (*Jingxinlu* 敬信錄, JXL), a popular morality book collection in eighteenth century China and the Chosŏn, which included the *Folios of the Most High on Retribution* (*Taishang ganying pian* 太上感應篇, GYP), *Essay on Secret Virtue* (*Yinzhixwen* 陰文, YZW), and the *Scripture of Awakening the World* (titled *Guandibaoxun* 關帝寶訓).³⁷ After the recovery of his wife, Ko printed a thousand copies of the *Scripture of Awakening the World* (KS 1876, vol. 3, 51a).³⁸

As Thearch Kwan insisted that “Enlightenment should be progressed moderately and steadily (開化必以穩當靜當耳)” (SGJ, 15b), the main method was to spread their teaching by books and to cultivate ethical virtues. After publishing the collection of Thearch Kwan, those Enlightened had begun to publish two more collections: *Records of Cassia Palace* (*Kyegung-ji* 桂宮誌, KGJ) and *Collection of Various Fragrances* (*Chunghyang-jip* 衆香集, CHJ) (SGJ, 13a, Table 2). The actual publication was completed in 1881, supported by the elite officials (KGJ 1881, Preface; CHJ 1881, Preface). All these efforts were to complete the three-part Corpus of Enlightenment.

[1878-5-28] Disciple Yu Un and Yi Chinsun report: As for the work of [completing] the *Corpus of Three Sages Enlightenment*, we already humbly received the holy decree from the

³⁶ It is not certain whether they referred to their names as “Daoist name (*toho/daohao* 道號).” There are usages that Chosŏn literati called ‘*ho*’, the name of the eminent literati scholar as ‘*toho* 道號,’ in which Dao means Confucianism. By “Daoist name,” I mean the name of one who pursues the Dao of the Three Teachings.

³⁷ *Jingxinlu* was compiled in 1769 and widely circulated in the eighteenth century China (Sakai 1999–2000, vol. 2, 171–93). It was published in Chosŏn as the *Kyōngshin rok ōnsōk* 敬信錄診釋 at Buddhist temple Pulamsa 佛岩寺 in 1796, both versions of classical Chinese and vernacular Korean (HC 1986, vol. 2, pp. 1–26). I could not locate the 1796 edition. The 1880 edition was reproduced in HC 1986, v. 2.

³⁸ KS 1876, vol. 3, 51b. 高尚鎮壯年艱嗣，乙亥秋發願，印施《敬信錄》一百部，開印之月，有孕男。而妻李氏後，血證沈綿瀕危，尚鎮虔叩帝前，妻病頓愈，又印施《覺世真經》一千卷。

Thearch of Literature to sincerely publish the sacred teachings of *Records of Cassia Palace* and *Collection of Various Fragrances*. In consideration of completing them as soon as possible, we humbly [report] our plan. A faithful official Kim Ch'anghŭi had wished to read the sacred texts carefully, and suggested, "[Because] the collections of Three Sages' [texts] have a great relation to Enlightenment, we must cut out superfluity. If we only select the sacred scriptures, lessons, hagiographies, miraculous stories of the Three Sages, and make efforts to simplify them down to the essentials, appositely anticipating that [*Scripture of*] *Awakening the World* will provoke the faith, then their circulation will have no obstacle." (SGJ, 27a-27b)

臣弟子劉雲李瑄淳白：三聖開化藏之役，既伏承文帝聖旨，祇刊《桂宮誌》《衆香集》之聖教，以爲從速撰成，伏計矣。信官金昌熙發願參閱於聖典，而獻議言：“三聖合集，大有關於開化，須去煩冗。惟輯三聖聖經聖訓本紀聖籤靈驗，務在簡要切實，而期《覺世》起信，流通無”云。

Two elite officials in Kojong's court, Kim Ch'anghŭi (1844–1890) and Sin Chŏnghŭi 申正 (1833–1895), worked together on the publication. In the same year, 1881, Kim wrote a preface to the Lŭzu corpus (CHJ) and Sin wrote a preface to the Wendi corpus (KGJ).

As stated previously, in 1878 Kim Ch'anghŭi was the former President of Sŏnggyun-gwan Academy and the third minister of the Board of Personnel (*ijochamŭi* 吏曹參議). His career covered all Six Boards and he received the honorable posthumous title, "Duke of Superior Literature" (*Munhŏn-gong* 文憲公). Sin Chŏnghŭi was a military elite, who held many important positions such as Commander of the Forbidden Guard, Commander of the Military Training Corp, and, in 1881, Minister of the Board of Punishment (*hyŏngjo-pansŏ* 刑曹判書). Significantly, these elite officials were actively involved in supporting the publication, with the explicit intention of promoting Enlightenment.

In 1877, the Formless Altar published a digest of the Corpus of the Three Sages titled *Precious Book of the Three Sages* (*Samsŏng bojŏn* 三聖寶典, abbr. SSBJ).³⁹ Probably, the *Scripture of the Three Sages' Admonition* (*Samsŏng hun'gyŏng* 三聖訓經, abbr. SSHG) printed in 1880,⁴⁰ was also published by the effort of the Enlightened, those who shared the ideal of salvific enlightenment. Both are concise books of less than seventy pages that contain the essential texts of the Three Sages and share the core theme of Enlightenment (Tables 1 and 2).

[Thearch Kwan] received the command from the Heaven, along with the other two Thearchs of Literature and Succour, to get their official duty to enlighten [the world] and promulgate [transformation] through spirit-writing phoenix.

[關聖帝君] 受天，與文昌孚佑兩帝君，職任開化，鸞宣誥。

[The Thearch of Literature] together with Thearch Kwan and Patriarch Lŭ, received the heavenly command to enlighten [the world] below Heaven.

[文昌帝君] 與關帝呂祖，同受天，開化天下。

[The Thearch of Succour] served the command from the Heaven, received his duty to promulgate transformation with the other two lords of Thearch of Literature and Thearch Kwan. Thus, he traveled to the eight ends [of the world] to establish the salvation and complete all wishes of ordinary people.

[孚佑帝君] 乃奉天勅，受宣化之職，與文昌關聖二帝君，周遊八極立度，盡凡夫之弘願。(SSHG 1880, 1a-1b)

³⁹ MC1, Yŏngisŏ 緣起序, 1b. On the 18th day of the 12th month [1877], "Precious Book was dedicated to the Altar 寶典獻壇." Annotation: "It means the *Precious Book of the Three Sages* (SSBJ). We received the command of the Sacred Thearch of Subduing Demons (i.e., Thearch Kwan), and proceeded together towards publication and distribution 三聖寶典，承伏魔聖帝命，冀進刊布." It states that the Formless Altar members finished publication of the *Precious Book* to the Altar in 1877.

⁴⁰ SSHG has no preface to inform us of the editor, but it has the same colophon (光緒六年庚辰春季刊印) as KHJS, which was printed by Kojong's edict. Both were Kojong's collection and reproduced in HC 1986, vol. 2.

In these books, the Three Sages are defined clearly as the celestial agents who enlighten the human world through spirit-writing. This conception of Enlightenment had nothing to do with industrialization or westernization. On the contrary, it advocated cultivating the morality of the Three Teachings, emphasizing traditional values, such as loyalty and filial piety.

In addition to the endeavors promoting Enlightenment, the healing activity of the Three Sages also gave momentum to Kojong's initiative to circulate the scriptures in the spring of 1880. The printing arose from a hybrid of fear of demonic plague and aspiration towards the salvific power of divinity.

In the summer of 1879, cholera had spread from Tongrae 東萊 (present day Pusan) to Seoul. Smallpox followed that winter. Even the Grand Queen Dowager Cho got sick, and the Crown Prince suffered from smallpox. Curing the royal family assumed the utmost urgency. The Administrator of the Shrine delivered the divine prescriptions to the Palace: a stamped seal script "*chöigae* 最改," which means "Best Improvement," pear juice (*lijüp* 梨汁), and the sandalwood incense (SGJ, 52a). Similarly, at the outbreak of smallpox, the shrine delivered the stamped seal script "*chu* 珠," which means "pearl," and a compound medicine for reviving the meridians (*saengmaek-san* 生脈散) (SGJ, 58a-b). Fortunately, most of the royals recovered from their illnesses, but one of Kojong's sons died in the first month of 1880, probably of smallpox.

The sacred names (*söngho* 聖號) of the Three Sages were believed to have talismanic power. Kojong ordered the printing of hundreds copies of these names (SGJ 1880-2-21, 64b-65a). Because of a continuous outbreak of bewildering illness (*palchak-ji-goe* 發作之怪) at the Palace, Kojong requested an exorcism. The Administrator of the Shrine received the response that the Three Sages would rush into the Palace with their weapons in order to ward off the demonic spirits of disease.⁴¹ SGJ is the only source that testifies to Kojong's edict to print the scriptures, in the apotropaic context and the hope to redeem his world and his people.

[1880-3-11] I entered the Palace and attended on [his Royal Majesty], to deliver the Thearch's will, and informed of the exorcism on the last night, as well. I received the edict to print and distribute several scriptures. [The Royal Majesty] asked whether or not there are the woodblocks of *Anthology for the Pious Faith* (JXL) and *Folios on Retribution* (GYP); thus, I replied and came out. (SGJ, 65b)

入侍大內，仰稟聖意，亦聞夜間掃之事。承諸經印布之教。而下詢《敬信錄》《感應篇》板本有無，故仰對而出。

[1880-03-12] I entered the Palace and attended on [his Royal Majesty], to dedicate JXL and KHJS. Then, there was a royal edict to print and distribute them. There was another edict to find and present GYP.⁴² (SGJ, 66a)

入侍大內，進獻《敬信錄》《過化存神》，則有印布之教。又《感應篇》求進之教。

Again, the revelation of the deities determined every detail of the publication process. Thearch Kwan commanded that an inscription at the start of the scriptures, "Royal Majesty, who dominates the heaven and magnifies the destiny (of dynasty), creates the axis [mundi] and strengthens morality,⁴³ commanded to print the true scripture, [in the purpose of] spreading enlightenment to the eight areas of the country" (*tongch'ön lyung'un*, *chogük donryun*, *chusang chönha*, *myöngin chingyöng*, *puhwa p'alryök* 統天降運，肇極敦倫，主上殿下，命印真經，敷化八域, SGJ 1880-3-19, 66a). Continuously, "[in the purpose that] enlightenment reaches plants and trees, blessing spreads in every direction [of the

⁴¹ SGJ 1880-2-18, 64b, 入侍，下詢大內雜掃除事。SGJ 1880-3-10, 65b, 有三聖與周爺，奉刀同進蕩滅之教。

⁴² Chöi Söngwan published GYP as the classical Chinese version in 1848 and the Chinese-Korean bilingual version as the *T'aesang kamiung p'yön tosöl önhae* 太上感應篇圖說諺解 in 1852. The 1880 edition was reproduced in HC 1986, vol. 3.

⁴³ The first eight-character phrase was a revered title of Kojong, dedicated by court officials in 1872 (CWS 1872-12-24). It was incorporated in his posthumous title: 統天降運肇極敦倫正聖光義明功大德堯峻舜徽禹謨湯敬應命立紀至化神烈巍勳洪業啓基宜曆乾行坤定英毅弘休壽康文憲武章仁翼真孝太皇帝。

world]" (*hwap'i ch'omok, noegüp manbang* 化被草木, 賴及萬方) was added (SGJ 1880-3-22, 66b). There are plenty of books with these inscriptions in the present libraries of Korea, Japan, France, England, and the United States (HC 1986, v. 2-3; Figure 10). This record not only provides insight into the context of the publication, but also reveals that the celestial duty of Kojong overlapped with that of the Thearch.

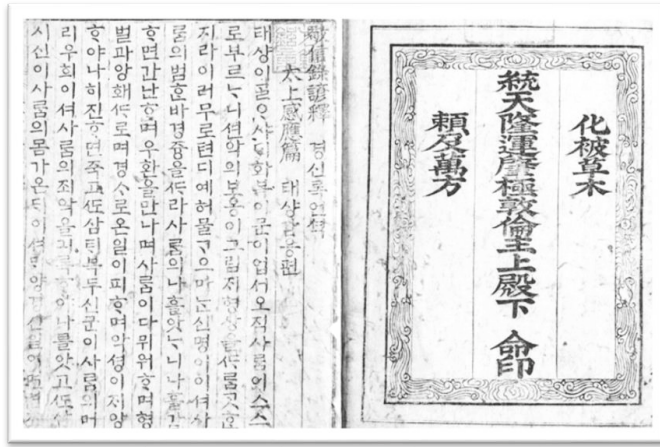


Figure 10. Spirit-Written Inscription in Morality Books (Kyujang-gak Library) Printed by Royal Edict in 1880 (Collection of Kojong’s Library).

After the distribution, there was a reward from the Jade Emperor:

[1880-07-06] The Highest Thearch, Jade Emperor issued an edict: “The King of your country, from now onwards, his mind to enlighten-transform people will become greater.” Thus, the Highest Thearch acclaimed his great virtue and commanded us as follows: To the King of your country, endow the reward by prolonging his life one cycle (twelve years); to the Queen and the Crown Prince, also extend one cycle (twelve years) of life. . . . Later, you can tell this edict of the Highest Thearch to your King. (SGJ, 71b)

玉皇上帝勅教內: 汝之國王, 自今以來, 化民之心甚大. 故上帝讚其大德, 命於吾等: 汝之國王, 賜賞增壽一紀, 國母元儲, 亦各增一紀之壽. . . . 後上帝勅旨, 傳宣汝之國王, 可也.

The distribution of the books was under the Enlightenment project that aims for the moral edification of people. Morality books were published in both languages of Chinese and Korean for uneducated people, including women and children. Furthermore, there was another kind of reward to those who performed spirit-writing.

[1880-7-24] (Instruction and divination received in the dream of Kim Hüijöng).

Deep inside the peak, turning along the lane,
I passed the root of the mountain.
A house was there, among the woods in the bloom of golden flowers.
I asked: Where is the noble master?
Then in the remote valley, downside the brook,
the brushwood door was opened up. (SGJ, 72b)

庚辰七月二十四日(金熙鼎夢中下賜戒訓占)
峯深路轉過山根, 家在黃華爛漫樹, 借問高人何處在, 僻溪澗下關柴門.

The interpretation of the divination reads: “The one who has a will to follow the Dao seeks his master first, despite the distance of thousand miles so that he completes his sincerity. This sign is the symbol of transformation from the profane into the sacred.”⁴⁴ The best reward for the devout follower is to attain the ultimate goal, that is, the transformation from the profane to the sacred (*hoebŏm chaksŏng* 回凡作聖). The oracle poem was a promise of this.

6. The Project of Enlightenment and Reform

The *Collection of Sacred Spirit-writings* (SGJ) ends on the 14th day of the 10th month in 1880. The last records were teachings addressed to Kojong and a blessing for the crown prince: they stated that the king should do his best to save his people, and the prince had the nature of a Sage King (*sŏnggun* 聖君). Thearch Kwan recounted again: “It has been a long time since we, the Three Sacred Thearchs, [first] undertook the task of Enlightenment, but it is rare to meet someone who understand it (吾三聖帝, 奉勅開化之任, 久矣. 然知者, 鮮矣)” (SGJ, 75a).

This passage begs the question: what did these revelations mean to Kojong himself? What kind of changes would be expected by him in order to implement this program? How did the spirit-altar injunctions relate to Kojong’s competing visions of state reform? During the succeeding years, Kojong’s veneration of Thearch Kwan intensified. Queen Min, for her part, favored a female shaman, who was titled the Lady of Perfected Numinosity (Chinryŏng-gun 眞靈君). This shamaness was the mother of the court official Kim Ch’angryŏl 金昌烈, who herself claimed to be the daughter of Thearch Kwan (CWS 1894-07-05; Kim T. 1922, 347c).⁴⁵

In 1883, the construction of a new Kwanwang Shrine in the northern part of Ch’angdŏk Palace was completed. The Union of Loyalty and Righteousness (*ch’ungŭi-gye* 忠義契) was organized for the North Shrine (Park 2009), where Kojong found shelter from the Qing armies after the failure of the 1884 Regime Change. In Kojong’s reign period, three more shrines of Thearch Kwan were built in Kanghwa Island, which was the first port opened to foreign powers.

In 1885, Kojong dictated a ritual code stipulating that both the king (himself) and the crown prince should worship to Thearch Kwan at the North Shrine, directly following the rite to Confucius at the Literary Temple (Munmyo 文廟) (SJW 1885-4-13). Apparently, the Kwanwang Shrine served as the symbol of military capability; quite clearly Kojong’s intention was to consecrate equally both sages of literary and military potency.

In the historic 1894 Reform (*Kabo Kyŏngjang*), Kojong declared a new name for his reign year: *kaeguk* 開國, “Opening of the [New] Country.” His reform had started from the military system in the early 1880s and changed the systems of administration, economy, education, social classification: it abolished slavery, torture, severe punishment, and discrimination between civil and military officials. Kojong gave an address on this topic in 1895:

I reformed the state government, in order to initiate the foundation of independence and build up the work of national restoration. . . . We will carry out the plan for beneficial utility and prosperous livelihoods, with impartial and righteous governance. . . . so that my children [i.e., the people]. . . . may live in peace and delight in their occupations. . . . Let all know that Reform and Enlightenment truly originates from [the heart of caring] for the people. (CWS 1895-5-20)

⁴⁴ SGJ 1880-7-24, 72b 解曰: 有志慕道, 先訪其師, 不遠千里, 以遂其誠. 此卦回凡作聖之象. It is poem No. 27 from the *Sacred Lots* (KS 1876, vol. 3, 61a), which was spirit-writing of Thearch Kwan, received by Chŏng Hakkū in 1876 (KS 1876, vol. 3, 85b).

⁴⁵ As for the North Shrine, most scholars discuss it in the category of popular religion, especially based upon Murayama’s study of 1920s critics of what they regarded as superstition during Kojong’s reign (Murayama 1935, pp. 435–39; Jang 2004, pp. 417–18; KGS 1929). According to these figures, the North Shrine was built by Queen Min, who indulged in shamanism. However, the construction and function of the North Shrine should be reconsidered in the context of the Enlightenment project of Kojong.

維新國政，肇獨立之基，建中興之業。... 以公平正大之政，行利用厚生之方。... 朕赤子。... 安生而樂業。... 咸知更張開化之宜出於爲民也。

“Reform and Enlightenment” (*kyōngjang-kaehwa*) was his own terminology that linked the social reforms with all the ideals of independence, wealth and strength of the country, impartiality and righteousness of governance, and the comfort and welfare of the people. With the foundation of the Great Han Empire (1897), nominal independence of the Chosŏn from the Qing was completed.

After Kojong himself became the Emperor, he declared himself as “the Sovereign of Confucian Religion (*yugyo chongchu* 儒教宗主)” (CWS 1899-4-27), and successively elevated the official rank of Kwan from King to Thearch (SJW 1901-7-12). Kojong had a clear vision that religion—characterized as the Fundamental Teaching (*chonggyo* 宗教)—is the pivot of civilization.

Imperial Edict: Every country in the world reveres a Fundamental Teaching [religion] without exception of using it as the center, because it refines human mind and results in the [righteous] way of rule ... As for the religion of my country, is it not the Way of our Confucius? (CWS 1899-4-27)

詔曰：世界萬國之尊尚宗教，靡不用極，皆所以淑人心而出治道也。... 我國之宗教，非吾孔夫子之道乎？⁴⁶

In his memorial address elevating the title of Thearch Kwan, Kojong praised him as “the spirit of loyalty and righteousness,” possessing a “nature of impartiality and great strength,” who had “secretly supported (*yinzhì* 陰)” his country, with numerous “manifestations of the divine power” (SJW 1901-7-12).⁴⁷ Most of the significant phrasing in this decree came from the scriptures that Kojong himself commanded to be printed and distributed. In 1902, the following year, he built one more shrine for Thearch Kwan. Named “*sungii* 崇義” (Veneration of Righteousness) in the West, it completed the four cardinal points surrounding the Palace. In Kojong’s view, Thearch Kwan was devoted to the pivotal part of military modernization program, which was inevitable for the independent country.

As such, this potent military deity was in no way in conflict with state reform or the development of technology and industry. Kojong’s modernizing reforms were preceded by deploying religious symbolism, thereby providing divine sanction to and impetus for the reorganization of government institutions.

The cult of Thearch Kwan became very popular, often receiving newspaper headlines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When the South Shrine was burnt down in 1899, both officials and commoners willingly contributed to restoration efforts,⁴⁸ a striking contrast to the widespread reluctance to constructing the shrine three hundred years earlier. It is remarkable that *The Independent* (*Tongnip Sinmun*) applauded people’s volunteering to restore the shrine, in light of the newspaper’s promotion of scientism and anti-superstition discourse since its foundation in 1896.⁴⁹ It was the main propagandist of the new civilization, impressing on people of importance of science, progress, and modern education, but it employed a very different tone with regard to the Kwangwang shrine.

Around the shrines, people organized associations and unions to support worship and prayed for personal prosperity in the 1870s (SGJ 20b; 30b). On festival days, Kwanwang shrines were frequently crowded with people.⁵⁰ After the fall of the Korean Empire (1910), most Kwanwang shrines were destroyed, except the Eastern one. People who supported Kwanje worship opposed the demolition.⁵¹

⁴⁶ I am grateful for Prof. Younseung Lee, who informed me on Kojong’s intention to establish Confucianism as a state religion.

⁴⁷ SJW 1901-7-12; CWS 1901-8-25. 精忠節義之靈，凜凜然亘千秋而不泯，中正剛大之氣，浩浩乎包六合而往來，陰朕邦，屢顯神威。

⁴⁸ *Tongnip Sinmun* 獨立新聞 20 February 1899. “Volunteering in Restoration.”

⁴⁹ *Tongnip Sinmun* 7 April 1896. “Ghost Worship and Idolatry.” It stated that the ghost worship and idolatry should be banned in the entire country, including not only the icons in ordinary people’s house but also the paintings in the state offices. It maintained that the prohibition helps making a progress of civilization.

⁵⁰ *Maeil Sinbo* 日新報 3 May 1914. “The Overcrowded South Kwanwang Shrine at the Spring Festival.”

⁵¹ *Shidae Ilbo* 時代日報 24 April 1924. “The Demolition of Kwanwang Shrine: People are against it.”

Intellectuals also expressed their remorse, identifying the destruction of shrines with the decline in the state power, even while claiming: “every superstition should be expelled.”⁵² In the Japanese Imperial Period (1910–1945), the state no longer administered the East Shrine. In the 1920s, common citizens organized a religious sect called Kwansŏng kyo 關聖教—“The Teaching of Sage Kwan”—at the East Shrine. The practice of divination of Numinous Lots fueled the popularity of the cult. In the mid-1930s, thousands of people continued to visit the Kwanwang Shrine for oracle poems on New Year’s Day.⁵³

Discourses on Enlightenment ideas lend themselves to binary thinking. On one side stood the reformers of “the Enlightenment Party” who strove for institutional innovation and the liberation of human reason from superstitions. Some of them received a modern education in America and converted to Christianity, some of them maintained the Confucian value system connected with nationalism. On the other side were those involved in the spirit-writing practice and the Three Sages cult, who asserted that moral recovery would lead to a peaceful and prosperous future. The reality is much more complex.

Pak Yŏnghyo, the leader of the reformers, said: “Enlightened people are few, stubborn people are many 開化人少, 頑固人居多.”⁵⁴ Yun Chiho 尹致昊 (1865–1945), a modernization leader and Christian educator, criticized the superstition of Kojong and Queen Min while devoting his life to “the production of useful literature for the Enlightenment of the common people” (Yun 27 December 1894). His ideal goal was “the civilized world” (Yun 30 December 1892) and his model was “the perfect enlightenment of Japan” (Yun 28 December 1896). Pak Yŏnghyo’s Enlightenment also might have been directed toward the “civilization” of the Japanese model.

On the other hand, ordinary people understood “Enlightenment” as a moral reprimand. As for the fire at the South Shrine in 1899, *The Independent* observed scornfully that “an insane woman” aged 53 testified that “Duke Kwan (Kwangong 關公) had set the fire on purpose for the Enlightenment.” According to her, “Duke Kwan’s spirit left right away from the South Shrine and came out for the Enlightenment. In just a few days, the Enlightenment will be completed to [burn and] blacken even the feet of children.”⁵⁵

Such horrifying images of retribution are consistent with the eschatology of the spirit-written texts. Although intellectuals mocked this conception of Enlightenment, the episode provides evidence that Thearch Kwan was considered as a deity sufficiently potent to enlighten the world. As seen in the above, the main scripture of Thearch Kwan, the *Scripture of Awakening the World* was provided in vernacular Korean and widely recited among ordinary people. Its teaching is that one should awaken oneself to embody ethical values. This kind of Enlightenment could be more widespread and entrenched in people than another notion of Enlightenment that placed more emphasis on the scientific progress. Even after the encounter with the new concept, imported from Japan, the idea of moral enlightenment prevailed among many people; it was not limited to the lower class.

Sin Kisŏn 申箕善 (1851–1909), an eminent military elite who had supported Kojong’s reform in the 1880s, espoused his vision of moral enlightenment. He criticized the 1894 Reform, particularly for its reliance on Japan:

⁵² *Shidae Ilbo* 24 November 1924. “Misfortune of Kanwang Shrines”; “Must Expelled Kwanwang Shrine (The Hall of Superstition).”

⁵³ *Koryŏ sibo* 1 March 1939. “New Year Fortune Telling: Over Five Thousand People for Divination (關王廟買占人五千名突破).”

⁵⁴ 1884-12-9, The testimony of Yi Chŏmdol (a servant of Kim Okkyun) in interrogation after the Kapsin Regime Change (*Park* 2009, p. 36).

⁵⁵ *Tongnip Sinmun* 21 February 1899. “A Funny Story.” 광공님의셔 기화를 헉시라고 부러 불을 노호섯다...광공님의 혼은 그날 즉시 남묘를 써나셔 기화 식히려 나오섯는디 불과 몇칠 후면 어린 우희 발등 썩지 식감앗토록 기화가 되리라.

That which is called Enlightenment is nothing but the expansion of the public [impartial] way [of discussion] and abolishment of personal [partial] opinion, so as to cause both officials and the people do their work rightly, thereby opening the source of beneficial utility and prosperous livelihoods, and do everything for enriching the country and strengthen the armed forces. ... If they (Japan) had come with good intentions, ... they should let our Lord and officials concentrate our minds and cultivate our roots, to make both domestic and foreign affairs organized and clear; according to public opinion and aiming at the right timing, [we can] gradually gain the momentum of self-government and steadily achieve the concrete reality of Enlightenment. (CWS 1894-10-3)

夫所謂開化者，不過曰恢張公道，務祛私見，使官不尸位，使民不遊食，開利用厚生之源，盡富國強兵之術而已... 彼果出於好意也... 我君臣，得以聚精會神，培根端本，內理外靖，因民心酌時宜，漸鞏自主之勢，徐就開化之實。

Sin Kisŏn thought of Enlightenment as the ultimate goal to be reached through integrity and impartiality for the public good; a vision firmly rooted in Neo-Confucian praxis. He was the one who wrote the praise for the West Shrine of Veneration of Righteousness in 1902 (SJW 1902-10-24).

The conservative elder official, former Prime Minister Cho Pyŏngse 趙秉世 (1827–1905), also thought of Enlightenment as a kind of utopian ideal. In his mind, Chosŏn possessed the method of attaining it through legal and institutional framework. He said:

As for so-called Enlightenment, this official knows nothing about what it is nowadays. Nevertheless, in my foolish opinion, from the period of Ancient Kija [Chosŏn] to Our Dynasty, the National Code has been brilliantly constituted, being the means by which people have been blessed and nurtured. The Way of Enlightenment has been already qualified without remainder, such as *Comprehensive Compilation of National Code* [*Taejŏn t'ongp'yŏn* 大典通編, 1784] and *Six Codes of Ordinances* [*Yukchŏn jorye* 六典條例, 1866]. However, the Way of Governance is not in inoperative laws, but in its concrete implimentation, so as to moderate control and to protect and cherish people. Only after that will our country get closer [to the ideal of Enlightenment]. (CWS 1902-10-5)

今所云開化，臣未知何件事。而臣之愚見，自箕子以來至于我朝，典章燦備，生民休養，開化之道，已盡無餘。《大典通編》《六典條例》，此其具也。然而爲治之道，不在徒法，在乎實行，制節用度，保愛生民，然後國其庶幾也。

Seeing through the records of SGJ and reviewing official historical sources, there is no fundamental division or binaries of elite and ordinary, literati and military men, official and popular, rational and superstitious in the entities of religio-ethical Enlightenment. The old religious ideals and canonical values interacted with the apprehensions of war and catastrophe, simultaneously with the new visions of previously unexperienced civilization. In the process of the never-ending interaction among various agents in diverse social strata, the idea of Enlightenment was floating and evolving.

7. Conclusions

In this article, I have demonstrated the way in which spirit-written texts were published and distributed under the Enlightenment project in the late Chosŏn period. These publications provided both vernacular Korean translation for the those ignorant of Sinograms as well as Classical Chinese for the literati. Its predominant purpose was to urge people to restore fundamental ethical principles.

Enlightenment (*kaihwa/kaehwa*) had various strata of meanings in Buddhism and Daoism, particularly in a soteriological context, and was even consonant with the Confucian concept of edification (literally “teaching and transformation”; *jiaohua/kyohwa* 教化). Spirit-writing played the role of a furnace in which to meld the Three Teachings and to transform Chinese-oriented gods into universal deities standing for transcendent standards of morality. It should be observed that the members of spirit-writing altars in Chosŏn had no emic identification as “Daoist,” belonging to any

particular sect—this is the same as many spirit-writing practitioners in China. Rather, they shared an identity as “the Enlightened” who strove for enlightening “Dao” as the fundamental Way of humanity.

In case of European Enlightenment (Aufklärung), Reinhart Koselleck and Horst Stuke have sketched different forms of the ideas, and even dissent, regarding the core concepts (Koselleck 1988; Stuke [1975] 2014). According to their works, the impetus of the Enlightenment was to ensure an individual basis of morality. Consequently, it was inevitable that Enlightenment discourse would contain an element of utopian idealism.

I found some parallels with the European case in the varying discourses of Enlightenment among Chosŏn intellectuals. There was also an aspect of utopian idealism, especially with regards to morality. Even the famous thinker of Enlightenment Party, Yu Kilchun 俞吉濬 (1856–1914)—who was greatly influenced by Fukuzawa—presupposed an ideal state of Enlightenment, which would be based in perfect morality and therefore “exceedingly good and extremely beautiful 至善極美.” In his six-stage classification of Enlightenment, the first stage is the Enlightenment of behavior (*haengsil* 行實), which implied the embodiment of the ethical virtues of the five constant human relationships (*oryun* 五倫) and ultimate understanding of moral principle (*dori* 道理). The rest are, in order: education, politics, law, mechanics, and the utility of material goods (Yu 1895). Yu Kilchun considered the ideal type of Enlightenment as something balanced between traditional-universal ethics and new institutional benefit.

Although the anti-superstition campaign was one of the vocal critics in the new field of public opinion such as newspapers, the sole dominance of *kaehwa* (Enlightenment) weighted on the scientification and disenchantment is a sort of modern East Asian delusion or myth. In reality, “marvels and wonders” from the divine world had never ceased to give powerful momentum to social changes. Recent studies pay attention to the struggles of modern intellectuals to find compatibility between science and religion both in East and West.⁵⁶ As Paul Katz has observed, “Be it Western Enlightenment or Chinese modernization,” the processes of modernization “cannot be fully understood outside the context of religious beliefs and practices” (Katz 2015, pp. 279–80). In early modern China, “spirit-writing not only shaped the lives of individual elites but their collective activities as well” (Katz 2015, p. 280). The same holds true for the late Chosŏn period.

The spirit-writing practice and publication of morality books in the late Chosŏn provoke a reconsideration of the spiritual movement that had emerged—and were even requested—in the dynamic flux of the era, faced to World Powers and the Christian religion in the border between premodern and modern. From the young leaders of the progressive party to the conservative elder officials, from royal members to ordinary people, all social strata of people actively transacted with the ideas of Enlightenment diversely. However, the religio-ethical thinking of Enlightenment was in no way incompatible with the picture of Civilization with powerful and precise mechanics. Many future studies are needed, especially on the relation of Enlightenment with the Neo-Confucian heart-mind theory and self-cultivation practice.⁵⁷

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⁵⁶ As for this issue in the European Enlightenment, see (Saler 2006). Significant studies on this issue in Europe and East Asia are listed in footnotes 4 and 5 in (Katz 2015, p. 279).

⁵⁷ The privatization of moral judgment is an important subject. Spirit-writing practice liberated people from formal religious institutions and clericalism and resulted in the individual encounter with one’s heart-mind—the unconscious dimension of humanity—from where spirit-writing descend. Recently, Daniel Burton-Rose showed the evolution of spirit-writing practice from the clan and community base into individual dreams and the self-fashioned practice. (Burton-Rose 2020). It should be studied the relevance between the contemplation on individual minds and East Asian modernization of morality.

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Article

Confucian Exemplars and Catholic Saints as Models for Women in Nineteenth-Century Korea

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Abstract: Women in Joseon Korea (1392–1910) were held to high standards of virtue, which were propagated through didactic texts such as the “Chaste and Obedient Biographies” volume of *Lienü Zhuan*, the Chinese classic featuring biographies of exemplary women. Joseon women who converted to Catholicism were also educated in standards of Catholic virtue, often through the biographies of saints, which shared with the Confucian exemplar stories an emphasis on faithfulness and self-sacrifice. Yet, the differences between Confucian and Catholic standards of virtue were great enough to elicit persecution of Catholics throughout the nineteenth century. Therefore conversion would have involved evaluating one set of standards against the other and determining that Catholicism was worth the price of social marginalization and persecution. Through a comparison of the Confucian exemplar stories and Catholic saints’ stories, this paper explores how Catholic standards of virtue might have motivated conversion of Joseon women to Catholicism. This comparison highlights aspects of the saints’ stories that offered lifestyle choices unavailable to women in traditional Joseon society and suggests that portrayals of the saints’ confidence in the face of human and natural oppressors could also have provided inspiration to ease the price of conversion.

Keywords: early Korean Catholicism; Confucianism; women and Catholicism; Catholic saints

1. Introduction

In a letter written from prison during the persecution of Catholics in 1801, Ludgarda Yi Suni (1779–1802) mentions sending a note to her husband imprisoned elsewhere. The note read, “Let us die for the Lord together on the same day” (Yi 2014, p. 205). There was, in fact, little Ludgarda and her husband could do to ensure dying together. Their lives were under the control of the detaining authorities, and their Catholic faith forbade them from committing suicide. Yet, in her description of this incident, Ludgarda mentions the curious phrase, “die together on the same day”, three times. The context shows that the phrase is an expression of the couple’s intent to be martyred when they were arrested for being Catholic and ordered to recant their faith, and Ludgarda is reminding her husband of their intent so that he might be encouraged and strengthened to remain faithful in the face of torture and the threat of death.

In its phrasing and in its representation of a joint act of faithfulness, Ludgarda’s phrase appears to be a variation on a phrase from a story in *Lienü Zhuan*, the Chinese classic that features the biographies of women who undertook great acts of self-sacrifice to preserve morality. The story is about the wife of the king of Xi, taken by the invading king of Chu while her husband is forced to keep the city gate. She finds a moment to slip away to tell her husband that she will kill herself out of faithfulness to him rather than be wed to the king of Chu. Her husband tries to dissuade her, but she indeed kills herself, and he soon follows her in death by likewise committing suicide. Thus, they “die together on the same day” out of faithfulness to each other and to the principles of propriety that the *Lienü Zhuan* was published to promote (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 87, 89).

The *Lienu Zhuan*, or *Yeolyeo Jeon*, as it is titled in Korean, was translated into vernacular Korean and propagated in Korea during the Joseon period (1392–1910) to promote morality among Joseon women. Although Ludgarda Yi Suni was born into a Catholic home, as the daughter of an elite *yangban* family at a time when most Joseon Catholics followed whatever Confucian customs did not conflict with the Church’s injunctions, she would have been educated in Confucian ideals alongside Catholic doctrine. Her letters from prison are quite unlike other Joseon women’s writing from this period in their representation of Catholic ideals, but certain features, such as her expressions of filial piety, do reflect the Confucian side of her upbringing.¹ Thus, it is quite likely that Ludgarda is referencing the phrase from *Yeolyeo Jeon* and using it as a trope for her and her husband’s joint intent of martyrdom. At the same time, in her expressed desire for martyrdom, Ludgarda is voicing a sentiment repeated frequently in the stories of Western Catholic saints.

This detail from Ludgarda’s letter reflects the co-influence of Confucian and Catholic ideals that is found in many of the earlier Korean Catholic sources. As is often the case in religious conversion, those who converted to Catholicism in the Joseon period were compelled by the way it both reinforced and supplemented their pre-existing values. This is reflected in their insistence, in the face of being branded by the Joseon state as rebels against tradition, that they were in fact upholding the traditional values of filial piety and loyalty by being faithful to God, the “great lord and great father” (*Daegun Daebu n.d.*). Yet, as the Joseon state’s hundred years of persecution of Catholics attests, there were deep incompatibilities between Catholic and traditional Joseon modes of operation.²

Among the various criticisms of Catholicism by the Joseon state was that it allowed men and women to mix, which went against the Confucian rule of separation between the sexes, and that it allowed women to remain unmarried, which interfered with their primary role as wives and mothers (Cho 1988, p. 164; Jeong 2002, p. 248). As these criticisms suggest, Catholicism offered opportunities for Joseon women that were unavailable in a traditional context. Yet, Catholicism presented its own strict standards of behavior. Conversion would have involved, at some level, weighing one set of standards against the other, judging that Catholic standards of virtue were better and then, as required by conversion, adapting some and rejecting other pre-existing norms.

How might Confucian and Catholic models for women have informed this process of evaluating standards of virtue and choosing one over the other as one’s primary point of reference? This question may be explored in part by comparing the models of behavior from the aforementioned *Yeolyeo Jeon* with the female saints featured in *Seongnyeon Gwangik* (holy year for widespread benefit), a Catholic text that featured a saint’s biography for every day of the year. The narrative content of these two texts is comparable in that both present biographies of people who undertook heroic acts of self-sacrifice for the sake of moral and/or spiritual principles, and these biographies were propagated to educate and inspire others to act likewise. *Yeolyeo Jeon* stories were reprinted in other didactic texts for Joseon women, while some of the Catholic saints’ stories appeared also in a Bible commentary that was central to the devotional lives of Joseon Catholics. Because Joseon Catholics had little direct clergy leadership until persecution ended in the 1880s, texts such as *Seongnyeon Gwangik*, read and relayed by lay Catholics individually, or communally in secret gathering places, were even more important as sources of guidance. Thus, the actions, the rewards, and the risks represented in these saints’ stories would have affected the formation of Joseon Catholics, men and women alike. In the following pages, I will examine the virtues modeled by the female protagonists of these two texts and highlight comparative aspects of the saints’ stories that would have motivated conversion and continued adherence to Catholicism.

¹ For a discussion of Yi Suni’s Confucian–Catholic hybridity, Cf. (Torrey 2015).

² For more on the conflict between Confucianism and Catholicism in Joseon Korea, Cf. (Baker 2017, pp. 3–120).

2. Obedience and Chastity

Thematically, the Confucian exemplar biographies propagated during Joseon and the Catholic female saints' biographies appear comparable in their emphasis on obedience and chastity. The original *Yeolyeo Jeon* was composed of several volumes, each emphasizing a particular virtue, and included stories of women who outdid their menfolk in bravery, skill, and wisdom. However, evidently “Chaste and Obedient Biographies” was the volume of *Yeolyeo Jeon* most widely promoted in the Joseon period, with the result that the “yeol” (列) of “yeolyeo”, meaning “various”, came to be understood as the “yeol” (烈) for “chaste and devoted” (Bak 2015, p. 209). Thus, during the Joseon period, the phrase “biographies of various women” became synonymous with “biographies of chaste and obedient women”. As Moon Young-ho states, “The fact that [the “Chaste and Obedient Biographies”] volume has survived while the others have been lost is probably not a coincidence, likely being related to efforts to strengthen Confucian principles in the late Joseon society” (Moon 2015, p. 9).³ Moon's reference is to the Joseon-era expectations of women to uphold order in the family and in society through the separation of duties between men and women, by being faithful to one husband even after the husband's death, and by obeying moral principles regardless of one's own immediate needs. These values are represented in the Confucian exemplar stories by women, such as that of the widow of the king of Wi, whose betrothed dies in battle as she is on her way to him. The king's successor then asks for her hand, but she refuses and remains the widow of her betrothed (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 45–51).⁴ Baixi, another faithful widow, shows her adherence to moral principle by remaining trapped in a burning building rather than walking out unaccompanied because that would go against the behavior of a proper wife (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 32–43).

The Catholic female saints in the biographies read by Joseon Catholics were also honored for their obedience and for their chastity. In the Catholic tradition, chastity was a category of virtue applicable to both men and women, and most of the male saints featured in the saints' biographies were celibate priests and bishops. However, in the case of the female saints, “virgin” was a category stated in the title of almost every biography. This was either in reference to nuns who were canonized for their outstanding piety, such as Catherine of Sienna or Clare, St. Francis' friend and follower, or to the “virgin martyred” who had decided to maintain their virginity for the Lord, and were killed by pagan persecutors, often the very men whose advances they had rejected. Susanna, one of the better-known examples, resolved, at age fifteen, to remain a virgin dedicated to the Lord, but was later killed by the king for spurning his son and for refusing to give up her religious vow (Jo 2014a, Chugye pp. 300–4). In the extant version of the saints' biographies read by Joseon Catholics, the few female biographies titled simply “martyred” feature young women who had not vowed to remain virgins, but were martyred while still unmarried, sometimes for refusing pagan suitors.⁵ Thus, the Catholic female biographies, similar to the Confucian exemplar stories, emphasized virginity alongside obedience.

However, it is at this superficial point of comparison—the parallel emphases on obedience and chastity—that the fundamental differences between what is represented by the Confucian exemplars and by the Catholic saints also emerge. The main characterization of these differences might be stated as a “this-worldly” versus “other-worldly” orientation. For the Confucian exemplars, although their obedience was primarily to transcendent ideals of propriety and only secondarily to human authority figures, these ideals were understood as undergirding the orderly maintenance of this-worldly human relations and social hierarchies, not soul salvation in heaven. As for the Catholic saints, although piety usually involved obedience to religious superiors, the human authority in those cases represented God,

³ Cf. (Gang 2015, pp. 231–32).

⁴ The entry for each story in the *Yeolyeo Jeon* edition referenced here includes the Chinese version of the story, the pre-modern Korean vernacular version, and a modern version, alongside illustrations. Hence, the page range for each of these references is quite long, although the stories themselves are short.

⁵ Cf. Prisca (Jo 2014b, Chugye pp. 206–7) and Theodora (Jo 2014d, Hagye pp. 751–54).

the Catholic's primary reference point, and obedience was necessary for the salvation of the saint's individual soul, not simply for the proper maintenance of society.

Accordingly, the ideal of chastity in the saints' stories diverges from the Confucian exemplar stories in its social application, even to the extent of possibly undermining the Confucian emphasis on family continuity. In Joseon society, a woman's primary duty was to bear heirs to maintain her husband's family line. By remaining faithful to her husband even after his death, she would avoid disrupting the patrilineal kinship line by bearing the sons of another man. The implied link between chastity on the part of the wife and the proper continuation of the family line is poignantly illustrated by a detail in a woodblock print that accompanies the exemplar story of Gaoxing, a young widow whose beauty and virtue attract the attention of the king of Liang. To repel the king's advances and remain faithful to her late husband, Gaoxing cuts off her nose (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 168–77). The woodblock illustration of this scene, in which Gaoxing holds a knife up to her nose, includes the figure of her young son clinging to her (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 168–69). Nayeon Kim observes that the figure of the son further emphasizes Gaoxing's virtue by making "evident that she has already fulfilled her female virtue of maintaining the patriline" by giving birth to a son (Kim 2018, p. 75). I would add that the son's presence also emphasizes the importance of Gaoxing's chastity, because he represents the patrilineal link whose parentage and reputation must be protected.

Chastity within marriage to the spouse with whom one would bear children was expected of ordinary Catholics. However, in the biographies of the saints who were upheld as heroes of the faith, chastity was about remaining a virgin consecrated to the Lord. As such, it involved a refusal to procreate and thus undermined the importance placed on maintaining a family line. Practically, Catholic celibacy would likely have had little effect on the maintenance of family lines and proper population growth in the Joseon period, because, for every Catholic who chose celibacy, there were many more who chose to have families. Nevertheless, the practice was troubling to the Joseon authorities for at least two reasons. Rules of propriety were considered the backbone of order in the Joseon era, and divergence, even on a small scale, was seen as a threat to order. Secondly, in the strict Joseon hierarchy that placed each person within a clearly defined network of authority and accountability, a woman was under the authority of her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son after the death of her husband.⁶ These male family members were, in turn, under the authority of their superiors and, ultimately, the king. When women chose to remain unmarried and childless and then outlived their fathers, they were stepping outside these clearly demarcated lines of authority. The Catholic model of chastity, by presenting non-marriage as a noble option, meant that a woman could be virtuous while avoiding the confines of the traditional female role, whereas the Joseon model of virtue emphasized the woman's subservience to her spousal and maternal roles. Unsurprisingly, many women among the first generation of Korean Catholics chose celibacy.⁷ The state responded by denouncing the Catholics' defiance of the moral duty of marriage and referenced, in their criticism, this trend among Catholic women to choose celibacy (Cho 1988, p. 153).

3. The Place and Status of Women

A related feature of Catholicism, which we see represented in the saints' biographies, was more interaction between men and women and representation of women alongside men and outside the domestic sphere. In contrast, the introduction to the Confucian exemplar stories references the importance of "strict adherence to the separation between man and wife" (National Hangeul Museum 2015, p. 21). This principle of separation was encapsulated in the passage from Mengzi stating that between husband and wife there must be "attention to their separate functions" and in the phrase from the Book of Rites stating that "[b]oys and girls from the age of seven do not sit together" (Mengzi Teng

⁶ This was called the Rule of Three Followings (三從之道삼종지도).

⁷ Cf. (Jeong 2002).

Wen Gong I 5.4/29/10-11; Sturgeon 2011a, Nei Ze).⁸ Application of this principle included rules that restricted women to the home and limited their education to domestic and moral instruction specific to their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Interactions with men, including husbands, were strictly circumscribed, and rules of separation applied even to the domestic space, where husbands and wives occupied separate living areas.⁹

In the exemplar stories, this principle is emphasized by the story of Mengxi. Although most of the exemplar stories are about women remaining faithful to dead, ill, imprisoned, or abusive husbands, Mengxi is praised for guarding the principle of separation, even at the risk of death. When Mengxi is traveling with her husband, Duke Xiao of Qi, an accident causes her to fall from the palanquin that allowed her to travel in concealment, and the palanquin is ruined in the crash. Mengxi immediately has her servants shield her with a tent. Duke Xiao tells her to move to the standing carriage that he and the men are riding, but Mengxi, whose attention to propriety is unparalleled, insists that it would be better for her to remain by the side of the road and risk death than betray decorum by riding with the men and in plain sight (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 69–83). In the closing line of the story, Mengxi is praised specifically for not riding in the wagon with her husband (National Hangeul Museum 2015, p. 83).

The women in the Catholic saints' stories were, of course, restricted by the paternalism of the ancient and medieval societies in which they lived, and their earthly status was never as high as that of the male priests and bishops. Moreover, stories about male saints far outnumber those about female saints. Nevertheless, the fact that they were represented alongside male saints and that their stories were read by men as well as by women signified a much lesser degree of exclusion. Furthermore, the most honored of the saints was a woman: Mary, the mother of Jesus. Granted, she was subservient to God the Father and to Jesus her son, but so was everyone else, men and women alike. In earthly matters, Catholic female saints often answered to men, and nuns were under the authority of male priests and bishops, but in the spiritual realm, all souls were equal before God, and this principle found expression also in cases of cooperation or association between male and female saints in some of the saints' stories.

Of particular interest is a detail from the biography of St. Scholastica, a nun and the sister of St. Benedict, a monk. One day when Scholastica is visiting her brother near his Abbey, knowing her death is imminent, she asks Benedict to stay with her for the evening. Benedict refuses, because it is against the rules to spend the night outside his monastery, rules that help the monks avoid, among other things, extended private interaction with women. Scholastica prays, and a sudden storm prevents Benedict from leaving. Benedict understands that the intervention is from God and stays with Scholastica the whole night (Jo 2014b, Chungye pp. 293–95). The fact that Scholastica and Benedict were siblings lessened the degree of their deviance from the rules, but it is nonetheless notable that God would intervene to grant Scholastica's request to facilitate this divergence from social propriety.

Another story of note featuring friendship between a woman and a man is that of St. Theodora and St. Didymus, featured together. Theodora is sent to a brothel because she resists the advances of pagan men and is helped by Didymus, a soldier, who gives her his clothes so that she can escape in disguise. Didymus is arrested and sentenced, at which time Theodora appears at the court to be martyred in his place. Didymus declares he also is prepared to die for the Lord, and the two are executed together (Jo 2014d, Hagye pp. 751–54). Each of the saints' stories in this Joseon-era Catholic text is followed by a passage instructing the reader on the "virtue to be rightly practiced", which the story has illustrated, and in this case, the virtue is "loving your friend". The passage instructs that when people help each other do good and, in that purpose, "love each other and become friends, Jesus'

⁸ References to the Mengzi cite page, section, and line numbers in the Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, No. 21, *A Concordance to Mo Tzu*, as quoted in Sturgeon (2011b). Locations of the textual references given in this paper can also be determined using the Chinese Text Project website: <http://ctext.org/tools/concordance>.

⁹ Cf. (Kim 1990).

love is most certainly between them” (Jo 2014d, Hagye p. 754). Thus, the commentary on the story of Theodora and Didymus specifically affirms this instance of friendship and cooperation between a man and a woman as an example of spiritual virtue.

In the practice of Catholicism in the Joseon period, this increased equalization was reflected in the fact that lay men and women received the same religious education and were held to the same standards of piety, whether these were ritual in expression, such as participating in the same religious sacraments, or behavioral, such as remaining faithful to one spouse, which was required of men as well as women. Whereas the Joseon model of strict separation between the sexes reinforced a woman’s limitation to the domestic sphere and her subservient position, conversion to Catholicism enabled a woman to increase her sphere of influence, including in her saintly role as an example for both men and women to emulate. Hagiographic records from the early decades of Joseon Catholicism indeed feature many women as heroic role models. The first of these records, Hwang Sayeong’s famous “Silk Letter”, features many martyrs from the persecution of 1801, most of whom are men, but Hwang devotes more text to a description of the life and heroism of Columba Gang Wansuk than he does to most of the men he features (Hwang 2009, pp. 185, 197–200). In addition, a letter written by surviving Church leaders in 1811 features biographies of seven martyrs from 1801, three of whom are women, including the aforementioned Columba and Ludgarda (Francesco 2000, pp. 242–53). Furthermore, the biographies of these three women appear immediately after the opening biography of the martyred Fr. Zhou (a missionary from China) and before the remaining three biographies of lay male Catholics. The prominence of women is most notable, however, in a hagiography of martyrs from the persecution of 1839, with a full 50 of the 78 featured martyrs being women (Gihae Ilgi n.d.).

The related theme of class impartiality in Catholic doctrine would have contributed to the appeal of the saints’ stories specifically to women of the lower classes. The vernacular translation of *Yeolyeo Jeon* made it more accessible to commoner women, and the Joseon state’s growing efforts to propagate Confucian morals among the lower classes suggested that such examples of morality were meant for commoners as well as the elite. However, the exemplars in the *Yeolyeo Jeon* stories are overwhelmingly from the elite classes. Ten of the fifteen featured exemplars include wives of kings and dukes and the wife of a military official. Even the five exemplars that are not identified as elite are nonetheless depicted as almost identical in dress and surroundings to most of the elite women in the accompanying illustrations.¹⁰ In contrast, only about half the women in the Catholic saints’ stories are identified as social elites, and Mary the mother of Jesus, the most honored of the saints, is not one of them. Furthermore, the saints who come from elite families lose their privileges, either from anti-Christian persecution or by embracing poverty to become nuns. Thus, the themes of spiritual equality before God and the affirmation of poverty and suffering, themes that appear to have drawn many members of the Joseon lower classes to Catholicism in the first place, were reiterated in the saints’ stories.¹¹

4. Worth the Price of Conversion

What I have described thus far in comparing the Confucian exemplar stories with the Catholic saints’ stories reiterates my earlier mention of Catholicism offering opportunities for Joseon women that were unavailable in a traditional context. There were, however, prices to conversion. Most apparent in this regard was the persecution that haunted Catholics for almost a century. For various reasons, some of which I have alluded to, the practice of Catholicism was outlawed in the Joseon period soon after its beginning in the 1780s, and Catholics were ruthlessly persecuted until a treaty with France in 1886 compelled the state to allow religious freedom. This persecution involved arrest and severe torture; imprisonment under harsh conditions, sometimes for years at a time; exile; and execution for most of those who refused to recant their Catholic faith. Joseon-era laws dictated that even the young

¹⁰ Cf. (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 24–25, 52–53, 144–45, 180–81).

¹¹ For discussions of Catholic doctrine and class issues in Joseon, Cf. (Bang 2006, pp. 186–90; Cho 1988, p. 128; Yi 2004, p. 175).

children and other relatives of a Catholic could be penalized with exile and/or servitude. The first large-scale persecution of 1801 resulted in about 100 executions and 400 exile orders and eliminated most of the leadership. Smaller-scale persecutions during succeeding decades resulted in hundreds of arrests and about fifty deaths. The second large-scale persecution, which took place in 1839 and led to the first official Korean hagiography mentioned above, resulted in over a hundred deaths. The last and most brutal persecution, which began in 1866 and continued for seven years, resulted in the deaths of more than 8000 Catholics. Aside from the suffering of actual arrest and punishment, being Catholic in Joseon involved displacement, poverty, and other forms of marginalization.

Another price of being Catholic was the burden of being held to standards of behavior that had eternal consequences. A Joseon woman who failed to uphold propriety would bring disgrace to herself and her family, but there was nothing in the Confucian didactic literature that indicated that her action would lead to unending suffering in hell. Popular Joseon beliefs about the afterlife offered some notion of reward or punishment after death, but there was nothing comparable to the clearly articulated and extensive teaching about heaven and hell given in Joseon-era Catholic texts. In particular, the aforementioned Bible commentary that was integral to the devotional lives of Joseon Catholics emphasized the difficulty of attaining heaven and advised its readers to be constantly vigilant to avoid the horrors of hell.¹²

Despite this price in terms of both earthly suffering and the burden of spiritual vigilance to avoid eternal suffering, Catholicism continued to attract converts. Even with the losses of 1801 and 1839, including members leaving the church from fear of persecution, membership recovered to around 10,000 by the middle of the nineteenth century and grew to 23,000 by the start of the persecution of 1866 (Kim and Chung 1964, p. 231). This was, of course, a small minority of the Joseon population—most people were not compelled to convert. However, for those who did, the price was apparently worth what they gained from conversion.

The Confucian exemplar stories that I have introduced here represent a broader culture of moral education that primed Joseon women to be virtuous and self-sacrificial. For those women who converted to Catholicism, this pre-existing expectation of virtue and self-sacrifice made the expectations of Catholic virtue less difficult to fulfill than if they were converting from more liberal and self-indulgent modes of behavior. Moreover, as we have seen, Catholic standards of virtue offered a level of individual agency and status that were unavailable for women in the traditional context.

5. Confidence in the Face of Suffering and Oppression

The positive offerings of the saints' stories discussed here relate to aspects of Catholic doctrine and practice that have been discussed in other scholarship on the attractiveness of Catholicism to Joseon women.¹³ However, several characteristics particular to the saints' biographies and less a general feature of the Catholic doctrine encountered in nineteenth-century Korea also merit our attention as factors that likely contributed to the appeal of these stories.

One of these is what might be identified as a certain defiant boldness on the part of the saints. Alongside qualities such as perseverance and self-sacrifice, qualities that were expected of any Joseon woman, Confucian or Catholic, many of the female Catholic martyrs featured in the saints' biographies exhibit an unusual defiance when opposed or threatened by human authority figures. For their part, the women of the Confucian exemplar stories are also ready to chide their less virtuous superiors, such as parents and husbands, about the importance of propriety and virtue. As in the case of Mengxi telling her husband that she must follow propriety rather than get in the carriage with him, the exemplars are always featured stating their moral position, either in speech or in writing. However, this was expected of them by their social milieu: a good Confucian woman should help others to act

¹² For a more detailed discussion of this text and its emphasis on judgment, Cf. (Torrey 2020).

¹³ Cf. (Kim 2003a, 2003b, 2008; Jeong 2002, 2005).

virtuously, through exhortation as well as guidance and example. Thus, even when contradicting their superiors, the exemplars were upholding the Confucian moral status quo. Furthermore, such actions were frequently rewarded by a change of heart on the part of the person in authority, absolving the exemplar's contradictory stance. For instance, when Gaoxing repels the king's advances by cutting off her nose, the king is moved by her sacrifice and grants her a special status (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 168–69). Similarly, when the wife of the late king of Chu holds a knife to herself and reprimands the invading king of Wu for trying to rape her, he is ashamed, and leaves her in peace (National Hangeul Museum 2015, pp. 128–29). In contrast, many of the Catholic martyr stories feature young women who boldly defy male authority figures to the extent of incurring their increasing wrath. This would usually result in increasingly severe torments for the martyrs, who would bear it all with superhuman courage.¹⁴ One of the most striking examples is that of thirteen-year-old Eulalia, who boldly rebukes Diocletian, the emperor, when he seeks to persecute Christians. She declares that despite her age, God gives her courage, and she is unafraid of suffering, which she proves by remaining firm under torture (Jo 2014c, Donggye pp. 952–54).

As in the above story, the majority of the saints' stories describe their protagonists undergoing severe physical suffering at some point, from either disease or torture, but in the end, these sufferings become inconsequential. In the case of Eulalia, even as she is being burned, she declares—her voice ringing clearly through the flames—that she will be rewarded and her tormentors will be punished by eternal fire (Jo 2014c, Donggye p. 953). Elsewhere in the saints' biographies, women who are wracked by physical ailments embrace their bodily sufferings and die in peace, thus psychologically defying these oppressors of nature.¹⁵

Such narrative features would have held special appeal to the Catholic demographic of nineteenth-century Joseon. Although Catholicism was first embraced and propagated in Joseon by a group of elite *yangban* scholars, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the majority of Joseon Catholics were members of the lower classes, who regularly faced oppression by human authorities and by the forces of nature. In particular, a confluence of political and natural factors made the decades of the nineteenth century particularly oppressive. The accession of a very young king in 1800 and the lack of heirs to succeeding kings, which necessitated adoptions into the king's line, made the court vulnerable to the manipulations of royal relatives. The corruption that attended these manipulations led to increased taxes and the expansion of landholdings among the royalty, thus increasing the hardships of the lower classes (Eckert et al. 1990, p. 179). Natural disasters and epidemics added to the woes of this period, with the cholera epidemic of the 1820s leaving in its wake not only death, but deep fears that led to exaggerated accounts of mortalities and to the transmission of traumatic memories to later generations (Kim 2016).¹⁶ Even the minority of Catholics from the *yangban* class were vulnerable to social oppression due to their association with a marginalized political faction, not to mention that the criminalization of Catholicism that went into full force with the persecution of 1801 affected the *yangban* as much as the commoners.¹⁷ To Joseon Catholic women of the nineteenth century, well acquainted with oppression, suffering, and persecution from their immediate environment, examples of women who defied their human persecutors and who faced fleshly oppressions with courage would have offered more relevance than examples of mostly elite women whose actions as moral exemplars reinforced their connection with mainstream social norms.

Another important feature of the saints' stories is the fantastical element. In a majority of the martyr stories, a saint's faithfulness in the face of persecution is rewarded or accompanied by

¹⁴ E.g., Agatha, Dorothea, Domitilla, Julia, Susanna, Serafina, Regina, Caterina, Bibiana, Lucia (Jo 2014b, Chungye pp. 276–79, 280–83; 2014d, Hagye pp. 821–25, 861–63; 2014a, Chugye pp. 300–4, 408–11, 422–25; 2014c, Donggye pp. 877–81, 916–17, 960–64).

¹⁵ E.g., Lidwina, Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, Etheldreda, Clara, and Theresa. Cf. (Jo 2014d, Hagye pp. 716–20, 880–87, 1012–14; 2014a, Chugye pp. 305–10; 2014c, Donggye pp. 700–5).

¹⁶ Fear of cholera even motivated some of the conversions to Catholicism. Cf. (Kim 2016).

¹⁷ For factionalism and Anti-Catholicism Cf. (Baker 2017, 51, p. 96).

miraculous intervention. Although this intervention lessens the saint's sufferings somewhat until she is eventually executed, it appears that the more significant effect of the interventions is to demonstrate God's power over the persecutors, because many saints suffer terribly despite the interventions. In the case of the nuns who are not martyred but are sainted for their piety, they are also rewarded by signs and miracles of healing that usually continue after their deaths, benefiting those who visit their tombs. For instance, St. Genevieve's mother is struck blind when she opposes her daughter, and miracles of healing and other signs, "too many to record", continue after Genevieve's death (Jo 2014b, Chungye pp. 154–56). St. Prisca is beaten and imprisoned, but when she is thrown to the lions, they leave her alone, and when thrown into the fire, she is unhurt (Jo 2014b, Chungye pp. 206–7). St. Martina's trials are interrupted by earthquakes, angels, a great fire that destroys a pagan shrine, and wind and rain that extinguish the fire into which she is thrown (Jo 2014b, Chungye pp. 247–50). Some saints, such as Caterina and Lidwina, are visited by Jesus and Mary (Jo 2014b, Chungye p. 403; 2014d, Hagye p. 720). Moreover, many of the featured nuns are given foreknowledge of their time of death.¹⁸ Thus, not only are these women more righteous and courageous than their oppressors, but their alliance with an omnipotent God frequently allows them super-hero-like qualities that further emphasize their superiority to human and natural oppressors. In contrast, the Confucian exemplar stories are much more down-to-earth, featuring no miraculous intervention. Realistic stories might be more believable, but in the face of suffering, fantastical stories could be more potent, especially when the featured miracles were supported by the weight of religious teaching and, as discussed earlier, the protagonists enjoyed a heightened agency even apart from any miracles.

6. Conclusions

As the preceding analysis has shown, for those Joseon women concerned with virtue and drawn to the claims of Catholicism, the stories of female Catholic saints suggested compelling possibilities unavailable to the Confucian exemplars, such as celibacy and less restricted interaction with and representation alongside men. Furthermore, the female saints embodied a level of defiance toward the status quo not found in the "Obedient and Chaste" Confucian exemplar stories. The saints might be obedient to God, but to tyrants, to bodily suffering, and to the devil, they thumbed their noses. Certainly, the real-world experiences of persecution on the part of Joseon converts would have corrected any unrealistic expectations fueled by such stories. They would have quickly discovered that persecution was horrible and traumatic, that heroism was difficult, and that miraculous interventions were rare or nonexistent. Nevertheless, fantasies of standing bold and victorious in the face of oppression and pain could inspire and thus render the price of conversion less burdensome.

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¹⁸ E.g., Colette, Caterina, Euphrasia, Lidwina, Martha, and Clara. Cf. (Jo 2014b, Chungye pp. 377, 404, 415; 2014d, Hagye p. 720; 2014a, Chugye, pp. 249, 310).

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Article

Seeking Solidarity between Protestant and Catholic Churches for Social Justice in Korea: The Case of the Korea Christian Action Organization for Urban Industrial Mission (*Saseon*) (1976–1989)

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Abstract: The Korea Christian Action Organization for Urban Industrial Mission (*Hanguk-gyohoe-sahoeseongyo-hyeobuihoe (Saseon)*) was an organization which devoted itself not only to the Korean democratization movement against the military dictatorship, but also to the movement for the improvement of the quality of life of laborers, farmers, and the urban poor from 1976 to 1989. *Saseon*, a joint organization of Protestants and Catholics, trained activists dedicated to democratization and the people's right to life movements. The Protestants and Catholics of *Saseon* believed that participation in social movements was missionary work building the Kingdom of God on Earth, and that they could set a good example of solidarity with a common goal of social justice and a mission for the poor which transcended their theological differences. This paper will illuminate the cooperation between Korean Protestant and Catholic churches toward the common goal of social justice, focusing on the case of *Saseon*.

Keywords: Korea Christian Action Organization for Urban Industrial Mission (*Saseon*); Korean Protestantism; Korean Catholicism; social justice; solidarity

1. Introduction

The Korea Christian Action Organization for Urban Industrial Mission (*Hanguk-gyohoe-sahoeseongyo-hyeobuihoe (Saseon)*) was an active organization from 1976 to 1989. During that period, it devoted itself not only to the Korean democratization movement against the military dictatorship, but also to the movement for the improvement of the quality of life of laborers, farmers, and the urban poor. *Saseon*, a joint organization between Protestants and Catholics, trained activists dedicated to democratization and the people's right to life movements. It was a leading force in Korean social movements at a time when radical non-religious social movements were suppressed by the military dictatorship.

The Protestants and Catholics of *Saseon* believed that participation in social movements was missionary work building the Kingdom of God on Earth. They strove to work together towards a common goal of social justice, which transcended their theological differences, aiming to build a partnership by strengthening their ties to each other, developing mutual empathy, and emphasizing their similarities through shared experiences. This paper will provide a detailed account of the powerful union between the Korean Protestant and Catholic churches, which united toward the common goal of social justice, focusing on the case of *Saseon*.

Saseon was established by Korean Protestant and Catholic activists in September 1971 in reaction to the death of activist Taeil Jeon, who had committed suicide by self-immolation in November 1970 in protest of poor working conditions. *Saseon*, known at that time as *Hanguk-Christian-sahoehaengdong-hyeobuiche (Haengdong)* in Korean, was the first coalition of Protestant

and Catholic groups participating in social movements jointly, rather than as individuals, in the history of Christianity in post-Liberation Korea. *Haengdong* (later *Saseon*) was comprised of four categories of organizations: urban missions for the poor, urban industrial missions, rural missions, and student missions (KCAO 1976, p. 1). *Haengdong* was formed by six Protestant organizations, including the Yeongdeungpo Urban Industrial Mission, the Korea Student Christian Federation (KSCF), the Christian Academy, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and four Catholic organizations, including the Korea Young Christian Workers (KYCW, or the *Jeunesse Ouvnere Chretienne* (JOC)), the Korea Senior Christian Workers, the Korean Catholic Student Assembly, and the Anyang Workers Center (KCAO 1986, p. 80). The purpose of *Haengdong* was to inspire Protestants and Catholics to think and act collaboratively to improve the lives of laborers, farmers, and the urban poor, and to train professional Christian activists. *Haengdong* believed that "the powerless and poor issues should be put in a social and political context" and that "the redemption of the powerless and poor could be achieved through redemption from oppression and economic exploitation," a departure from the traditional charitable ideology of the time (KCAO 1986, p. 6).

Haengdong was renamed *Ecumenical-hyeondaeseongyo-hyeobuiche* in 1973, then *Hangukgyohoe-sahoeseongyo-hyeobuiche* later in 1973, and reestablished as *Saseon* in 1976. Though the organization changed its Korean name frequently, its English name, The Korea Christian Action Organization for Urban Industrial Mission (KCAO), and its core group of dedicated members, remained largely unchanged. In 1976, the Protestant organizations belonging to *Saseon* were mainly urban industrial mission organizations, urban mission organizations for the poor, and Protestant student associations, while Catholic member organizations were Korean Catholic farmer organizations, Catholic student associations, and the National Catholic Labor Priests Association. Solidarity between Korean Protestant and Catholic churches in pursuit of social justice had consolidated since the establishment of *Saseon* in 1976, and promoted the formation of vigorous Christian social movements.

The main discussion will proceed with the following order. Section 2 will be a critical review of the existing researches on the Christian social movement in Korea in the 1970s and 1980s. First, prior studies of Protestant and Catholic social movements will be examined, and then studies of the ecumenical movement will be reviewed. Section 3 examines the historical relationship between Protestant and Catholic churches in Korea. While Catholicism and Protestantism have similarities, they differ on many prominent points, leading to conflict and competition. The historical context of Korean Catholicism and Protestantism must be understood in order to grasp the significance of the cooperation between the two churches in the 1970s and 1980s. Section 4 will outline the solidarity between the Protestant and Catholic churches and the activities of *Saseon*, and examine their efforts to collaborate. Specifically, the acts of the Korean Protestant and Catholic churches towards the common goal of social justice will be examined through the lens of language, the balanced deployment of leadership and utilization of religious sites, and the characteristics of their rituals. By examining these activities, this article seeks to suggest one possible model of dialogue and coexistence among religions. Section 5 performs a theoretical evaluation of the case of *Saseon*, which proposes a model in which religions can cooperate and coexist with each other in religious pluralism without trying to commonize their differences or insisting on their own ways. Section 6 offers a critical view of *Saseon* activities. Though all members of *Saseon* were devoted to the cause, they also suffered oppression based on their religion, which demonstrates that participation in the *Saseon* movement demanded great determination and fortitude, making their partnership unique in Korea.

This paper will analyze the purpose, specific activities, and religious and social significance of the solidarity movement between Protestant and Catholic churches in Korea by examining sourcebooks published by *Saseon*, newspaper accounts, and the testimonies of those involved.

2. Review of Existing Researches on Korean Christian Social Movements

Researches on Korean Christian social movements of the 1970s and 1980s have mainly focused on organizing historical events in chronological order, or were published in the form of autobiographies or biographies of key figures. Studies of the Christian social movements during the democratization movements in Korea have been actively conducted for a relative short time, and so research on the subject has not been abundant.

Studies on the history of Protestant social movements mainly deal with the following topics: the movements of particular organizations and activist groups, such as Protestant pastors and students (Kim 1993; Jo 2005); the contemporary significance of a particular field of movement, such as Protestant labor movements and human rights movements (Park and Lee 2015; Son 2017); and the change of the characteristics of Protestant social movements into conservation and diversification (Lee 2002; Kang 2012).

Studies on the history of Catholic social movements are not different from those of their Protestant counterpart. However, it can be pointed out that, due to the organizational characteristics of the Catholic Church, there are some studies that deal with the Catholic social movement in connection with the global Catholic Church. Research topics on the Catholic social movement are as follows: movements of particular organizations, such as the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique* (JOC) (Kim 2016); the movements of particular activist groups, such as Catholic lay persons (Shim 2006); particular movement fields, such as the urban poor movement (Park 2010); the justification of social movements through the analysis of Catholic social teaching methodology (Oh 2006); and the relationship between the social participation of Korean Catholicism and the Second Vatican Council (Kang 2008).

Such research rarely takes the case of *Saseon* seriously (Jo 2005; Kang 2008; Kim 2009; *The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea* SHCK; NCCCK 2013, pp. 556–60). This article is significant in that it ferrets out the case of *Saseon*, which has not received much attention, and introduces it to scholars in Korea and around the world who are not familiar with it.

The literature on the South Korean ecumenical movement mainly organizes historical events around unity among Protestant denominations (*The Presbyterian Church of Korea Ecumenical Committee* PCKEC). *Saseon's* activities, not the denominational unity movement in a strict sense, but a partnership toward a common goal, tend to be described separately in the history of either Protestantism or Catholicism, rather than being analyzed from the perspective of a coalition movement. Further, studies that recognize the activities of *Saseon* as Protestant and Catholic solidarity describe only the content of the activities themselves, without an analytical approach to academic implications of the coalition movement (*Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development* 1983, pp. 178–82; Son 2017). This failure to acknowledge the ecumenical significance of the *Saseon* movement is also found in the statements of participant activists. For instance, the memoirs of Rev. Kwon Hokyong, who represented the Protestant social movement in the 1970s and 1980s, provides relatively detailed accounts of his experiences with the *Saseon* movement, but does not mention the religious significance of cooperation with Catholics (Kwon 2019, pp. 254–67).

In this regard, this article is also significant, in that it justly acknowledges the joint social movement of Korean Protestants and Catholics in the 1970s and 1980s as an ecumenical movement. *Saseon* was a joint movement to achieve common goals, despite theological differences, and set an example of interreligious dialogue and coexistence in the process. It is necessary to fairly evaluate the meaning of the *Saseon* movement, its activists not collaborating from time to time, but forming a single organization and launching a single movement.

3. The Historical Relationship of Protestantism and Catholicism in Korea

Catholics and Protestants have been at odds with each other in Korea ever since Protestant missionaries first arrived at the end of the 19th century, when Catholic missionaries had already been established. Missionaries from both religions vied for status within Joseon (later Korea). After the Joseon government opened its ports in the late 19th century, after having persecuted Catholics for

about a century, various denominations of the latecomer Protestants flooded into Joseon and began engaging in very active missionary work. The Protestant missionaries openly criticized characteristics of the Catholic faith, such as the celibacy of priests and icon reverence. Dismayed, Catholic missionaries described Protestant missionaries as “enemies who like to compete” and “people who are more enthusiastic about converting Catholics than converting those of other religions.” They also criticized Protestantism as being “threatening and pretentious” and “superstitious,” and derided it as “heresy” (Myeongdong Catholic Church 1987, pp. 51–52, 64; Lee 2018, pp. 43–44).

In response, Protestant missionaries accused Catholics of “discounting the Bible,” while emphasizing “holy things,” and of “drawing hundreds and thousands of the Koreans with the false in the semblance of the true” (Underwood 2005, p. 657; Lee 2018, pp. 63–64). Horace Grant Underwood, a Korean representative of missionaries from the Northern Presbyterian Church in the U.S., criticized Catholics for their “blindness” while criticizing heathens for their “darkness” (Underwood 2005, pp. 657–58). Some Joseon Dynasty Protestants condemned Catholicism as ‘Romanism,’ contending that the papal system was a representative product of Romanism with no biblical basis and ran counter to the traditions of the early churches. Protestants further dismissed Catholicism as “ritualism” focusing only on ritual or ritual practice. They were especially derisive of Catholics’ regard of the church as a sanctuary, worshiping the statue of Jesus by sanctifying it, and elevating the image of Mary to sainthood, an act of blatant idolatry. In short, Joseon Dynasty Protestants thought that Protestantism valued “internal faith,” while Catholicism valued “external form” (Lee 2018, pp. 62–69).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Korean Protestant and Catholic churches wanted to highlight their differences from each other, so when Catholicism became known as ‘Cheonju-gyo,’ Protestants chose to adopt the name ‘Yaso(Jesus)-gyo.’ Catholic churches accepted the name of God chosen by the Chinese Catholic churches, ‘Cheonju,’ (天主, The Lord of Heaven) while Protestant churches, in order to avoid ‘Cheonju,’ adopted ‘Haneunim’ following the translation of the *Protestantism Catechism (Yesusyeonggyo-Mundap)* published in 1881 by John Ross, a missionary from the Scottish Union Presbyterian Church (Lee 2018, pp. 76–79; Oak 2020, pp. 132–33, 135–36). Relations between the two Christian traditions were so contentious at that time that even marriage between Protestants and Catholics was banned. It is clear that, in the early days of Catholicism and Protestantism in Korea, their refusal to recognize each other’s validity created conflict and turmoil.

After Korea’s liberation from Japanese colonial rule in the mid-20th century, the strained relations between Protestantism and Catholicism in Korea continued, exemplified by a conflict over the military chaplains’ quota¹ when Korea’s first president, Syngman Rhee, a Protestant elder, implemented the military chaplain system (Choi 1982, p. 733). During the 1960 presidential election, Protestants had sought to support Rhee’s ruling party by denouncing Catholicism when a Catholic candidate from the opposition ran for vice-president (Kang 2014, pp. 64–70). This further heightened tension between the Korean Protestant and Catholic churches.

Change finally came after the second Vatican Council, which ran from 1962 to 1965. One of the council’s agendas was inter-religious dialogue and the ecumenical movements of Catholicism and Protestantism. Both sides participated in the dialogue, but the conflict and tension between the two religions continued unabated, nevertheless.

¹ The military chaplain system in Korea has been originated and developed mainly by Korean Christian churches, imitating the military chaplain system of the United States. After the Korean War (1950–53), the military chaplain system was officially established. From the beginning, Catholic priests were also dispatched as military chaplain, but their activities were as prominent as Protestant pastors. The Protestant military system took an exclusive position during the Rhee Syngman regime, which was based on anti-Communism and involved a large number of Protestants. When Korean armies participated in Vietnamese War in the late 1960s, Buddhism began to send military monks after persistent demands. On the surface, the three religions seemed to cooperate, but in reality, there was a great religious conflict in securing the number of military chaplains, especially over the position of the chief of chaplains (Choi 1982, p. 733; Park 2013, pp. 233–35).

4. The Objectives and Activities of *Saseon*

The background of the cooperation between the Korean Protestant and Catholic churches for the purpose of promoting social justice through *Saseon* in the 1970s and the 1980s can be categorized as both international and national. First, the decision of the second Vatican Council to engender cooperation between Catholics and Protestants led to the Korean Catholic churches acknowledging the necessity of the ecumenical movement. They began actively pursuing cooperation based on ‘the decretal on the ecumenicalism’ declared in 1964. They sought to open a dialogue with their estranged Protestant brothers, by holding joint rallies, joint prayers, and social activities. They tried to strengthen the ecumenical movement within the churches themselves through self-reform and adaptation to the modern world (Choi 1982, p. 733). Meanwhile, Protestants—the majority of whom were affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, with others affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Korean Methodist Church—instigated a trend to participate in social movements through dialogues with other religions, based on the strengthened missionary concept of *Missio Dei* (Latin for the “mission of the God”) after the Willingen meeting of the International Mission Council in 1952 (Sonea 2017, p. 72).² In November of 1964, Protestants invited other religious leaders to a meeting on the theme of “a dialogue between Protestantism and other religions” at the dedication of Academy House, the headquarters of a prominent Christian Academy, which later became a member of *Saseon*. Korean Catholics and Protestants held their first joint prayer service during the week of ecumenism in January 1986 (Choi 1982, p. 734).

Soon, a movement sought to form the foundation for ecumenism, not only through prayer meetings, but also through writings. One of the most remarkable works produced during that era was the Common Translation Bible. In 1966, the Protestant World Bible Society and the Vatican Bible Committee agreed to co-translate the Bible. Accordingly, Korean Catholic churches and some active Protestant denominations in the ecumenical movement organized a joint translation committee, collaborated on translations together, and cooperated in publishing the Korean Common Translation Bible in 1968. The New Testament was published on Easter Day in 1971, and the Old Testament on Easter Day in 1977 (Choi 1982, pp. 735–36; Shin 2014, p. 27). This Korean Common Translation Bible was used during *Saseon*’s worship services.

Another issue uniting the two religions was the resistance to Korea’s dictatorship led by Chunghee Park. While religious movements encountered relatively little interference from the military dictatorship compared to non-religious social movements at that time, some Protestants and Catholics sought to unite against the dictatorship. Protestants and Catholics were better protected from reprisals than activists affiliated with non-religious institutions in South Korea’s domestic social and political spheres in the 1970s and 1980s (Cho 2010, p. 344), due to their close links to the world’s churches, such as the United Church of Canada, the United Methodist Church, the Uniting Church of Australia, *Das Evangelisches Missionswerk in Südwestdeutschland*, *Berliner Missionswerk*, and the World Council of Churches. Since Korea’s military dictatorship sought validation from the international community, it required cooperation and support from various countries around the world, and could not easily punish or suppress Catholic priests or Protestant pastors protected by long-established international networks. Although some pastors and priests endured suffering, oppression, and even martyrdom, their relative freedom from reprisals made them some of the first members of the resistance to the dictatorship (Oh 2009, pp. 155–56).

Under these circumstances, a small number of Protestants and Catholics had to join forces to participate in democratization and the people’s right to life movements. The Protestant and Catholic

² The content of the *Missio Dei* doctrine was clearly presented for the first time at the Willingen meeting of the IMC in 1952. *Missio Dei* held that the main purpose of the missionary activities of the church is not the establishment of churches, but service to God. The mission is independent from the church and strictly understood as God’s own activity (Sonea 2017, pp. 72–73). Joining *Missio Dei* means specifically, “raising a prophetic voice against social, economic and racial injustice” (Bassham 1980, p. 36).

populations in Korea were not very large in the 1970s and the 1980s. According to the 1971 census, 9.8 percent of the Korean population was Protestant and 2.4 percent was Catholic, among a total population of almost 33 million. In 1977, Catholics made up 3.0 percent of the total Korean population and Protestants 13.7 percent (Korea Research Institute for Religion and Society 1993, pp. 174, 188). In 1985, the Protestant population accounted for 16.0 percent of the total population, and the Catholic population 4.6 percent (Korean Statistical Information Service 1985). Although the numbers of Catholics and Protestants were small, they were able to join the anti-dictatorship *Saseon* movement, taking advantage of the religious sector's relative autonomy from the military dictatorship.

Saseon's objective was to fulfill God's mission by building a kingdom of God on this Earth by protecting people from all the evil forces of the world (KCAO Brochure n.d.). To achieve this purpose, *Saseon* brought together Catholic and Protestant social missionary groups until the mid-1970s. In the late 1970s, it became the leading force of democratization and inspired the people's right to life movement as the Chunghee Park dictatorship neared its end. The trigger was the so-called 'YH Incident' of 1979, when a woman laborer fell from a building and died while police forcibly tried to disperse a group of female laborers staging a sit-in protest against the closure of YH, a wig export company. Reverend Kyeongseok Suh, the general secretary of *Saseon*, who was supporting the female laborers, was arrested along with them (Kim 2015, p. 207). After that, *Saseon* concentrated directly on organizing and leading democratization and the people's right to life movements.

On 18 March 1982, university students in Busan set fire to the Busan Center for American Studies in protest of U.S. support for the new dictator, Doohwan Chun. *Saseon* issued a statement supporting the attack, stating that "the arson at the Busan Center for American Studies is a concrete expression of anti-American sentiment among Koreans" (Kim 2015, p. 208). As a result, a number of Catholic and Protestant leaders were arrested and investigated. Many media outlets criticized *Saseon* for supporting the attack, but in doing so promoted the organization's widespread name recognition, as many Koreans learned of *Saseon* for the first time. After the 5.18 Kwangju Democratization Movement in 1980, only religious rallies were exempted from the military junta's ban on rallies, and so *Saseon's* summer retreat and year-end parties served as a gathering place for Korean social activists. Representatives from each sector of the movement, such as urban industrial mission organizations, urban mission organizations for the poor, Protestant student associations, Catholic student associations, and the Korea Catholic farmer organizations, studied, exchanged information, and discussed tactics in their struggle, beyond the reach of government vigilance (Kim 2015, pp. 210–11).

Saseon operated educational and training programs for professional Christian activists, preparing for urban and industrial missions, fighting for the improvement of laborers' and farmers' environments and rights, organizing activities to help the urban poor through the Seoul Metropolitan Community Organization (*Sudokkwon-dosiseongyo-wiwonhoe* or SMCO), addressing industrial sector pollution by organizing the Korea Pollution Problems Institute (*Hanguk-gonghaemunje-yeonguso*), the first environmental organization in South Korea, and caring for Korean democratization movement leaders in custody (KCAO Brochure n.d.; Kim 2015, pp. 209–10).

Saseon contributed significantly to the formation of the general labor movement, the peasant movement, and the urban poor movement in Korea in the late 1980s. In the 1970s and 1980s, the democratic labor union movement was powered by the Protestant industrial missionary movement and the Catholic Labor Youth movement. A group of Protestant and Catholic rural activists in *Saseon* also organized the National Farmers Missionary Council (*Jeonguk-nongminseongyo-hyeobuihoe*) (KCAO 1986, p. 81). In particular, the Catholic Farmers' Association (*Catholic-nongminhoe*), established in 1972, 'the only farmers' movement organization in the country' for 10 years after its inception, broke new ground in the Korean peasant movement by greatly contributing to the formation of the National Farmers' Association (*Jeonguk-nongminhoe*) (Kang 2008, p. 293; Cho 2010, pp. 341–44). The urban poor movement, organized by SMCO in the 1970s, was more specialized, with the launch of the Catholic Urban Poor's Community Association (*Cheondobin*) in 1984 and the Christian Urban Poor's Council (*Kibinhyeop*) in 1986. Although ties between Protestantism and Catholicism had weakened at that

point, with the separation of the two religions within the urban poor movement, their contributions remained notable (KCAO 1987, p. 8). The two organizations contributed to the formation of the Seoul City Association of the Evacuated Urban Poor (*Seocheolhyeop*) in July 1987.

As *Saseon*'s activities progressed, roles were divided naturally between Protestants and Catholics. Protestants focused on urban industrial missions and student movements in the Seoul metropolitan area, while Catholics focused on industrial missions and farmer movements in rural areas. In the 1980s, *Saseon* tended to support people directly involved with their own organization, shifting their emphasis from 'a movement for neighbors' to 'a movement with neighbors.' (Cho 2010, p. 344). Accordingly, the labor movement, the peasant movement and the urban poor movement decoupled from religion (Kang 2008, pp. 294–95). As a result, the Christianity movement's influence and initiative waned and it stopped leading the people's movement. Nonetheless, it is generally agreed that *Saseon* made a significant contribution to the formation and development of Korean social movements for laborers, farmers, and the urban poor, and democratization movements in the 1970s and 1980s (Kwon 2019, pp. 260–61).

As well as engaging in social and political activities, *Saseon* also aimed to strengthen cooperation between the Protestant and Catholic faiths in Korea (KCAO 1986, p. 53). Korean Protestant and Catholic activists did so by recognizing their theological differences without trying to reconcile or eliminate them. They developed their social movement on the basis of similarities in several ways.

First, Protestants and Catholics identified problems facing Christianity in Korea and tried to solve them cooperatively. They sought common problems in Protestantism and Catholicism and then tried to address them through joint research on church affairs, such as the direction of church structure, sermons and missionary work, theological problems embracing the indigenization of theology and missionary work, research and development of Minjung theology, and questions of missionary methodology, including *Missio Dei* and popular missionary work (Korea Christian Action Organization n.d., p. 3).

They also avoided conflict by agreeing on which name would be used for God. In Korea, Protestants and Catholics use a different name for God; the Korean Standard Dictionary defines 'Hananim' and 'Haneunim,' as specialized terms used to refer to God by Protestants and Catholics, respectively. As previously mentioned, early Catholics used the term Cheonju, and Protestants used Haneunim. However, in the past, people in northwestern of Korea, including Pyeongan Province and northern Hwanghae Province, pronounced it Hananim, not Haneunim. Since they had accepted Protestantism faster than people from any other region, and their faith significantly influenced the Protestant characteristics of South Korea after liberation from Japanese colonial rule, many Korean Protestants accepted the dialectical pronunciation of Hananim (Yoon 2015, pp. 29–31). After much consideration, Protestant and Catholic biblical scholars participating in the publication of the Common Translation Bible in 1968 agreed to label God as Haneunim. Catholic churches, which referred to God as Cheonju until the 1960s, accepted the term Haneunim for the sake of ecumenism, and Protestant churches convinced their followers that it was correct according to Korean linguistics to refer to God as Haneunim. However, the mainstream Protestant churches refused to accept the Common Translation Bible, and continued to use the term Hananim. The dispute over God's name ended when Korean Catholics agreed to use Haneunim, while Hananim was used by Protestants. The debate over the Korean term for God did not arise from simple differences in translation or pronunciation, but rather from long-standing conflicts and inconsistencies between Protestantism and Catholicism (Shin 2013), but *Saseon* used both Haneunim and Hananim. Catholic-led masses and theological material referred to God as Haneunim, and in Protestant worship services and materials used Hananim.

In addition, both sides tried to be fair when determining meeting venues and number of participants. Venues alternated between Protestant and Catholic churches; for example, the special general assembly, a large meeting, was held at Dongdaemun Catholic Church in 1979 (KCAO 1979, p. 1), while the Prayer for the Nation, another noteworthy event, was held at the Seoul First Church, a Protestant church in Jung-gu in 1984 (KCAO 1984, p. 1). Activist trainers and trainees were chosen evenly between each religion. *Saseon* wanted to strengthen the practical solidarity movement of

Protestants and Catholics by operating a training program for activists for the movement for the poor through the association of the Catholic Urban Poor's Community Association and the Protestant Urban Poor's Council. Trainers' positions in the program were divided evenly between members of the Catholic Urban Poor's Community Association and the Protestant Urban Poor's Council, and trainees were chosen in equal numbers from the two organizations (KCAO 1988, pp. 1–2).

Finally, communal worship services, or masses, were conducted to emphasize the similarities of Protestantism and Catholicism and harmonize the differences. The Common Translation Bible was used in communal services, and both Protestant and Catholic hymns were sung, along with people's songs (*minjung gayo*). For example, during the opening service of the 1983 general assembly, the Catholic hymn number 127 "A Song of the Blessed" and the Protestant hymn number 212 "A Church Song" were sung along with popular songs such as "Peasant Song" and "We Will Win." (KCAO 1983, pp. 1–2). The Holy Communion was also an important issue, because the Eucharist was strictly reserved for devout Catholics, while the Protestant Sacrament was relatively accessible to non-believers. *Saseon's* communal worship service solved this problem by omitting the Holy Communion altogether. In this way, even if Protestant believers attended Catholic Mass, they did not feel much resistance, nor did Catholic believers. Rather, the worshipers identified the merits of the faith and reflected on their lack of religion, and wanted to reform their religion more actively (College Student Council of Saemoonan Church 2017, pp. 113–14).

Saseon's activists recognized their differences with each other, but still carried out joint activities by highlighting common values, such as dedication to social justice, the legitimacy of social movements based on the Christian faith, and recognition of the need for internal reform within Korean churches. Protestants and Catholics in *Saseon* performed social work cooperatively, transcending their theological differences in finding common ground, united by their passion for social justice.

5. The Implication of *Saseon* for Coexistence and Cooperation between Religions

The case of *Saseon* demonstrates the possibility of religions to coexist and cooperate in a pluralistic society, while acknowledging their differences. According to Alister E. McGrath, there are three Christian approaches to understanding the relation between Christianity and other religious traditions: particularism, inclusivism, and pluralism. The particularist approach is based on the premise that "only those who hear and respond to the Christian gospel" can be saved (McGrath 1998, p. 329), which can cause conflict among religions in modern pluralistic society, in that it fundamentally blocks inter-religious dialogue. The inclusivist approach argues that "salvation is possible for those who belong to other religious traditions." Karl Rahner, the most prominent advocate of this model, argued that "saving grace must be available outside the bounds of the church, and hence in other religious traditions" (McGrath 1998, pp. 329–31). Inclusivism suggests that non-Christian religious traditions include elements of truth (McGrath 1998, p. 331). This approach is problematic, in that it fails to set a standard for determining whether or not God will save a certain person. John Hick criticized it as granting "honorary status unilaterally to people who have not expressed any desire for it" (McGrath 1998, p. 331).

The pluralist approach relates partly to the model of cooperation and coexistence presented by *Saseon*, suggesting that "all the religious traditions of humanity are equally valid paths to the same core of religious reality" (McGrath 1998, p. 329). The most significant exponent of this approach is Hick, who asserted that "a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realization that it is God who is at the centre" was required, and "all the religions of mankind serve and revolve around him" (Hick 1993, p. 131). Hick suggested that the characteristic of God's nature is his universal saving will; "God wishes everyone to be saved" (McGrath 1998, p. 332). Hick declared that, although the language, concepts, liturgical actions, and cultural ethos differ widely from one religion to another, human beings come together within the framework of an ancient and highly developed tradition "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Mic. 6:8)." (Hick 1996, p. 38). According to Hick, all religions led to the same God. McGrath pointed out that there was a problem

with Hick's suggestion, because the religious traditions of the world were clearly radically different in their beliefs and practices. For instance, Hick's suggestion cannot be applied to non-theistic religious traditions, such as Advaitin Hinduism or Theravada Buddhism, which have no place for the traditional notion of God (McGrath 1998, p. 332).

Saseon's activities can be one possible solution to the problem pointed out by McGrath. As in the case of *Saseon*, when the realization of social justice becomes a common goal, the difference between religious experience and doctrine is not much of a problem. Religions can coexist without great conflict when a common understanding of God's nature and meaning is shared, rather than a common approval of God's reality. In other words, this is to focus not on who has 'the universal saving will' Hick referred to but on how it can be realized. When the thesis on God's nature expands into realizing social justice in this world as a way of achieving God's salvation, atheistic religious traditions such as Advaitin Hinduism and Theravada Buddhism can collaborate with theistic religious traditions such as Christianity.

The ecumenical movement in South Korea can be divided into two aspects: the inter-denominational unity or the reunion of Protestantism and Catholicism and the emphasis on the social responsibility of the church and cooperative activity towards it. The Human Rights Mission of the National Council of Churches in Korea also explained the unity movement and social participation of the Korean church separately ([The National Council of Christian Churches in Korea 2005](#), pp. 40–54). *Saseon's* activities can be considered as being focused on the latter. The *Saseon* movement in Korea proposes a model in which religions recognize each other's differences and collaborate for the common goal of social justice, rather than excluding or including other religions.

6. Mainline Churches' Criticism on *Saseon*

Korean mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches were often critical of *Saseon*, specifically because their activities were creating uncomfortable relations with the state by resisting the military regime, while seeking cooperation with other religions. In the late 1970s and 1980s, high-ranking members of the Catholic church tried to weaken the Catholic social movement and promote close cooperation with the government ([Kang 2008](#), pp. 350–52). The Bishops' Conference of 1978 decided to abolish many Catholic social movement organizations, including the Catholic Farmers' Association, the Catholic Labor Youth Association, and the Catholic University Student Association. Later, the Bishops' Conference of March 1987 decided not to allow Catholic members of *Saseon* to officially designate themselves as Catholics. The Korean Catholic church was concerned that the Catholic social movement would become a general social movement, with more emphasis on social than religious aspects. The Bishops' Conference also criticized the alliance and cooperation with non-Catholics, arguing that laypersons' apostolic organizations should consist only of Catholics ([Kang 2008](#), pp. 327–34, 355–56; [Oh 2015](#), p. 115).

The Korean Protestant churches also criticized the Protestant activists of *Saseon*. In particular, the group was denounced by various media outlets after the YH incident as one of the most ideologically "impure" forces in South Korean society. The Korean Protestant community openly labeled them as communists even in the books "What are Urban Industrial Missions for?" and "This is 'Urban Industrial Missions'" in 1977 and 1978, respectively.³ These books criticized the Protestant social movement as "not only a non-evangelical and impure movement, but also part of the world's communist bypass strategy," and described it as an anti-Christian movement based on atheist Marxism ([Hong 1977](#); [Hong 1978](#); [The National Council of Christian Churches in Korea 2005](#), p. 140).

³ Little is known about the author of these books, Jiyeong Hong. The author, who was a lecturer at Korea National Defense University and Myongji University, wrote books mainly criticizing communism, political theology, and the labor movement, as well as dealing with national security issues. The above-mentioned books were published with the support of Protestant magazine *The Current Thoughts*, which took the position of the military dictatorship at the time. Conservative media outlets criticized *Saseon's* activists as communist, quoting the books ([Hong 1977](#); [Hong 1978](#); [KCAO 1978](#)).

Mainstream Protestant and Catholic criticism of *Saseon* was not directed at their ecumenism, but at their anti-government alignment, because *Saseon*'s activities at the time highlighted democratization and the people's right to life movement against the dictatorship, rather than ecumenical activities. The activists of *Saseon* did not set a common goal of social justice for ecumenism, but accepted the strategy of ecumenism for the realization of social justice.

Nevertheless, the animosity of mainline Korean Protestants and Catholics toward ecumenism was clear in the 1970s and the 1980s. They were especially critical of the Common Translation Bible. Catholics criticized the Common Translation Bible for being too Protestant, while Protestants criticized it for being more Catholic. As soon as the Common Translation Bible was released, conservative Protestants denounced it from a doctrinal and interpretative perspective, arguing that it was unacceptable because Catholics and Protestants were inherently different in the doctrinal aspect. There was a consensus within Catholic churches that the term 'apocrypha' should be amended to 'second scripture', because it constituted a theological error (Choi 1982, pp. 735–36).

In the 1970s and 1980s, when *Saseon* was active, most Catholics and Protestants tended to be either negative or indifferent to each other. A survey of the relative degree of intimacy between Protestants and other religions in 1982 indicated a conflict between Catholics and Protestants, with 45.5 percent of Protestants expressing discomfort, and 33.8 percent expressing familiarity with Catholicism. According to a 1985 social survey report by the Laypersons Council on the 200th anniversary of the Korean Catholic Church, 34.5 percent of Catholics responded that they had a great affinity with Buddhists, while only 14 percent of Catholics reported a connection with Protestants. According to a 1988 survey on religious consciousness and the lives of Catholics, 36.6 percent of Korean Catholics supported Buddhist doctrines and ideas and 28.5 percent opposed them, while 19.6 percent were in favor of Protestantism and 43.8 percent opposed to it. These statistical results can be interpreted as showing that relations between Catholicism and Protestantism in Korea were not amicable (Shin 2014, pp. 25–26).

Saseon activists were not only checked by the dictatorship, but also criticized by mainstream Protestants and Catholics. The activities of *Saseon* cannot represent the political and social attitude of all of Korean Christianity in the 1970s and 1980s. It is clear that *Saseon* activists were absolutely a minority within the Korean church. However, even a minority can have a substantial significance. *Saseon* has a great significance, in that it was the first coalition of Protestant and Catholic groups. Furthermore, in South Korea, where mainstream Protestants and Catholics were hostile toward each other and did not support the movement against the dictatorship, the collaboration for social justice by *Saseon* activists can be said to demonstrate prominently the degree of their will, determination, and conviction of the inter-religious activities of the social justice movement.

7. Conclusions

Saseon devoted itself not only to the Korean democratization movement against the military dictatorship, but also to the movement for the improvement of the quality of life of laborers, farmers, and the urban poor from 1976 to 1989. The Protestants and Catholics of *Saseon* recognized the social movement as missionary work for building the Kingdom of God on Earth, and actively carried out a social movement based on Christian faith.

Catholicism and Protestantism have a long history of conflict, miscommunication, and tension, which continues to this day. At many times throughout history, Catholics and Protestants have only been able to concentrate on their differences, rather than their similarities. However, thanks to the second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church during the 1970s, which supported inter-faith dialogue, a foundation for cooperation was built. Within Protestantism, there was also a trend to strengthen a dialogue with other religions to carry out God's mission (*Missio Dei*). The situation in Korea, where religious movements encountered relatively little interference from the military dictatorship compared to non-religious social movements, was another factor that created solidarity between Protestant and Catholic churches. Although only a few Protestants and Catholics sought to collaborate in resistance to Korea's dictatorship, they were able to lead social democratization and

the people's right to life movement during a time when non-religious movements were suppressed. The activities of *Saseon* contributed greatly to the formation of the general labor movement, the peasant movement and the urban poor movement in Korea in the late 1980s.

Despite the long conflict and tension, *Saseon* activists worked for the cause of social justice. To promote cooperation between the two religions, Korean Protestant and Catholic activists did not focus on their theological differences, but tried to look for ways to coexist. They recognized their theological differences, but chose not to focus on them, while developing a social movement on the basis of their similarities.

The solidarity between the Protestant and Catholic churches through *Saseon* has a particular significance in Korea, where many Protestants and Catholics were hostile toward each other. Even today, the ecumenical movement of Korean Protestants and Catholics is not as active or noteworthy as it was in the past, which is why it is important to remember the great work of this group. On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, many Christians had the chance to reflect on the past and prepare for the future together, yet failed to attempt to bring together Protestantism and Catholicism. In this regard, *Saseon* set an example of solidarity that can be emulated, even now.

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