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A THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF MINJUNG THEOLOGY,
SYSTEMATICALLY AND BIBLICALLY

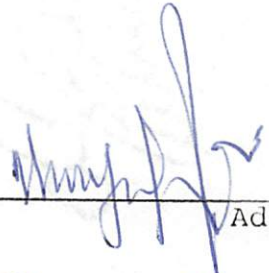
A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

by


Yong Wha Na

May 1988

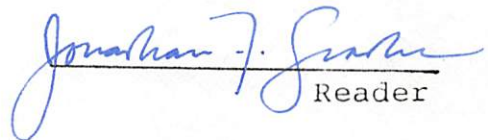
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GLOSSARY OF KOREAN NAMES AND WORDS

Ahn, Byung Mu	Professor of New Testament, Hankuk Theological Seminary, Director of Korea Theological Institute.
Chang Il-dam	A hero of a poetic memo of Chi Ha Kim.
Choo, Chai Yong	Professor of Church History, Hankuk Theological Seminary.
Dan	To break and resolve.
Donghak	Eastern Learning, an oriental faith whose major theme is "humanity is heaven."
Eunjin Mireuk	The largest statue of Buddha in Korea.
Ham, Sok Hon	A Quaker. Formerly teacher of Korean history, Editor of Ssial.
Han	A just indignation yearning for justice to be done.
Hankuk	Republic of Korea.
Han-ul-nim	God.
Hong Gil-dong	A hero of a Korean folktale.
Hyun, Young Hak	Professor of Christian Ethics, Ewha Women's University.
Jun, Gyung Yon	Professor of New Testament, Hankuk Theological Seminary.
Jun, Tae Il	Young Christian worker, incinerated.
Kim, Chai Choon	Former President of Hankuk Theological Seminary.
Kim, Chi Ha	Poet of resistance movement.
Kim, Chung Choon	Former Professor of Old Testament, Hankuk Theological Seminary.

Kim, Kyoung Jae	Professor of Systematic Theology, Hankuk Theological Seminary.
Kim, Myoung Hyouk	Professor of Church History, Hapdong Theological Seminary.
Kim, Yong Bock	Co-Director for Research, Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, Seoul.
Min, Young Jin	Professor of Old Testament, Methodist Theological Seminary.
Minjung	Underdogs figuratively, people literally.
Moon, Hee Suk	Professor of Old Testament, Presbyterian Theological Seminary.
Park, Chung Hee	Former President of Korea.
Park, Joon Suh	Professor of Old Testament, Yonsei University.
Rhee, Syngman	The first president of Korea.
Suh, Kwang Sun	Professor of Christian Ethics, Ewha Women's University.
Suh, Nam Dong	Former professor of Systematic Theology, Yonsei University.
Ssial	People.
Sye, In Suk	Professor, Seogang University.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Definition of Minjung Theology

A Theological Product of Social Movement

Minjung¹ theology first made its appearance in the theological arena of Korea early in 1975. Because of its rather recent emergence, it is necessary first to introduce and identify minjung theology, to trace its historical background, and finally to render an assessment of that theology.

Minjung theology is a theological product issuing from the background of the Korean political situation of the 1970s. This is demonstrated in the definition of minjung theology by Kwang Sun Suh, former dean of Ewha Women's University, Seoul, who introduces it as

¹"Minjung" is a Korean term for "the people." This term began to be used in the sense of class-consciousness since 1920s in Japan, and was introduced to Korea but its life span of usage was short in Korea. See, Yong Hun Park, and Jung Soo Ahn, Nation and Idea of Freedom (Seoul: Goryu-won, 1987), pp. 245-246. This term has been used in the political sense again since 1960 by Korean historians such as Ki Back Lee and Sok Hon Ham. These historians understood minjung as the underdogs, victims of social injustice. But the politico-theological sense of minjung was introduced to Korean minjung theologians under the influence of Japanese theologians.

an accumulation and articulation of theological reflections on the political experiences of Christian students, laborers, the press, professors, farmers, writers, and intellectuals as well as theologians in Korea in the 1970s. It is a theology of the oppressed in the political situation, a theocentric response to the oppressors, and it is the responses of the oppressed to the Korean church and its mission.²

That minjung theology is a Korean theological product is also clearly shown by Chi Ha Kim, a representative minjung poet, who focuses on the human rights movement of minjung theology and relates the Korean historical tradition with Latin American liberation theology. It is Kim's firm belief that minjung theology "should refine the historical tradition of the Korean minjung movement with the chisel of a liberation theology so that it may suggest the direction along which the people's rights movement should go."³

Minjung theology starts by condemning traditional Constantinian Christianity as the religion of the ruling class. It presupposes the crying scream of the suffering minjung, takes the Exodus event of Old Testament and the crucifixion of New Testament as paradigmatic references, and applies socio-economic hermeneutics to today's Korean socio-political context. Due to Constantine's official recognition of Christendom, according to Nam Dong Suh, former

²Kwang Sun Suh, "Minjung and Theology in Korea: A Biographical Sketch of an Asia Theological Consultation," in Minjung Theology ed. Yong Bock Kim (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), p. 18.

³Cited in Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, p. 156.

professor of systematic theology at Yonsei University, Seoul, and a representative exponent of minjung theology, Christendom was advanced to the open-air kingly religion of the ruling power class, emerged from the position of the underground religion of the oppressed. Thus, the faith, as the resistant grievance of the oppressed, which had an apocalyptic revolutionary latent power, came to be absorbed into the Roman regime, and that deformed Christendom changed to an ideology of the ruling class.⁴ By condemning traditional Christendom and presupposing the grievance of the oppressed minjung of Korea, a theology of minjung came to be forged in Korea.

Due to its political character, minjung theology is a field theology which is concerned with its own Sitz im Leben. In the process of the modernization movement under the Park's regime since 1961 some huge political and social problems have developed, most notably in regard to the country's international dependence and the internal unbalanced distribution of wealth stemming from generally low wages received in contrast with inflated prices paid in the marketplace. This situation of dependence and poverty stimulated some Korean church leaders to formulate minjung theology in Korea. Therefore, minjung theology is principally concerned with the Korean minjung, who has long

⁴Nam Dong Suh, "Theology of Minjung," The Theological Thought 24 (Spring 1979):87.

been engaged in the struggle for democratization.⁵

An Offshoot of Modern Theological Stream

Minjung theology did not come about independent of other theologies. In fact, the establishment of Korean minjung theology was made possible through a process of synthesis concentration, and filtering of Western theologies such as the secular theology, theology of hope, liberation theology, process theology, and the theology of history.⁶ This Korean theology of minjung is an offshoot of the stream of Western theological thought.

The most important representatives of minjung theology are Nam Dong Suh, a systematic theologian, and Byung Mu Ahn, a New Testament theologian.⁷ It is significant to note that the theological thought of Suh was formed under the influences of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr in the 1950s, of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the early 1960s, of Harvey Cox, J. A. T. Robinson and J. Moltmann in the late 1960s, of Theilhard de Chardin in the early 1970s, and of Kenzo Tagawa⁸

⁵Yong Bock Kim, "Theological Tasks of Korean Church in 80s," The Theological Thought 28 (Spring 1980):15.

⁶Kyoung Jae Kim, "Theological Problems of Korean Church in Tradition," The Theological Thought 28 (Spring 1980):19.

⁷Ahn is editor of The Theological Thought, the quarterly of the Korea Theological Study Institute.

⁸Kenzo Tagawa was formerly professor of New Testament, Tokyo University, widely known for the study of Marxism.

and Sasagu Arai,⁹ Japanese Theologians, and some Latin American liberation theologians from 1975 on.¹⁰ Similarly, the minjung theology of Ahn was directly influenced by Tagawa and Gerd Theissen, through whom he gained a sociological perspective of Early Christianity. In his Sociological interpretation of the Bible (1983), Ahn introduced four articles of Theissen: "Wanderradikalismus: Literatursoziologische Aspekte der Ueberlieferung von Worten Jesu in Urchristentum"(1972); "Die Starken und Schwachen in Korinth: Sociologische Analyse eines theologischen Streites" (1975), "Synoptische Wundergeschichten im Lichte unseres Sprachverstandnisses" (1976), and "A Sociological Study of the Background of Matthew's Gospel" (1979).

On the other hand, Missio Dei¹¹ theology has also been influential in the formation of minjung theology. Under the influence of Missio Dei, minjung theology appeared as a "doing theology (haeng-dong shin-hak)" which is concerned with social participation for the purpose of social justice.¹² In short, Korean minjung theology came to be formed under the influence of recent theologies in the

⁹Sasagu Arai is the author of Jesus and His Age, which was translated into Korean by Nam Dong Suh.

¹⁰Young Jae Kim, "Theology of Nam Dong Suh," The Theological Thought (Autumn 1984):487-493.

¹¹"Missio Dei" is the Latin term for "The Mission of God."

¹²Yong Bock Kim, "Theological Tasks of Korean Church in '80s," The Theological Thought (Spring 1980):12-13.

Latin America, and Japan, sociological hermeneutics and "the Western world, Missio Dei" theology of the World Council of Churches.

The Rise of Minjung Theology

The Recent History of Korea and Minjung Theology

In order to understand minjung theology better, it is necessary to sketch recent Korean history. Following World War II, Korea was liberated politically from Japanese colonial bondage (1910-1945), and Syngman Rhee established a democratic government and took the presidency for twelve years, from 1948 through 1960. His government was corrupt and was subsequently overthrown by the Students' Revolution of April 19, 1960, which planted the democratic spirit into Korean political soil. Myun Chang became the prime minister of the new government, but his cabinet was too weak to realize the dreams of democracy. On May 16, 1961, there was a military coup d'eta, by which General Chung Hee Park became president. His military regime came to an end with his assassination on October 26, 1979.

The characteristics of Park's military regime were the political authoritarianism of a long-term presidency and the economic modernization movement. Under his political authoritarianism the democratic spirit which was stimulated by the Students' Revolution of April 19, 1960 was severely suppressed. At the same time, the economic modernization

movement widened the gap between the rich capitalists and the poor laborers. Strategically, Park's regime maintained the low-price wages policy in order to bolster and expedite the development and growth of national economy, which was possible by way of giving high priority to export trade.

The critical situation of Park's long-term regime is illustrated by Tae Il Jun's self-incinerated death of November 13, 1970, and declarations issued by Christians and professors in 1973 which protested against the Yu-shin Constitution that was made in October 1973 to further the long-term presidency of Park.

The Literary Work of Poet Chi Ha Kim

Korean minjung theology, which was, for the first time, advocated by Nam Dong Suh, is based upon the literary work of the poet Chi Ha Kim.¹³ According to Suh, the task of minjung theology is to witness and support the Christian minjung tradition and the Korean minjung tradition being confluenced in the activity of the "Missio Dei" of today's Korean Church.¹⁴ This confluence was initiated by the literary work of Chi Ha Kim, whose early poems and writings are collected in his Kim Chi Ha Collection (1975).

¹³Chi Ha Kim was born at Mokpo, Chonnam, in 1941. He graduated from Seoul National University, began his literary work in 1969, and was awarded "Lotus" of Asia-African Writers' Association in 1975, and "The Great Poet" by Poetry International in 1981.

¹⁴Nam Dong Suh, Minjung Shinhak-eui Tamgu (A Study of Minjung Theology) (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), p. 78.

The poet Kim's thought is summarized in his "Conscience Declaration" written in prison in May 1975. In his "Conscience Declaration," he identified himself as one of the minjung, whose fight is for the promised Canaan of justice and freedom that minjung may take their own key of fortune into their own hands.¹⁵ His dream of a revolutionary religion is sketched in his work, "Chang Il-Dam"¹⁶ whose main theme entails "the unification of God and revolution," which is a combination of Jesus and Karl Marx. Correspondingly, the poet Kim gleaned from Marx, the idea that social oppression is an obstacle to the salvation of humanity, and from Jesus, the humanism which advocates the dignity of humanity.¹⁷

The Theological Activity of
Professor Nam Dong Suh

With the introduction of political theology and Latin American liberation theology into Korea, the Yu-shin Constitution, which was passed in October 1972 with a view to Park's long-term presidency, led some Korean radical churches to come into conflict with Park's military regime.

¹⁵ Chi Ha Kim, Kim Chi Ha Collection (Tokyo: Hanyang-Sa, 1975), p. 9.

¹⁶ "Chang Il-Dam" is an important poetic memo written in prison which prompted Nam Dong Suh to consider and advocate a Korean theology of minjung on the basis of Korean historical traditions and folktales.

¹⁷ Chi Ha Kim, Collection, p. 14.

In the midst of this conflict, Nam Dong Suh¹⁸ came to consider "minjung" as his theological theme in 1974.

The term minjung was theologically suggested in The Gospel and Church (August 1974), a monthly journal of Japanese churches, which estimated highly "The Korean Christian Declaration of 1973"¹⁹ (May 1973), saying that the Korean church "is the new image of the Third World church, which stands on the side of and in the midst of minjung, and fights for the liberation in their stead."²⁰

Suh began his literary work advocating "church for and of minjung," by contributing his article, "Jesus, Church History, and Korean Church" to Gidokgyo Sasang (Christian Thought), a monthly magazine of the Korean church in February 1975. But he came to use, for the first time, the term "minjung theology" in his article, "Theology of Minjung," in which he responded to Hyung Hyo Kim's criticism of

¹⁸Nam Dong Suh, born at Shin-an, near Mokpo, in 1918 and died in 1984, studied theology in Japan and Toronto and was professor at Hankuk Theological Seminary and Divinity School of Yonsei University. He wrote two books, A Study of Minjung Theology (1983), and Theology at a Turning Point (1982).

¹⁹The Korean Christian Declaration reads: "We believe that God is the one who necessarily protects with His justice the oppressed, poor, and weak from the evil forces and judges those forces in history. We believe that Jesus the Messiah proclaimed that the unjust powers should be destroyed and the kingdom of Messiah come, and that His messianic kingdom should be the heaven of the poor, oppressed, and despised."

²⁰Nam Dong Suh, "Jesus, Church History, and Korean Church," Gidokgyo Sasang (Christian Thought) (February 1975):63.

his first article.

Subsequent to Suh's first article, "The Captives' Declaration for the Restoration of Democracy" (February 21, 1975),²¹ Byung Mu Ahn's speech, "Nation, Minjung, and Church" (March 1, 1975),²² and "The Declaration of the Catholic National Clergy for the Realization of Justice" (March 10, 1975)²³ utilized the term "minjung" as their common and dominant theme. From this time on, "church for minjung" and "minjung theology" became popular terms among the liberal churches in Korea.

Suh's literary work came to be supported by Byung Mu Ahn, editor of the Korea Theological Study Institute, who published a special edition on minjung in the spring of 1979. In this special edition Suh structured a theology of minjung. And on the basis of this special edition, a theological consultation on minjung was held in Seoul from October 22 to 24, 1979,²⁴ sponsored by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), which published Minjung Theology (Singapore,

²¹ It declared: "We stand here with solemnity, relying upon the capacity of minjung who have fought against dictatorial government which rejects the desperate historical demand of minjung."

²² He spoke: "Minjung, who consist of the nation, have been suffering under the disguise of nationalism which Park's military government calls for."

²³ It declared: "A true democracy can be established by the democracy in which minjung take part as its subject."

²⁴ Two days later, on October 26, 1979, Chung Hee Park, president of that day, was assassinated by the chief of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency.

1981), an English translation. Subsequent to these two publications, Minjung-gwa Hankuk shinhak (Minjung and Korean Theology) was published by the Korea Theological Study Institute (Seoul, 1982). This is an enlarged edition of Minjung Theology of CCA, and consists of twenty articles contributed by fourteen writers. Through these three publications, minjung theology came to be widely known.

Up to the present, there are over twenty minjung theologians in Korea, but the minjung theological standard is based upon Nam Dong Suh and Byung Mu Ahn. It can be maintained, therefore, that there is only one basic minjung theology held by its adherents, which differs only slightly on minor details.

Methodology of Assessment of Minjung Theology

Statement of Problem

After more than one hundred years of Protestant mission work, Korea has been one of the successful mission fields in modern Christian history, with Christians making up approximately twenty percent of the total population of forty-one million. This rapid growth of the Korean church is largely due to the powerful proclamation of the Christian gospel, principally based upon the fundamental doctrines of the Reformation, such as justification by the grace of God through faith alone, the authority of the Scriptures, and the wrath of God punishing all kinds of sins.

But minjung theology, which focuses on the human rights of minjung and social justice, regards the fundamental doctrine of the Reformation as the ideology of the ruling class,²⁵ and disregards such doctrines as sola scriptura, sola gratia, and sola fide. According to minjung theology, where there is the preaching of the gospel (repentance of sins and forgiveness by God's grace through faith alone), there are exploitation, alienation, and oppression forced.²⁶

Minjung theology as a political theology emphasizes praxis, a socio-political participation in changing the world, rather than preaching and explaining the gospel of faith in Christ. It is more concerned about political events than God's salvation event which is accomplished in Christ. With minjung theology, a revolutionist Jesus replaces the Savior Christ. Thereby, the true significance of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is disregarded by minjung theology, which regards the challenge to change the environmental situation as the task of theology.²⁷

This motive of minjung theology has led to a serious identity-crisis for Christianity. Christianity is replaced

²⁵Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 43-44, 152.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 118, 150-152.

²⁷Bong Rang Park, "Today's Theological Trend," Christian Thought 25, (April 1981):70.

by the man-centered humanism via minjung theology;²⁸ the Scriptural text is replaced by the situational context; the redemptive spiritual liberation is replaced by the politico-economic liberation. The material contents of the Christian gospel are eliminated.

Purpose of the Study

It is imperative for the church of Christ Jesus to teach and preach all the contents of the gospel systematically and biblically (Matt. 28:20). Therefore, if the church is emptied of the material contents of the gospel, it cannot stand at all.

This thesis attempts to show how seriously minjung theology deviates from the true teachings of the Scriptures. And, at the same time, this thesis contrasts the teachings of minjung theology with the Scriptural meanings of the gospel, with the goal that we should be sure of the fact that the kingdom of God can be planted only by the powerful preaching of the gospel.

This thesis also attempts to verify whether minjung theology is really even a Korean theology or not. Minjung theologians insist on using the Korean term "minjung" in order to identify minjung theology as a Korean theology. They make reference to such as the economico-political

²⁸ See, Nam Dong Suh, pp. 171, 188-190; The Theological Thought (Spring 1979):125.

situation of recent Korea, the Donghak Revolt,²⁹ "han,"³⁰ Korean folktales,³¹ and the mask dance.³² The question becomes, "Do these references really identify minjung theology as Korean theology?"

On the other hand, minjung theology disregards the vertical dimension of the gospel, and over-emphasizes the horizontal dimension. In this connection, this thesis attempts to prove that minjung theology is defective in giving the theological motivation for its goal, namely, the new society of brotherly love.

Limitation and the Scope of the Study

In spite of many primary sources written in the Korean language by minjung theologians and many secondary sources contributed by Korean conservative theologians, because of its relatively short life span, minjung theology is still underdeveloped. Consequently, the study of this thesis is limited in its depth and scope.

²⁹Donghak (Eastern Learning) began in 1860s as a religious movement by Jai Woo Choi and gave political motivation for the peasant revolts.

³⁰"Han" is a "just indignation yearning for justice to be done." It is a deep feeling that arises out of the unjust experience of oppression caused by mischief.

³¹Folktale is an orally transmitted tale among the lower classes, usually criticizing the ruling classes.

³²Mask dance is a sort of play of the lower classes, composed of not only of dance but also instrumental music, songs, and dialogue full of humor, satire, and vulgar expressions, ridiculing the oppressors.

Furthermore, Nam Dong Suh and Byung Mu Ahn, the two main exponents of minjung theology, are regarded as the standard for minjung theology and are so influential among their fellow theologians that other writers of minjung theology simply follow in their train. In this respect, the direction of minjung theology depends heavily upon Suh and Ahn. Consequently, this thesis draws largely on these two exponents. At the same time, a thorough critical study on the whole system of minjung theology has not yet been done by the conservative theologians. In consideration of this, this thesis deals with minjung theology on the whole, including the Scriptures, minjung, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin, salvation, the church and the Sacraments. Because of its magnitude, this thesis cannot hope to analyze and criticize each and every topic at full length. And because minjung theology emerged under the influence of modern theological thought, this thesis, first of all, deals with its influence upon minjung theology in chapter two.

Chapter three touches on sociological hermeneutics and its introduction to Korea. Fundamentally, what distinguishes the theology of minjung from the traditional theology is its hermeneutical method. In connection with hermeneutics, how minjung theology understands the Holy Scriptures is the topic of chapter four.

Chapter five deals with minjung, the most important theme on which minjung theology is founded. Minjung theology

introduces Biblical references for minjung such as am ha-arez (the people of the land), habiru (the Hebrews), ptochoi (the poor), and ochlos (the crowd). This chapter assesses the socio-political concept of minjung in terms of its use of the Scriptures.

Chapters six through eight discuss minjung theology's understanding of God, Christ Jesus, and the Spirit. Because the doctrine of the Trinity is theology proper and a watershed of theology, this topic is dealt with at great length. Chapter nine deals with the church and the Sacraments, emphasizing the distinction between the Christian church and the secular world which minjung theology disregards. In Chapter ten sin and salvation are discussed, the focus here is on idolatry, an individual's sins, and the vicarious atonement, which are ignored by minjung theology. In the final chapter, summary assessments are given, determining the positive contributions of minjung theology and the negative points that need to be dealt with.

This thesis is written from the viewpoint of a Korean evangelical who desires to be faithful to the Scriptures with a special sensitivity to the absolute objective authority of God's written Word and its inspired writers. In this thesis, therefore, minjung theology is assessed systematically and biblically, based upon and faithful to the teachings of the Bible. In particular, "systematically" means that this thesis investigates whether minjung theology

draws upon the entirety of the Bible, and "biblically" means that this thesis investigates whether minjung theology is faithful to the true meaning of the Scriptural text in terms of a grammatical-historical hermeneutics which recognizes the absolute authority of the Bible.³³

³³See, Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 25.

CHAPTER II

INFLUENCE OF MODERN THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT UPON

MINJUNG THEOLOGY

Some Pertinent Issues at the Second Vatican Council

Under the direct influence of the Second Vatican Council liberation theology emerged as a theological and pastoral movement in Latin American and then developed as a new theological thought in the Third World.¹ In Korea, on the basis of Pope John XXIII's social encyclical, Mater et Magistra (1961), the Catholic Farmers' Association was organized, and the Korea Catholic Church's Committee for Justice and Peace publicly announced that Latin American liberation theology is a theology of truth.²

The first pontifical social document which deals with the problems of the working class is the encyclical Rerum Novarum of Pope Leo XIII written in 1891 in the face of the onslaught of socialist ideas. But the arrival of Pope John XXIII to his papal throne in 1958 signified the begin-

¹Korea Catholic Church Central Council News No. 24 (September 25, 1984); See, Emilio A. Nunez C., Liberation Theology (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 84.

²"For the Purposes of the Right Recognition of Church Activity," a leaflet, produced by the Korea Catholic Church's Committee for Justice and Peace (August 20, 1982).

ning of a new era for the Roman Catholic Church. On the basis of his famous encyclicals Mater et Magistra and Pacem in Terris, the Second Vatican Council made documents which emphaasized the social involvement of Christian church for the welfare of the oppressed peoples;

Great numbers of people are acutely conscious of being deprived of the world's goods through injustice and unfair distribution and are vehemently demanding their share of them.³

The church desires nothing more ardently than develop itself untrammelled in the service of all men under any regime which recognizes the basic rights of the person and the family, and the needs of the common good.⁴

"The Korean Christian Declaration of 1973" (May 1973) and "The Declaration of Human Rights in Korea" (November 1973), which insist on the protection of the oppressed with the divine justice, are the most significant reflections of the social justice of the Second Vatican Council. As Latin American liberation theologians have taken refuge in Vatican II in order to launch their revolutionary ideas into the theological arena,⁵ so minjung theologians were stimulated by it to fight for the human rights of the oppressed.

At the same time, the theological thoughts of two

³"Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," Documents of Vatican II, ed., by Austin P. Flannery (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), p. 909.

⁴Ibid., p. 943.

⁵Emilio A. Nunez C, Liberation Theology, trans. Paul E. Sywulka (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 90.

Roman Catholic theologians, Karl Rahner and Hans Küng have had a great influence on Korean minjung theology. Nam Dong Suh hears Rahner say that God became our neighbor; God was incarnated as our neighbor.⁶ This theological thought is called the sacrament of the brothers, which is seen in the Confession of 1967 made by the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., which reads, "it (the church) sees the face of Christ in the faces of men in every kind of need."⁷ The historical secular Christ presents Himself in Christian service to others.⁸

Rahner's "anonymous Christians" thereby clued minjung theology on how Christians might identify with the Korean minjung who has never heard or known the Christian faith and gospel.⁹

Today Christianity meets the man in non-Christian religions "as someone who can and must already be regarded in this or that respect as an anonymous Christian."¹⁰ Non-believers of Christianity should be conceived by the Christians as Christians of an anonymous kind.

⁶Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point(Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1976), p. 76.

⁷"The Confession of 1967," The Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., second edition, 1970, 9, 32.

⁸Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 78.

⁹Byung Mu Ahn, "Nation, Minjung, and Church," Christian Thought (April 1975): 79

¹⁰Emilio A. Nunez C., Liberation Theology, p. 181.

Hans Küng is known for his ecumenical openness to universalism. He opposes a narrow-minded, conceited, exclusive particularism which condemns the other religions in toto. Christianity should not be supposed to possess the truth; instead it should search for it in dialogue with non-Christian religions.¹¹ In this same vein, minjung theology tries to integrate the Christian faith with the Korean minjung religions.¹²

Küng is firmly convinced that Christianity and humanism are not opposites as long as these two merge in the name of Christ. The humanization of man should be the precondition of true service of God.¹³ Service of God never excuses from service of man.¹⁴

The Concept "Missio Dei"

The third general assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was held in 1961 at New Delhi, and the International Missionary Council was integrated with the WCC. The theme of the New Delhi Assembly was "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World," which dealt with the social involvement of

¹¹Ibid., p. 181.

¹²Nam Dong Suh, "Confluence of Two Stories," in Minjung and Korean Theology (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1982), p. 271.

¹³Hans Küng, On Being a Christian, trans, Edward Quinn (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1976), p. 31.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 253; See, John Kiwiet, Hans Küng (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), p. 114.

Christian church. This New Delhi Assembly gave an impetus to the social involvement of Christian churches in Korea.¹⁵

There are three important documents which gave a clear concept of Missio Dei. First the Uppsala Assembly of the WCC (1968), under the theological influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and secular theology,¹⁶ encouraged the church to engage in revolutionary activity for the betterment of human society and to seek its unity through solidarity with these struggling for social equality (Uppsala, sec. II).¹⁷

Second, "Salvation and Social Justice," the report of Section II of the Bangkok Conference of the WCC (1973), defines the Mission of God as follows:

As evil works both in personal life and in exploitative social structures which humiliate humankind, so God's justice manifests itself both in the justification of the sinner and in social and political justice. . . . Therefore, we see the struggles for economic justice, political freedom and cultural renewal as elements in the total liberation of the world through the mission of God. . . . This comprehensive notion of salvation demands of the whole of the people of God a matching comprehensive approach to their participation in salvation.¹⁸

Thus the report says, "Without the salvation of the churches from their captivity in the interests of dominating classes, races and nations, there can be no saving church.

¹⁵Chai Yong Choo, "A Brief Sketch of Korean Christian History," in Minjung and Korean Theology, pp. 233-234.

¹⁶See, pp. 29-33.

¹⁷Harold E. Fey, ed., The Ecumenical Advance (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), p. 421.

¹⁸International Review of Missions 62 (1973):199.

Without liberation of the churches and Christians from their complicity with structural injustice and violence, there can be no liberating church for mankind."¹⁹

The mission of God of the Bangkok Conference sees salvation in four dimensions; economic justice against exploitation, human dignity against political oppression, solidarity against alienation, and hope against despair.²⁰

Third, "The Confession of 1967," made by the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., emphasized that in Jesus Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself,²¹ and that Jesus' suffering made the church sensitive to all the sufferings of mankind so that it could see the face of Christ in the faces of men in every kind of need.²² It also says that the fact that Jesus Christ reconciled man to God makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of opulence is an intolerable violation of God's good creation. Because Jesus was in solidarity with the needy and exploited by identifying Himself with them, the cause of the world's poor is the cause of His disciples. . . . A church which is unconcerned with poverty, or avoids responsibility in economic affairs, or is partial to one social class only,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 200.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "The Confession of 1967," The Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., 9.07.

²² Ibid., 9.32.

or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes "a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God."²³

As the Latin American expression "theology of liberation" refers to a special concern for the poor and the victims of oppression, which in turn begets a commitment to justice,²⁴ so the minjung theology of Korea understands Missio Dei as the minjung liberation movement, in terms of the social dimension of the gospel, namely, social involvement.²⁵ And thus minjung theologians affirm that God is Lord of the history of the Israelite nation as well as Lord of the history of the world; world history is exactly a representation of God's wonderful providence; the goal of history is a world in which each and all men can live humanly without any oppression and exploitation; on the other hand, the church is a small group of the powerless people. In short, Missio Dei is understood as God's work of humanization for the oppressed people.²⁶

²³ Ibid., 9.46.

²⁴ "Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberations," National Catholic Reporter, September 21, 1984, p. 11.

²⁵ Nam Dong Suh, "Jesus, Church History, Korean Church," in A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), p. 19.

²⁶ Young Hak Hyun, "God's Creation of History," in Korean History and Christendom ed. Christian Thought Editorial Staff (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1983), pp. 328-333; See, Soon Kyung Park, "Theology of Mission," Ibid., pp. 337-361; Jang Sik Lee, "Review of the concept of

But the Scriptural definition of mission is different from that of these documents. Mission is to be seen as an activity of God, ratified in the sending of His Son and activated through His Spirit (John 3:16; Acts 1:8).²⁷ Because redemption in Christ is universal and because God intends His church for all men, this church has the duty and right to preach the gospel in all historical and cultural situations in order to summon men to the free obedience of faith (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 1:5). This mission necessarily alters social relations but it has no aims which are directly social or political. It is through Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-23) that the new creation and the new age is really brought into being.

Modern Theological Thoughts

Existential Theology

In the late 1950s, existential theology²⁸ was intro-

Missio Dei," Ibid., pp. 362-373; Sun Whan Byun, "Today's Mission and Christian Freedom," Ibid., pp. 374-384; Seung Hyuk Cho, "Freedom of Missio Dei and the Limit of Korean Labor Law." Ibid., pp. 403-413.

²⁷ Georg F. Vicedom, Missio Dei (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958), pp. 13-16.

²⁸ Existential theology deals with the actual conditions of human existence. According to this theology, religion is not a matter of certain beliefs or practices, and a man is religious at the point where he is "ultimately concerned." His ultimate concern is that which determines his being or non-being. The ultimate is being itself, or what has traditionally been called God. Basic to the failure of this theology is its rejection of the Bible as the revealed Word of God applicable to this age. It has substituted man's word for God's Word.

duced to Korea. Among the existential theologians, Paul Tillich's theological thought of God and history had an especially great influence upon minjung theology. Through Tillich's theology of history, Nam Dong Suh came to know "the third dispensation of the Holy Spirit" of Joachim of Fiore (1145-1202), a Cistercian abbot, and adopt the view of hylozoic pantheism.²⁹

Tillich induced the idea of God as the ultimate ground of existence, broke through the bourgeois self-sufficiency, abandoned the traditional view of God and the heteronomous faith, and advocated religious socialism.³⁰

A theme of Tillich's philosophy is "unconsciousness."³¹ True freedom is the realization of one's own destiny, namely, of one's own innate qualities; nature must be realized in personality, and personality must participate in nature. True reality must be grasped here and now; historical reality, namely, the personal action of volitional choice is the only unique reality. God is being itself (ipsum esse). God is knowable in Himself. God is not a being, but the ground of being, the power of being, and being itself. God does not exist, but he is the superpersonal

²⁹ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 8.

³⁰ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1: 228, 235, 282.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 179, 261, 279.

being.³² He is the name for that which concerns man ultimately.³³ This God can be known by the relationship with our neighbors and so-called secular things. The knowledge of God consists in the daily life of drinking and eating, the doing of justice, and the plea for the poor and oppressed.³⁴

Secular Theology³⁵

The root of secular theology as understood today lies in Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer opened the way for a theology that would concern itself with contemporary political realities. He concentrated his theological reflection on the question of how to reinterpret the Gospel for the modern adult and proposed a secular religionless interpretation of the Scriptures.

³²Ibid., pp. 183-186, 243; See, Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, pp. 384-388.

³³Ibid., p. 211: See, Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 56.

³⁴Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, pp. 57, 59; See, Paul Tillich, pp. 214, 240: the meaning of "God" is understood in terms of man's relation to the ultimate concern.

³⁵Secular theology represents a radical questioning of the function of the churches and of the role of the minister in social life today. It emphasizes the need for the participation of Christians in the common life of society. According to this theology, Christians must stop being churchy and pietistic; they must actively concern themselves with the affairs of secular life. This theology deplores the many ways in which the church has rationalized its failure to confront social and political evils. It demands that the distinction between the sacred and the secular be erased. Its basic fault lies in its neglect of the reality of sin in modern man's world and in its man-centered approach to the Bible.

In his article "The Communication of the Gospel and its Secular Interpretation," Nam Dong Suh introduced Bonhoeffer to Korea.³⁶ Bonhoeffer named the post-Christian era the "post-Constantine era," which indicates that he understood the Christendom of the post-Constantine era as the religion of the ruling class.³⁷ The post-Constantine concepts of Jesus as the Lamb of God, Redeemer, Son of God, true God and true man, and the man like God are said to be absolutely meaningless to the modern man. The word "God" is dead to modern man. The concept of the supernatural, transcendent God is supposed to belong to the basic criteria of metaphysical thought, which is strange to the modern man, who does not recognize the concepts of supernaturalism and transcendentalism and discards the distinction of the secular and the sacred.³⁸

According to Bonhoeffer, because modern man has come of age, he does not need God as a working hypothesis. Because the age of the autonomy of reason has come, before God and with Him man lives without God.³⁹ For Bonhoeffer, transcendentalism does not consist in that which exists

³⁶Nam Dong Suh, "The Communication of the Gospel and its Secular Interpretation," in Theology at a Turning Point, pp. 218-227.

³⁷Ibid., p. 219.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 220-221.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 222-223. See, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1972), p. 360.

beyond our sight and power but in our neighbor who is within reach; God is transcendent in the midst of our secular life.⁴⁰

Suh appreciates Bonhoeffer and affirms that Christian faith is a service activity for one's neighbor,⁴¹ and the salvation by man himself.⁴² Man can be saved by himself through charity to his neighbors. For Bonhoeffer, Jesus is there only for others; His being there for others is the experience of transcendence; faith is participation in this being of Jesus; our relation to God is a new life in existence for others.⁴³

Another reason Bonhoeffer's theology has been very influential among Korean Christians since 1965, is that Bonhoeffer himself became an example or illustration for minjung liberation in the anti-despotism struggle.⁴⁴

Influenced by Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity," there came up such secular theologians as Thomas J. J. Altizer, William Hamilton, Harvey Cox, and Paul van Buren, who declared the objectified God to be dead and affirmed

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.226; Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, p.381.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 227.

⁴² The Theological Thought (Spring 1979):116.

⁴³ Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 381.

⁴⁴ Ha Eun Jung, "Minjung of Korean-Japanese Theological Field in 1970s" The Theological Thought 25 (June 1979): 184; According to Jung, minjung liberation is a sort of political resistant movement, and minjung denotes political resistants.

that to be a Christian is to be a man.⁴⁵ For them, man's place is to stand with God in the midst of the world.

Hamilton rejects any dualistic view of the world.⁴⁶ He, like Bonhoeffer, emphasizes the life for others. "Reserve means a willingness to leave the other person alone, to let him be himself, apart from us. . . . Respect means giving the other a full right to be apart from us, apart from society, alone."⁴⁷ Defining "goodness" he states, "Such goodness might well involve: gentleness, sensitivity to the needs and claims of others; willingness to be counted with the underdog in our society; opposition to all coercion, pompousness, injustice, restriction of legitimate freedom. . . ." ⁴⁸

Paul van Buren, the writer of The Secular Meaning of the Gospel,⁴⁹ maintained that it has become impossible to believe in any reality apart from that which is open to the empirical investigation of the science. He understands the "secular" as excluding any kind of transcendent reality.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ William Hamilton, The New Essence of Christianity (New York: Association Press, 1966), p. 42.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 124-125.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 132; the word "underdog" is similar to "minjung."

⁴⁹ Paul M. van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1963).

⁵⁰ John Macquarrie, God and Secularity (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), p. 21.

And Harvey Cox, the writer of The Secular City,⁵¹ understands "God" as being at work in secular history. We are to look for God and cooperate with Him in secular history, namely, in the social and political ferments of our own time.⁵²

Process Theology

Process theology⁵³ seeks the salvation of all humanity. It acknowledges the global horizon of its ultimate concern. The understanding of human beings as indissolubly social is basic to process thought; in that regard Teilhard de Chardin writes that the eminently progressive group of Homo sapiens was born in an atmosphere of socialization.⁵⁴ Since process theology sees human beings as part of a larger community which includes all creatures, the indivisible salvation of the whole world cannot be limited to humanity.⁵⁵

⁵¹Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1965).

⁵²John Macquarrie, God and Secularity, p. 25.

⁵³Process theology is the name given to the theological reconception which employs the philosophical conceptuality enunciated in the metaphysics of Alfred N. Whitehead and Charles Heartshorne, who insisted that God is not only supreme cause of all things but also supreme effect; that God includes both a primordial aspect and a consequent aspect. The representative of process theology is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

⁵⁴Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Man's Place in Nature, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), p. 79.

⁵⁵John B. Cobb, Jr., Process Theology as Political Theology (Philadelphia; The Westminster Press, 1980), p. 16.

According to Theilhard, man is destined to play at the center of economic or evolutionary processes of development. In Theilhard is crystallized much of that hope in man which excited the dreams and struggles of Marx. One of the core principles shared by Marxism and Theilhard's evolutionism is that to be human means to change his own nature, to become someone he is not. Hence, evolutionism constitutes a way toward human transformation.⁵⁶ Marx had a rudimentary knowledge of the evolution of man. He wrote, "the whole of history is a preparation for man. . . . History itself is a real part of natural history, of the development of nature into man."⁵⁷

Theilhard's thoughts are subsumed: man is a participant in evolution and a creature related to God.⁵⁸ Man is the self-consciousness of evolution, the axis and tip of evolution;⁵⁹ and it is "in the science of evolution (so that evolution may show itself capable of functioning in a hominized milieu), that the problem of God come in -- the Prime Mover, Gatherer and Consolidator, ahead of us, of evolu-

⁵⁶ Richard Lischer, Marx and Theilhard (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁷ "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," trans. T. B. Bottomore, in Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (New York: Ungar, 1961), p. 137. cited in Lischer, Marx and Theilhard, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Lischer, Marx and Theilhard, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 327.

tion."⁶⁰

Influenced by Theilhard de Chardin, Nam Dong Suh's concept of God is sort of pan-en-theism:⁶¹ all events occur "in" God who is operative as chief agency in them all. Suh also came to assume that the whole of nature (or universe) would evolve toward hominization. God works through history; and the progress of history itself is God.⁶² Man is a process of the self-progress of the universe (God).⁶³ Suh learned this holistic humanism from Theilhard de Chardin, who emphasized ultrahumanity, the humankind as a society.⁶⁴

Theology of History

Three theologians of history such as Friedrich Gogarten, Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg are known to Korean minjung theologians.⁶⁵ According to the theology of history,⁶⁶ revelation is totally historical, and history

⁶⁰Pierre Theilhard de Chardin, Man's Place in Nature, p. 121.

⁶¹Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p.327.

⁶²Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Han-gil-sa, 1983), p. 171; The Theological Thought 24 (Spring 1979):123.

⁶³The Theological Thought 24 (Spring 1979): 116

⁶⁴Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 327.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 390-425.

⁶⁶Theology of history, advocated by W. Pannenberg, insists that there is only indirect revelation through historical acts. This history in which revelation takes place is not a special redemptive revelation known only through faith.

is supposed to be a way of God's existence; in other words, history is divine revelation.⁶⁷ Therefore, this theology of history does not know any concept of the transcendent.⁶⁸

Gogarten's view of Christian faith calls for radical demythologizing and existential interpretation, which replaces the static concepts of traditional metaphysics with historical-existential concepts. He understood secularization as history-making (Yuk-sa-wha) of human existence.⁶⁹ John Macquarrie pointedly summarizes Gogarten's concept of secularization as follows:

The Pauline notions of inheritance and sonship furnish a powerful inspiration to Gogarten. Once we were children, "under guardians and trustees" but now we "receive adoption as sons." As responsible sons who have now come of age, we have, so to speak, been given the key of the house. We are delivered from tutelage, and stand now in an adult relationship to the Father. This means that we have received the world for our use, and are no longer enslaved to its "elemental spirits" (see, Gal. 4:1-7).⁷⁰

The humanism of secular theology became the seedbed in which the theology of hope of Jürgen Moltmann became convinced of the necessity of "doing theology" in the context of Georg Wilhelm Hegel's understanding of the death of God experienced in "the openness of history and the

⁶⁷Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 390; Pannenberg says that only within the framework (or, horizon) of the history God has revealed Himself. See, W. Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology vol. I (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), pp. 15, 19, 98.

⁶⁸Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 391.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 397.

⁷⁰John Macquarrie, God and Secularity, p. 37.

totality of experience."⁷¹ Philosophically, the theology of hope found its immediate origin in the ideas of Ernst Bloch, who emigrated in 1961 from the German Democratic to the German Federal Republic where he joined the faculty of the University of Tübingen. Bloch's philosophy of the "not yet" can be traced back through Karl Marx to Hegel.

Nearby ten Korean translations of Moltmann's works⁷² and his visit to Korea (March 1975) indicate how influential he is to minjung theology. During his visit he delivered two major speeches, which were contributed to Gidokyo Sasang (Christian Thought, April 1975: 105-135). In his speech, "Evangelism and Liberation," Moltmann says that a cry for liberty is a common hope of humankind as well as nature.⁷³ The feast of freedom promised by the Liberator Jesus (Luke 4:17-21) belongs to the future, not to the present. This feast is prepared only for the poor, namely, the ones who have suffered from violence and injustice.⁷⁴ In connection with this feast, Jesus is the gate to the neighbor. To

⁷¹ Kenneth Hamilton, "Liberation Theology: An Overview," in Evangelicals & Liberation, ed. Carl E. Armerding (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 2-4.

⁷² Perspective der Theologie (1969), Theologie der Hoffnung (1973), Herrschaft Christi und Soziale Wirklichkeit nach Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1969), Politische Theologie (1974), Die Sprache der Befreiung (1974), Das Experiment Hoffnung und Politik (1974), Kirche in der Kraft des Geistes (1984), Der Gekreuzigte Gott (1979).

⁷³ Jürgen Moltmann, "Evangelism and Liberation," Christian Thought (April, 1975):106.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 107, 111.

believe is to open oneself to God's future and to do it right now, the day of Jesus. This means that to believe is to have a new hope. This hope can be achieved by "being-for-others" plus "being-with-others."⁷⁵

In his other speech, "The Hope in the Midst of the Struggle of Minjung," Moltmann defines minjung as the uneducated ochlos who cannot afford to learn nor to observe the law. Minjung is the term contrasted with the ruler. This minjung is the people of no position, uneducated and poor.⁷⁶ Jesus became one of the minjung and identified Himself with them. Thereby He can call them, "my brethren." Jesus presents Himself through the minjung.⁷⁷

Consequently, Moltmann emphasizes that minjung are the subjects of the messianic kingdom, and that the hope in the midst of the struggle of minjung cannot appear until the minjung should become the subjects of their own history.⁷⁸ The feast of liberty, namely, the "eating and drinking" mission expects that the kingdom of God should be realized among the physically hungry and thirsty.⁷⁹

In comparison with Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg is

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 115-116.

⁷⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, "The Hope in the Midst of the Struggle of Minjung," Christian Thought (April 1975):122, 124-125.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 129.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 135.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 132.

little known to Korea. Nam Dong Suh wrote an article⁸⁰ on Pannenberg and young Han Kim introduced him in his von Barth bis Moltmann.⁸¹ In introducing Pannenberg, these two Koreans emphasized the concept of revelation as a universal history. The divine self-disclosure does not occur directly, but by way of the divine action done in history.⁸² For Pannenberg, practically speaking, God is identified with the process of history; God is history.⁸³ Exactly speaking, God reveals Himself through universal history, which consists of His active presence. But God is assumed to be an infinite power and reality, and the infinite reality becomes God through man's personal confrontation with the infinite power. Man's religious experience comes from man's being met by the infinite reality. The Transcendent God is replaced with God of the not-yet accomplished future.⁸⁴

Latin American Liberation Theology

Chronologically, Latin American liberation theology followed the theology of hope: the theology of hope,

⁸⁰ Nam Dong Suh, "Revelation as History," in Theology at a Turning Point, pp. 410-425.

⁸¹ Young Han Kim, von Barth bis Moltmann (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1982), pp. 246-328.

⁸² Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 411.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 423.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 418-423; W. Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology 2: (1971), pp. 241-249.

influenced by a "Young Marx," Ernst Bloch⁸⁵ followed the theology of the death of God and secular theology: and the death of God theology and secular theology followed Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The Christian Shinmun, a weekly Christian paper of Korea, would say that Korean minjung theology was born under stimuli of secular theology, the God-is-dead theology, the theology of hope, and liberation theology, all of which came into existence under the influence of Bonhoeffer.⁸⁶ This proposes that Bonhoeffer is the common source of both liberation theology and minjung theology.

Harvey Conn and Allan Killen refer to Bonhoeffer as a fundamental theological source of liberation theology. Gutierrez, a representative liberation theologian, can be taken as an example in this regard. Quoting Bonhoeffer he defines the meaning of liberation: "Freedom is . . . something he has for others Being free means being free for others, because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free."⁸⁷ Bonhoeffer's formulations challenged the Protestant ghetto mentality and its alleged church-world dualism. It was Bonhoeffer who aided in seeing the relationship between faith and ideology and the

⁸⁵The paths of the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch and the Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann crossed at the University of Tübingen in the 1960s.

⁸⁶"Theology of Minjung," Christian Shinmun (The Christian Press), July 11, 1981, p. 2.

⁸⁷Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, Temptation (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1959), p. 36.

demands of Christian discipleship.⁸⁸ In this respect, in order to understand the historical origin of liberation theology it is necessary to go back to Bonhoeffer.⁸⁹

There are other examples of Bonhoeffer's influence. Bonhoeffer's rejection of the absoluteness of the truth such as the Ten Commandments can be seen in Jose Miguez Bonino's denial of the existence of any form of eternal truth; truth can only be known through action.⁹⁰ Truth, for Miguez Bonino, is sparked by social action; man is to learn truth by becoming involved in the problems of poverty and oppression.⁹¹ Bonhoeffer's idea of the changed world and corporate salvation in a kingdom of God upon this earth comes out very clearly in Gustavo Gutierrez's idea of the qualitative aspect of salvation.⁹² Bonhoeffer's "religiousless Christianity," which emphasizes that man suffers in his identification with the secular world as Christ suffered, can be viewed as parallel with liberation theology's identi-

⁸⁸Harvey M. Conn, "Theologies of Liberation: An Overview," in Tensions in Contemporary Theology, ed. S. N. Gundry and A. F. Johnson (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), p. 350.

⁸⁹R. Allan Killen, The Theology of the Third World (Jackson, MS: Reformed Theological Seminary, 1977), pp. 16-18.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Jose Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), p. 72.

⁹²Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (New York: Orbis books 1973), pp. 151-152.

fication with the poor.⁹³

Latin American liberation theology starts from a situation of economic dependence and social injustice. In other words, this theology is forged in a social context of extreme poverty in which millions of Latin Americans live. This theology has made use of Marxist tools of socio-economic analysis for the description and transformation of Latin American society and is concerned with the struggle to free those who are oppressed under unjust economic structures. As a result, what is needed is not development or evolution, but rather revolution, the radical change of social structures and the establishment of socialism.⁹⁴

Latin American Christian church must take the social responsibility toward rapid social and cultural changes for the poor of the Third World. The church must participate in the revolutionary process, namely, the class struggle.⁹⁵

Latin American liberation theology's starting point, socio-economic analysis, revolutionary struggle, and solidarity with the poor find an exact transition in minjung theology.

Japanese Theology

Japanese theology, especially of Kenzo Tagawa and Sasagu Arai, had a great influence upon minjung theology.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 275, 300.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

⁹⁵ Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology, pp. 107-108.

Minjung theology came to use the term "minjung" in the politico-theological sense after reading works of Tagawa and Arai.⁹⁶ Several Korean translations of Tagawa and Arai⁹⁷ also indicate how influential Japanese theology is among minjung theologians.

The main characteristic of Japanese theology is its sociological hermeneutics. Kenzo Tagawa, known for his struggle on the college campus and his study of Marxism,⁹⁸ argues that the faith of Christianity itself must be rearranged, on account of his misunderstanding that Paul reversed reality with the idea.⁹⁹ In Tagawa's opinion, Mark's historical work is based upon a Galilean minjung perspective, which is contrasted with the Petrine mainline of the Early Christian church centered in Jerusalem; as well, Jesus also was opposed to both the political system and the religious system of His day.¹⁰⁰ In his commentary on

⁹⁶In his article, "Jesus, Church History, Korean Church" (1975), Nam Dong Suh translated am ha-arez as "the common crowd" (seomin daejung), but in "Theology of Minjung" (The Theological Thought 24 (1979), he defined minjung in the politico-theological sense, referring to Tagawa comment on Mark 3:31-35.

⁹⁷Sasagu Arai, Jesus and His Age (1976): Kenzo Tagawa, A Phase of the Primitive Christian Church History (1983), A Guy Jesus (1983).

⁹⁸Sasagu Arai, Jesus and His Age, trans. Nam Dong Suh (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1976), p. 15.

⁹⁹Kenzo Tagawa, A Phase of the Primitive Christian Church History, trans. Myung Sik Kim (Gwangju: Sa-gye-jul, 1983), pp. 106-107.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 51, 51-63, 117-123, 137.

Mark 3:31-35, Tagawa defines the ochlos as "minjung" which is always opposed to the ruling class.¹⁰¹

Tagawa introduces Jesus as a resistant political revolutionist for the oppressed of His day. Jesus is a good neighbor of the minjung and He shows His charity for minjung by doing social justice. Jesus is a good friend of minjung; a paradoxical guy, living, fighting, and working for minjung against the ruling class and the dogmatic faith.¹⁰² Jesus was murdered by the ruling regime of His day for His resistance against the established order.¹⁰³

In his work, Jesus and His Age, Sasagu Arai tries to reconstruct Jesus historically from the viewpoint of minjung.¹⁰⁴ He defines minjung as those who, as a whole, were economically exploited by Roman authorities and great landowners and who were discriminated against religiously and socially by the Pharisees.¹⁰⁵ These exploited and discriminated minjung were never asked to repent by Jesus. In fact, no Gospel writer, except Luke, gives any advice to repent.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹Kenzo Tagawa, A Commentary on Mark's Gospel (Tokyo: Shin-gyo Publishing House, 1972), pp. 244-246; See, A Phase of the Primitive Christian Church History, p. 117.

¹⁰²Kenzo Tagawa, A Guy Jesus, trans. Myung Sik Kim (Seoul: Han-ul-rim, 1983), pp. 13-14, 38, 260.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 272-274.

¹⁰⁴Arai, Jesus and His Age, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 38. See, pp. 40-41.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 71; See, Tagawa, A Guy Jesus, pp. 205, 210. Tagawa assumes that Jesus never made use of the word "sin."

Jesus' important advice for the alienated and discriminated is "Go back to your home." The restoration of family relationship and restoration to the society is their greatest wish of those alienated and discriminated.¹⁰⁷

In terms of literature and sociology, the men who surrounded Jesus are the so-called "sinners" of that day, lepers, the handicapped, prostitutes, and tax collectors.¹⁰⁸ This means that Jesus lived together with underdogs. As a friend of minjung, Jesus never insists on His Messiahship Himself.¹⁰⁹ Jesus stands only on the side of am ha-arez (the people of the land) or "sinners," with minjung, and wishes man to live as man. Jesus' criticism of the oppression and discrimination given to the minjung by the Judaic rulers escalated to a criticism of the law and then the Jerusalem temple and finally the Roman Empire, as far as it supported Judaic rulers of temple-state system. In this sense, Jesus committed Himself to being misunderstood by the Roman government and brought upon Himself political death. Therefore, the meaning of Jesus' death cannot be understood or connected with the forgiveness of man's sin.¹¹⁰

By way of Japanese theology and its sociological hermeneutics, minjung theology gained a politico-theological

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 189: See, Tagawa, A Guy Jesus, pp. 194-195.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 189-190.

concept of minjung, understood Jesus as a resistant political revolutionist, and interpret Jesus' death as political murder.

Summary

The Second Vatican Council and the concept of "Missio Dei" are concerned with the social involvement of Christian church in the service of all people who are subject to oppression and exploitation. This idea of the social involvement of the church can be traced back to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, on the one hand, and to Hegel, on the other. Minjung theology came to emerge under the influence of these two, Bonhoeffer and Hegel. Minjung theology learned from both existential theology and secular theology that God can be seen in our relationship with our neighbors within our reach; from process theology came holistic humanism; from the theology of history came the negation of transcendentalism; from Roman Catholic theology came universal ecumenism and the idea of "anonymous Christians"; from Latin American liberation theology came the application of the socio-economic hermeneutics to the social situation of evil structures; and from Japanese theology came the political concept of minjung and the socio-political conflict between the rulers and the ruled.

There are several reasons why minjung theology is able to make use of these theologies with harmony. First of all, practically speaking, Bonhoeffer is considered the

fountainhead of all of these theological thoughts. His proposals of "religionless Christianity" and "discipleship for others" are the common foundation. The humanistic or human-centered way of life is the major concern in these theologies.

Secondly, connected with the first reason, all of these modern theologies are focused on justification by works rather than by faith in Christ and His vicarious atonement. In their case, to believe is to do something for others in need.

Thirdly, these theologies do not start from a Scriptural text but from a situational context. They do not acknowledge the absolute authority of the Bible but regard the Scriptures as historical and sociological references. In fact, the core of these modern theological thoughts is the sociological hermeneutics, so to speak, the secularization of the gospel. Therefore, the sociological hermeneutics is dealt with in the following chapter.

But, as a result of such a significant influence from various theological thoughts which have originated in Europe, Latin America, and Japan, minjung theology carries both their strength and weakness in its claims. Considering this, one may legitimately raise some questions, namely: how much is minjung theology genuinely Korean in nature, as frequently maintained by minjung theologians themselves, or how far can one rightly maintain that minjung theology is an outside thought in a Korean garb? If the Korean term "min-

jung" has been used in the Japanese language from the time when minjung theology was not formulated yet, and minjung theology regards Bonhoeffer's anti-despotism struggle as an example for minjung liberation, how can minjung theology insist on its originality? Who can believe that minjung struggle for liberty is unique in the world history?

And, another question can be also asked. Even if modern theological thoughts can be traced back to Bonhoeffer, each of these thoughts has its own unique themes which are different from one another. Considering these differences, one can ask: is minjung theology not a sort of mosaic product?

CHAPTER III

SOCIOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS AND MINJUNG THEOLOGY

The Nature of the Sociological Hermeneutics

Definition

Sociological critics assume that the traditional methodology of grammatical-historical hermeneutics is insufficient because it disregards sociological concerns and is interested in literal, historical, and theological concerns. Modern hermeneutics tries to research the sociological context or Sitz im Leben of the Scriptural text,¹ and likewise, within the framework of economic, sociological and political organization, men of today seek an understanding of themselves and consequently of ancient man of the Scriptures.²

Sociological hermeneutics is a process for examining Biblical social behavior and gaining self-understanding according to the methods and theories of the social

¹ John H. Elliott, "Introduction," A Home for the Homeless, A Sociological Exegesis of Peter: its Situation and Strategy (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), edited and translated in Sociological Interpretation of the Bible by Byung Mu Ahn (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1983), pp. 90-91.

² George H. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist 25 (1962-63):66.

sciences.³ This sociological critique of the Scriptures was influenced by the social theorists, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx.

Among the influential aspects of their work, says Norman K. Gottwald, are Durkheim's understanding of religious beliefs as social facts and of the division of labor in society; Weber's fascination with the interplay between economics and religion and his analysis of traditional, charismatic and bureaucratic forms of authority; and Marx's analysis of the modes of production and his comprehensive grasp of the conditioning force of political economy on societal economy structure and ideology.⁴

Basic Propositions and Major Concern

The sociological approach to religion is based upon two fundamental propositions; one is that every religion arose in a particular social milieu and was subject to its influence, and the other is that the religion, in turn, exerted an influence upon the formation of the social structure. Therefore, investigation of this interaction between religion and society is the major concern of religious sociology.⁵ Likewise, sociological hermeneutics focuses on the relationship between the social organization of the

³Norman K. Gottwald, "Sociological Criticism of the Old Testament," The Christian Century, (April 1982) p. 475.

⁴Ibid., p. 477.

⁵Herbert F. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 158.

Hebrew people and the development of their religion.

From the viewpoint of sociological critics, religion is a social phenomenon related to the societal group rather than the individual. Thereby, sociological critics emphasize collective factors rather than personal experience as the essential element in religion. Accordingly, they do not deal with great religious leaders except as members of a social group. By preference, they investigate the religious life of the common people who made up the mass of the social group.⁶ According to Gottwald, ancient Israel's religion was a function of a long conflicting social history that had revolutionary origins.⁷

Limitations

The sociological critics have applied social scientific approaches both to the study of Israelite religion and to the study of Biblical literature and used the rapidly emerging so-called social sciences to supply new perspectives on traditional Biblical problems. The focus of this sociological criticism is on the conflicting relationship between the social classes, concentrating primarily on the social position of the oppressed mass. Thereby, this criticism makes it impossible to understand society in the light of membership.⁸

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Norman K. Gottwald, "Sociological Criticism of the Old Testament," p. 477.

⁸ John H. Elliott, "Introduction," in Ahn, p. 107.

Sociological criticism arose against the background of the experience of socio-political tumults such as the Vietnamese war, student revolutionary movements, severe socio-economic oppressions, and the exploitation of multinational enterprises, which stimulated theologians to awaken their social consciousness⁹ so that they might study the Scriptures sociologically with the aid of the social sciences of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Karl Marx. According to Norman K. Gottwald, Marx provided the most inclusive, dynamic, and incisive model of human society, within which the work of Durkheim, Weber and others can be incorporated constructively.¹⁰

Since sociological hermeneutics was stimulated by modern social experiences (with the aid of social sciences) and did not start from the Scriptural text, there are some serious problems confronting sociological hermeneutics. First, the tremendous variety of sociological theories and models presents theologians with an understandable confusion. Second, most Scriptural texts speak about theological truths and not about sociological conditions. Scripture is not always sociologically applicable. Third, it is doubtful that any sociological method can be fitted into a theological scheme which leaves room for the transcendent.¹¹ Socio-

⁹Ibid., pp. 87-88.

¹⁰Norman K. Gottwald, "Sociological Criticism of the Old Testament," p. 477.

logical analyses based upon structural functionalist models can at best reveal some general patterns but can at worst eliminate all that is unique or supernatural.¹²

Sociological Hermeneutics
in the Old Testament

The sociological approach to the study of religion, with respect to the Old Testament, was first undertaken by the real founder of religious sociology, Max Weber.¹³ Weber's interest in the relation between religion and society was aroused by subordinating the spiritual factor in human history to the socio-economic activity and that only in the case of ancient Judaism was there a situation at all analogous to that which he had found obtaining in the Protestant West.¹⁴

According to Weber, it was the idea of the covenant which defined Israel's relation to its God and established the political unit of the tribes in the premonarchical period. This unity solidified under a charismatic type of

¹¹ Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: the Present State of Research," New Testament Study 26 (1980): 166-167.

¹² Edwin Yamauchi, "Sociology, Scripture and Supernatural," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 27/2 (June 1984):192.

¹³ Max Weber's two works which contributed to the sociology of Old Testament religion are The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), and Ancient Judaism (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952).

¹⁴ Herbert F. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research, pp. 159-161.

leadership. This considered as the ideal form of social organization by later generations.¹⁵

Herbert F. Hahn summarizes Weber's interpretation of Israel's history:

The keystone of Weber's interpretation of Israel's history was the thesis that the further development of its religion, in the prophetic movement, was the result of a crisis in the socio-economic development of the nation. It was not so much the treat of syncretism with Canaanite religion that called forth the protest of the prophets as the gradual submersion of Israel's original social system under new forms imitated from the Canaanites. The religiously motivated social organization of the Old confederacy retained its significance as the rise of new economic conditions broke down the old feeling of solidarity between the various groups within Israel. The growth of landowning aristocracy . . . divided the people into a small urban nobility and a large mass of debt-ridden or entirely landless peasants. The significance of this development was that it contradicted the basic principle of equality implicit in the covenant which had formerly governed the socio-economic life of the tribes.¹⁶

The social criticism of the prophets arose out of this situation. Weber did not use the term "class struggle," though this is what he portrays. It was the misuse of power and position by the people's rulers that the prophets criticized. Their emphasis was on the need for justice and humanity when the ruling classes mistreated the economico-politically weak and helpless.

It was Adolphe Lods¹⁷ who applied Weber's sociologi-

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 162-163.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁷ English translations of Lods by S. H. Hook: Israel from its Beginnings to the Middle of the Eighth Century (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932); The Prophets of Israel (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1937).

cal method to the interpretation of the Old Testament. According to Lods, when Israel set its foot on the road to a higher culture by accommodating itself to the ways of the Canaanites, a split developed in the national conscience.¹⁸ Later it was G. E. Mendenhall¹⁹ and Norman Gottwald²⁰ who developed the sociological hermeneutics since 1960s.

Mendenhall proposed the hypothesis that ancient Israel was composed mainly of native Canaanites who revolted against their city-state overlords, sparked by invaders from the desert with their rabid adherence to their deliverer God.²¹ The Mendenhall hypothesis presupposes the phenomenon of religious conversion,²² and the revolt model:²³ a peasant uprising among the Canaanite lower classes, catalysed by

¹⁸Herbert H. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research, p. 167.

¹⁹Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," pp. 66-87 ; The Tenth Generation: the Origins of the Biblical Tradition (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1973).

²⁰The Tribes of Yahweh: a Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050, B.C.E. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979); The Bible and Liberation, ed. N. K. Gottwald (Maryknoll; Orbis Books, 1983).

²¹Jacob Milgrom, "Religious Conversion and the Revolt Model for the Formation of Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature 101/2 (1982):169.

²²Milgrom advocated that religious conversion is neither attested nor possible in ancient Israel before the second temple period. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

²³According to Milgrom, "In any case, religious conversion was no factor at all in gaining admission to the Israelite people. Thus the assumption of the revolt model that the national entity of Israel was formed by mass conversions to the covenantal faith is totally without warrant." (*Ibid.*, p. 175).

escaped slaves from Egypt. The Israelite community, as an ideal society of political decentralization and social egalitarianism, fought against the Canaanite urban centralization and social stratification with power in the hands of the elite. The covenantal society of Israel was the egalitarian society.²⁴

In developing Mendenhall's hypothesis of the revolt model, Gottwald summarized the major proposals of his sociological study of the religion of ancient Israel. The Israelites were pastoral nomads in transition to agriculture and later to village and city life; Israelites were "confederated tribes bonded together in a sacred league" dedicated to the cult of the God Yahweh; Israelites were "Canaanite peasants in revolt" against the political economy in which they were exploited participants.²⁵ On the basis of his major proposals, he made the following major conclusions:

- 1). Early Israel was an eclectic formation of marginal and depressed Canaanite people, including "feudalized" peasants habiru mercenaries and adventurers, transhuman pastoralists, tribally organized farmers and pastoral nomads, and probably also itinerant craftsmen and disaffected priests;
- 2). Israel was emergent from and a fundamental breach within Canaanite society and not an invasion or an immigration from without;
- 3). Israel's social structure was a deliberate and highly conscious "retribalization" process rather than an unreflective unilinear carry-over from pastoral nomadic tribalism;

²⁴Walter Brueggemann, "Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel," in The Bible and Liberation, ed. N. K. Gottwald, p. 310.

²⁵Norman K. Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahweh, p. xxii.

4). The religion of Yahweh was a crucial societal instrument for cementing and motivating the peculiar constellation of unifying and decentralizing socio-cultural patterns necessary to the optimal function of the social system.²⁶

Israel, the tribes of Yahweh, then became the name of a confederacy or league of tribes which was bonded equally on the basis of egalitarianism, and Yahweh is the historically concretized, primordial power to establish and sustain social equality in the face of counteroppression from without and against provincial and non-egalitarian tendencies from within the society.²⁷ Israel's anti-state and anti-feudal nature and their goal to establish an egalitarian society causes Israel to be understood not as a group of geographical outsiders but as socio-political outsiders. Their marginality is not geographic in character, but rather social, economic, and political.²⁸

Sociological Hermeneutics
in the New Testament

Martin Hengel is known as the first New Testament scholar who concerned himself with the concrete political and economic history in relation to the early church and particularly with regard to Jesus and His followers.²⁹ He has been particularly concerned with the problems of politi-

²⁶Ibid., p. xxiii.

²⁷Ibid., p. 692.

²⁸Walter Brueggemann, p. 310.

²⁹Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament," p. 168.

cal force and the question of violence. In his work, Was Jesus a Revolutionist?, he argues that broad justification of revolutionary violence is in danger of being "overcome by evil."³⁰ In his *Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit*, he argues that only when the social context bears some analogies with the contemporary setting can the teaching of Jesus about violence be relevant for today's world.³¹

It is A. Deissmann who advocates that early Christians were of the lower social classes such as peasants, slaves, and artisans.³² But E. A. Judge argues that the early Christians were dominated by a socially pretentious section of the urban population, on the basis of the data such as middle and upper class people mentioned in Acts and Pauline Epistles: Barnabas (who donated his possessions to the Jerusalem church), the hospitality of wealthy and respectable patrons, and Corinthian Christians of the relatively privileged classes.³³ E. A. Judge's argument is supported by Abraham J. Malherbe, who suggests that the social status of early Christians is higher than Deissmann supposed.³⁴ Wayne A. Meeks also argues that the typical

³⁰Martin Hengel, Was Jesus a Revolutionist? tr. William Klassen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), pp. 30-31.

³¹Martin Hengel, Victory Over Violence, trans. Robin Scroggs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), pp. ix-xi.

³²Cited in Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament," p. 169.

³³Robbin Scroggs, *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³⁴Abraham J. Malherbe, Social Aspects of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), pp. 86-89.

Christian of the early church is a free artisan and small trader.³⁵

John G. Gager and Gerd Theissen emphasize the relationship between oral tradition and the role of wandering charismatic disciples of the early Christian church. Gager writes, "Oral traditions expand, contradict, combine, and even disappear according to the changing circumstances of those individuals and communities which preserve and transmit them."³⁶ These wandering charismatic disciples belonged to the lower levels of the Greco-Roman system of social classes, even though some of them were relatively wealthy or cultured individuals.³⁷

Gerd Theissen agrees with John G. Gager, in that Theissen argues that these wandering disciples, economically speaking, drew heavily on the "many rootless people in Palestine."³⁸ But he points out that the "social context of renewal movements within Judaism of the first century was not so much the lowest classes of all as a marginal middle class."³⁹ Ecologically speaking, these movements reflected

³⁵Wayne A. Meeks, "The Social Context of Pauline Theology," Interpretation 36 (1982):270.

³⁶John G. Gager, "Shall we Marry our Enemies?" Interpretation 36 (1982):260.

³⁷John G. Gager, "Sociological Description and Sociological Explanation in the Study of Early Christianity: a Review Essay," in The Bible and Interpretation, p. 439.

³⁸Gerd Theissen, Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 36.

³⁹Ibid., p. 46.

tensions between city and countryside, between positive and negative attitudes toward Roman power and Hellenistic culture. In short, Christianity emerged as a social and religious experiment spawned by a deep-seated crisis in Palestinian Jewish society.⁴⁰ The wandering charismatic disciples gave up all of their old life to proclaim the urgent gospel of the kingdom of God. Homelessness, lack of family, lack of possessions, and lack of protection were characteristics of their new life. To live as beggars was a sign of their trust in God.⁴¹

The sociological interpretation of the New Testament has been followed by the Japanese theologians, among whom Kenzo Tagawa is the most well-known. Tagawa reflected on the socio-political tensions between Jerusalem city and Galilean country,⁴² and developed the political concept of ochlos.⁴³

As John G. Gager points out, "At the root of most recent sociological analysis of the New Testament is a set of assumption which derives from the sociology of knowledge."⁴⁴ According to this sociology of knowledge, beliefs and actions are determined by social circumstance;

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

⁴¹ Gerd Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity ed. and trans. John H. Schutz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp. 27-29.

⁴² Kenzo Tagawa, A Phase of the Primitive Christian Church History, tans. Myoung Sik Kim (Gwangju: Sa-gye-jul, 1983), pp. 43-35.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 119-121.

⁴⁴ Gager, "Shall We Marry our Enemies?" p. 263.

and when these circumstances change the beliefs and actions will change accordingly. This sociological approach is derived from Max Weber's "elective affinities" or "associative relationships" between certain kinds of religious beliefs and particular sorts of social conditions.⁴⁵

Introduction of Sociological
Hermeneutics to Korea

As alluded to earlier, minjung theology is based upon the economic-sociological hermeneutics and so-called proto-gospel which is assumed to be rearranged through this hermeneutics.⁴⁶ The attendant socio-economic language becomes dominant today in the Korean theological arena as many theologians try to understand the Korean situation by means of this hermeneutics.⁴⁷ Minjung theology understands the sociological hermeneutics as a scientific approach which grasps history as a dynamic relationship of conflict between the ruling and ruled classes.⁴⁸ Since the recent Korean history has been written from the point of the ruling class, it does not demand the liberation of the oppressed class of minjung. But minjung theology demands the political liberation of minjung. In this respect minjung theology is an

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Kyoung Jae Kim, "The Significance of Minjung Theology in terms of the History of Theology and Its Assessment," in A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea, (Seoul: Korean Christian Academy, 1983), p.100.

⁴⁷ "Symposium: Discussion on Theology of Minjung," The Theological Thought 24:111.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 113.

ideology.⁴⁹

With the introduction of Latin American liberation theology to Korea, Korean theologians came to be interested in this socio-economical interpretation of theology.⁵⁰ In the case of Nam Dong Suh, when he read Arai's Jesus and His Age in 1976 and translated it into Korean, he began to interpret theology in the socio-economical terms, and after reading Gottwald's The Tribes of Yahweh around 1980, he came to see the Israelite conquest of Canaan as a Biblical reference point for minjung theology.⁵¹

He was also influenced by Tagawa's Commentary on Mark's Gospel, which interprets "minjung" as a negative concept against the authoritative class.⁵² Under the influence of Tagawa's sociological understanding of minjung, minjung theology comes to see minjung rather than Jesus as the main subject.⁵³

Byung Mu Ahn, in his representative article, "The Sociological Understanding of Mark's Gospel,"⁵⁴ began to

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983),

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 49, 55; By 1983, Suh read Gager, Kingdom and Community (1975), Fernando Belo, A Materialistic Reading of the Gospel of Mark (1981), Gerd Theissen, Sociologie der Jesus Bewegung (1979), and John H. Elliott, A Home for the Homeless (1981).

⁵² Ibid., p. 52.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 53.

Byung Mu Ahn, ed., Sociological Interpretation of the Bible, pp. 205-237.

interpret minjung theology in sociological terms under the influence of especially Gerd Theissen and Tagawa. His editing of Sociological Interpretation of the Bible⁵⁵ (1983) definitely shows the influence of the sociological hermeneutics on minjung theology. In this publication, Young Jin Min introduces the sociological approach to the Old Testament, which touches on Max Weber, G. E. Mendenhall and N. K. Gottwald.⁵⁶

Summary

The secular interpretation of the Scriptures, which was applied to minjung theology through the influence of Bonhoeffer, is complemented by the sociological interpretation. In the sociological approach to the Old Testament, the

⁵⁵This publication comprises fourteen articles; Gottwald, "Sociological Criticism of Old Testament" (The Christian Century, April 1982); Young Jin Min, "Sociological Approach to the Old Testament;" Burke O. Long, "The Social World of Ancient Israel" (Interpretation 36 [1982]); Robert R. Wilson, "Anthropology and Old Testament" (Union Seminary Quarterly Review 34 [Spring 1979]; John G. Gager, "Shall We Marry Our Enemies?" (Interpretation, 36 [1982]); John H. Elliott, "Introduction," A Home for the Homeless (Fortress Press, 1981); Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament," New Testament Study 26 [1980]; Georges Casalis, "Introduction a la lecture materialiste de la Bible" (1978); Gerd Theissen, "A Study of the Sociological Background of Matthew's Gospel" (1979), "Synoptische Wundergeschichten im Lichte unseres Sprachverstandnisses" (1976), "Wanderradikalismus: Literatur soziologische Aspekte der Uberlieferung von Worten Jesu im Urchristentum" (1973), "Die Strarker und Schwachen in Korinth: Soziologische Analyse eines theologische Streites" (1975); Wayne A. Meeks, "The Social Context of Pauline Theology" (Interpretation 36 [1982]); Byung Mu Ahn, "Sociological Understanding of Mark's Gospel."

⁵⁶Young Jin Min, "Sociological Approach to the Old Testament," Sociological Interpretation of the Bible, pp. 23-39.

Mendenhall-Gottwald hypothesis of revolt model supplies the key to interpreting theologically the Korean tradition of peasant revolts; and in the sociological approach to the New Testament, the Theissen-Tagawa hypothesis of class conflict between Jerusalem and Galilee supplies the key to interpreting socio-political situation today in Korea.

Some sociological critics assume that this scientific social analysis of the Scriptures neither poses a threat to Scriptural authority (or to faith itself), nor renders traditional approaches obsolete, but rather makes it possible to understand early Christianity in significantly new ways.⁵⁷ This assumption is farthest from the truth, as we will see in the next chapter. Here it is enough to quote two paragraphs from "Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" issued by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

Concepts uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology and recourse to theses of a Biblical hermeneutics marked by rationalism are at the basis of the new interpretation which is corrupting whatever was authentic in the generous initial commitment on behalf of the poor.⁵⁸

Let us recall the fact that atheism and the denial of the human person, his liberty and his rights, are at the core of Marxist theory. This theory, then, contains errors which directly threaten the truths of the faith regarding the eternal destiny of individual persons. Moreover, to attempt to integrate into theology an analysis whose criterion of interpretation depends on

⁵⁷ John G. Gager, "Shall We Marry Our Enemies?" pp. 256-257.

⁵⁸ "Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" (VI, 10) issued by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and released in National Catholic Reporter, September 3, 1984.

this atheistic conception is to involve oneself in terrible contradictions.⁵⁹

How can sociological hermeneutics based upon atheistic Marxist sociology be relevant to the analysis of the divine revelation? How can the sociological analysis of modern capitalism be a text for interpreting Scriptures? Which is the criterion of the truth, the Marxist sociology, or the divine Word of God?

⁵⁹Ibid., (VII, 9).

CHAPTER IV

THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

ACCORDING TO MINJUNG THEOLOGY

The Scriptures as a Historical Reference

The preceding chapters point out that minjung theology attempts to interpret the Scriptures in secular and socio-economico-political terms, the foundation of which is the sociology of knowledge. Does this sociological approach to the Scriptures not pose a threat to Scriptural authority? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to deal with minjung theology's view of the Scriptures.

Nam Dong Suh prefers the term "reference" (jeon-geo) to "revelation" (gye-si). The term "revelation" is considered to belong to the category of religious thinking and the term "reference" to the category of history. This term "reference," which can be interchangeably used with "paradigm" or "archetype," is contrasted with the term "revelation."¹ Practically, Suh uses the term "reference" in order to reject revelation, the norm of traditional theology. Therefore, it can be said that to interpret

¹Nam Dong Suh, "Confluence of Two Stories," in Minjung and Korean Theology, (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1982), p. 240.

theology with the socio-economical approaches means to discard the older traditional method of theology.²

Consequently, according to Suh, the Scriptures are only written records of historical events which occurred for the purpose of liberating man. These liberating events, as they occurred in world history, are "primary revelation" (won-gye-si). Historical events are God's revelation,³ because history is the way of God's existence; God is revelatory reality and the Scriptural revelation is an historical event.⁴

Because the Scriptures are not considered the direct revelation given by God Himself, they cannot be accepted as the absolute norm of theology; they are, at best, references for theology. They are not unique references, but only a selection of references. At the same time, church history and Korean minjung tradition of socio-economic events are also references for theology.⁵ Korean traditions of socio-economic events are counted as the primary sources of theology; Scriptural records of social events and church history are secondary sources, which are taken into consideration only so as to render minjung theology a theology.

²"Symposium: Discussion on Theology of Minjung," The Theological Thought 24 (Spring 1979):112.

³Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), pp. 233-234.

⁴Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point (Seoul: Korea Theological Institute, 1976) p. 72; See, Minjung and Korean Theology, p. 243.

⁵Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 184.

Since Suh considers the Scriptures as references for theology rather than the absolute norm, his resultant theology does not draw on the entirety of the Scriptures.⁶ Typical sections like the Exodus, the Covenant Code (Ex. 20:22-23:19), proto-Israel of the period of Judges in relation to the Hebrew conquest of Canaan, and the crucifixion are selected as references for minjung theology. These selected references are integrated with the revolt model of the Korean minjung movement. Theologically, these selected Scriptural references then serve to interpret the Korean minjung movement of political revolts.

The historical event alone is viewed as "God's language," that is, God's self-disclosure.⁷ Consequently, to interpret the Exodus event only in the religious dimension is to make it an ideology of the ruling class for sustaining the status quo. The Exodus event must be interpreted as a political event occurring in the socio-economic dimension. It was a socio-economico-political revolt of the slaves' liberation by which the Hebrews could escape from the bondage of Egypt under the leadership of Moses struggling

⁶Nam Dong Suh contends that as Luther represented the entirety of the Bible with Romans 1:17, so does he with these selected references. But, in Luther's case, he studied carefully the entirety of the Bible and found its main theme in Romans 1:17. By contrast, Suh selected these references on the basis of his own ideological purpose. His major concern is political liberation and human rights of the poor. Consequently, he does not take into consideration subjects such as tabernacle, priesthood, and God's warning against idolatry in his dealing with Exodus.

⁷Minjung and Korean Theology, p. 243.

against the oppressive regime of Egypt. This Exodus event is one of the references for the interpretation of Korean minjung's revolts.

Likewise, ancient Israel of the Judges' period is viewed as a newly organized political system of egalitarianism and decentralization which was made possible through the Hebrews' revolutionary violent revolt against the Canaanite urban centralization; the Covenant Code is the constitution of the new political order; crucifixion is capital punishment for the political criminal for living a life of companionship with the poor underdogs in resistance against the system of the rulers of the Jerusalem temple.⁸

On the basis of these Scriptural references, some Korean churches which support minjung theology understand the historical experience of the March First Independence Movement of 1919 and the liberation on August 15, 1945, as events of God's salvation for the Korean nation.⁹

Minjung Theology and the Doctrine of the Inspiration

Behind minjung theology's view of Scriptures, which understands the Scriptures as a reference rather than a norm of theology, lies the rejection of the doctrine of inspiration. At the root of this rejection is the misunderstanding that the language of God, namely, the inspired written Word

⁸ Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 184-186.

⁹ Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," Minjung Theology (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), p. 158.

of God, had already become or was in the process of becoming the language of the rulers and of their ideology to oppress the minjung.¹⁰ By contrast, the oppressed and alienated minjung can become the protagonists of history and in control of their destiny, by way of rejecting the authority of the written Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit.¹¹ In this respect, the doctrine of inspiration is definitely rejected by minjung theology.

It is strongly felt by Suh, in the stance of Jesus, that the Scriptures themselves do not teach the doctrine of inspiration. Jesus did not seem to attempt to authenticate His word with God's word. Jesus did not draw the basis for His authority either from Law or from God.¹² Jesus spoke His own word, not the word of God. He did not speak like the lawyers, whose authority was based on the fact that they spoke according to the Law, the language of God. On such a basis, Suh concludes that the Scriptures are not God's Word written by inspiration, but historical writings authentic, unique, and original, which are concerned only with the historical knowledge of the historical person of Jesus.¹³

At the same time, the Scriptures can be considered the Word of God, not because they are the inspired holy

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 161.

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Ibid., p. 160.

¹³ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, pp. 66-67.

canon, but because the writings of old contained in the Scriptures give meaning and right directions for our lives here and now.¹⁴ In other words, that which renders the Scriptures the Word of God is not the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but their contents of historical knowledge. Thereby, Ik Whan Mun contends that without discarding the major thesis that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, there can be only the unconditional blind obedience to the decision of the preceding generations!¹⁵ Each generation must prove the words of the Scriptures in their own daily lives. Consequently, the Scriptures seem to have no more than a relative significance as one of such keys as Confucianism, Buddhism, or the thoughts of politicians or thinkers, which can help to solve urgent contemporary problems.¹⁶ The traditional doctrine of inspiration is considered a tyranny of idealism by Mun.¹⁷

In this connection, Luke, who emphasizes repentance and forgiveness of sins, is assumed to change the original message of the minjung to an ideological religion of the rulers; and Paul, who systematically and soteriologically formulates the major themes of the Christian gospel, is also

¹⁴Ik Whan Mun, "Tasks of Old Testament Theology in Korea," The Christian Thought (March, 1971):92.

¹⁵Ibid. :93.

¹⁶Ibid. :94.

¹⁷Ibid. :96.

misunderstood to revert from practice to the theoretical.¹⁸ But in fact, Luke and Paul are the men who show great concern in the human rights of the poor and women,¹⁹ and emphasize practice of hospitality to such as wandering pilgrims.²⁰

When minjung theology does not acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible, the Bible loses its absolute authority and Biblical meaning is always considered relative, dependent upon the social context of the "here and now."

Criterion of Minjung Theology

Orthopraxis

Two major criteria of minjung theology are not dogma and Scriptures but praxis and Korean folktales of oral tradition. Orthopraxis is concerned with doing the truth and transforming the world. By this term "orthopraxis," Gustavo Gutierrez intends "to recognize the work and importance of concrete behavior, of deeds, of action, of praxis in the Christian life."²¹ Accordingly, he defines theology as a critical reflection on historical praxis, the liberating transformation of the history of mankind, and part of the process through which the world is transformed. The historical praxis can be found in the protest against trampled

¹⁸"Symposium," The Theological Thought 24:127.

¹⁹Luke 8:2; 10:42; 16:19-31; 18:1-14; Acts 12:13; 16:14; 21:9.

²⁰Romans 12:13; 16:16; 16:1, 13; 1 Tim. 6:18-19.

²¹Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), p.10.

human dignity, in the struggle against the plunder of the vast majority of people, and the building of a new, just, and fraternal society.²²

Just as Gustavo Gutierrez defines theology as critical reflection on historical praxis and uses as its framework such historical Sitz im Leben as Latin American economico-political situation of exploitation and oppression, Nam Dong Suh uses the social conditions of minjung as the framework of minjung theology.²³ Minjung theology as political theology takes the stand that one's environmental condition determines one's being; in other words, social conditions determine humanity.²⁴

The theological task of the liberal side in the Korean church in the 1980s is to reflect practically on the liberation of humanity; so to speak, praxis is the task of minjung theology.²⁵ One could say the human rights movement of Missio Dei is the criterion of minjung theology.²⁶ The so-called metaphysical God of orthodoxy, according to minjung theologians, is no longer meaningful to modern man, and God active in history is the task of theology.²⁷ To do

²²Ibid., p. 15.

²³Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, p. 157.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 157-158.

²⁵Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 137.

²⁶Ibid., p. 47.

²⁷"Symposium: Prospect for Korean Theological Developments in 80's" The Theological Thought 28 (Spring 1980):38.

theology is to reflect on God's work of liberating man in connection with the struggle for the liberation of today's minjung.²⁸ Minjung is the subject of history as well as the main theme of theology.²⁹ Therefore, theology must be criticized from the viewpoint of minjung and their struggle for liberation. Indeed, the conclusion of minjung theology is that theology must be estimated by the result of the transformation of world history.

Folktales (min-dam)

For minjung theology, orally transmitted folktales among the lower classes are the medium of God's self-disclosure. By contrast, the Scriptures, which are supposed to be edited theologically, are not the primary media of God's revelation, in that the written Scriptures are theologically oriented in favor of the ruling class. Neither mystic experience nor theological speculation is the medium. The primary medium of God's revelation is God's historical event. The authentic communicating medium of such an event is folktale. According to minjung theologians, folktale is God's language. God's medium is not speculation, idea, word, but action, event, life, folktale. In a word, God reveals Himself by way of action and folktale, not by speculation and philosophy.³⁰

²⁸Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 86.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 187, 208.

³⁰Ibid., p. 305.

The medium of the traditional theology is, in Suh's opinion, a logically speculated abstract idea which starts from the existence of the transcendent God, the written Scriptures, and the affirmed dogmas.³¹ In contrast, the authentic medium of minjung theology is the folktale which is derived in an inductive way from concrete practical experiences.³²

The written word is the privilege of the ruling elite, the weapon of self-protection for their own ruling system and of domination over the minjung. But the folktales of such minjung as the Canaanite Hebrews escaping from the bondage of slavery and Galilean marginals criticize and correct the ruling ideology, the ruling class and their culture.³³

Here are three among twelve Korean folktales given by Nam Dong Suh, in his work, A Study of Minjung Theology:

1). "The Tiger who Slipped on Cattle Dung:" an ill-natured tiger trampled down the vegetable garden of an old woman who one night invited him to her hut. The old woman had spread cattle dung on the entrance to the kitchen so that she could catch the tiger, as it slipped on the dung. This folktale shows the confrontation between the worst kind

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid. Suh contends that the traditional Christian doctrines of Trinity, vicarious atonement through Christ's gracious blood, and Sacraments as means of grace are the dogmatized speculations which overwhelm the poor minjung.

³³Ibid., p. 306.

of power and the weakest person, and this portrays the hope of minjung. Minjung has a dream to overcome structural evil by means of peaceful non-violence.³⁴

2). "Eun-jin Mireuk³⁵ and Mice:" a mouse, which lived under the Eun-jin Mireuk Statue, had a beautiful daughter. He decided to choose the greatest and strongest bridegroom suitable for her. He first proposed to the sun, which introduced the cloud as the stronger. But the cloud introduced wind; the wind answered that the Eunjin Mireuk was much stronger than he. The Eunjin Mireuk, which had withstood the strong wind, confessed that he was afraid of being overthrown if mice continued to dig out the ground from underneath him. At last, the mouse came to realize that mice themselves were the strongest creatures in the world. This folktale teaches that minjung, as the sustaining power of the society, have not played a role as the subjects of history until now; but the conscientized minjung will emerge as the ruling power in history.³⁶

3). "Biography of Hong Gil-dong:" Hong Gil-dong, an illegitimate son of a maidservant of a minister called Hong, was very clever, but was inhumanly discriminated. He left his parents, became the chief of thieves, stole the possessions of the unrighteous officers and distributed them to

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 275-276.

³⁵ Eunjin Mireuk is the largest statue of Buddha in Korea.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 277-279.

the poor. He left for an unknown island to establish a utopia of the new social order. This biography of Hong Gil-dong is considered as the social biography of minjung, which was written against the background of the peasants' revolt.³⁷

For minjung theology, the folktales of minjung, namely, the social biographies of minjung, are the divine media; the written Scriptures are the weapon of the ruling class to oppress the minjung on the one hand and to sustain the status quo on the other hand. Minjung theology attaches importance to the folktale mainly because it is the suffering, the groaning, and the revolutions and struggles of the exploited and oppressed underdogs through which God is supposed to disclose Himself. Consequently, folktales are regarded as the primary source of theology which can direct and formulate minjung theology. In this respect, the Exodus event and the Hebrew conquest of Canaan are also seen as types of folktales.

Evaluation

"The task for Minjung Theology is," according to Nam Dong Suh, "to testify that in the mission of God in Korea there is a confluence of the minjung tradition in Christianity and the Korean minjung tradition."³⁸ The Korean minjung tradition is no more than reference. Minjung theology starts from the context of the Sitz im Leben of the Korean

³⁷Ibid., pp. 284-287.

³⁸Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," Minjung Theology, p. 177.

poor minjung and appeals to the Scriptures for reference. This approach to the Scriptures appears to decanonize them.³⁹ Thereby, the orthodox traditional doctrine of salvation history, the absolute normative revelation of the plenary inspiration, and supernatural transcendentalism come to be understood as the language the ruling class used to tame minjung.⁴⁰ And so Suh refused to regard the Scriptures as the absolute norm for theology.⁴¹ The Scriptural text is used as reference for the event of the "here and now."⁴²

Minjung theology view of Scripture is built on the Missio Dei which transformed the history of salvation into the salvation of history and removed the line between the church and the world. In this restructuring of mission, the world, not the church, becomes the central focus of God's redeeming activity, a "salvation today" understood as humanization in the general historical process.⁴³ Thereby, contextualization comes to be emphasized, as it takes into account the struggle for human justice and economic-political situations of exploitation and oppression.

Accordingly, contextualization is to be constructed

³⁹Kee-Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1984), p. 445.

⁴⁰Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 152.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 184.

⁴²Ibid., p. 166.

⁴³Harvie M. Conn, "Contextualization: where do we begin?" in Evangelicals and Liberation, ed. Carl E. Armerding (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 93.

on the dialectic of the Scriptural text and the secular context; and so minjung theology calls for a contextualization where the "text" is the secular situation.⁴⁴ Scriptural contextualization, however, calls all of the body of Christ to the task of applying Scriptures as judge to the whole texture of their culturally bound lives. Christians must listen carefully to both Scriptures and culture, without either acculturating the Bible through an allegorization for revolt models, or biblicizing culture through accommodation.⁴⁵ Contextualization cannot sacrifice the normative function and authority of the Scriptures because God is central for the only correct understanding of history; and reflection on Him and action flowing "from Him and through Him and to Him" (Romans 11:36) are the preconditions of knowledge.⁴⁶ Even though praxis is the nerve center of the God-centered contextualization, that praxis is not the precondition or norm of knowledge. God as the sovereign suzerain calls for the hermeneutic response of life from man as vassal.⁴⁷

Just as Latin American liberation theology, minjung theology is also a theology of class. As a result, it must be criticized on the basis of its class-conscious viewpoint. For minjung theology, the viewpoint of the oppressed and

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 103.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 104.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 197.

⁴⁷Ibid.

revolutionary class is the single true point of view. Theological criteria for truth are thus revitalized and subordinated to the imperatives of the class struggle. In this perspective, orthodoxy is substituted by the notion of orthopraxy as the criterion of truth.⁴⁸

In connection with the class-conscious viewpoint, minjung theology introduces folktales as the divine revelation. They lay the theological foundation and betray the depth of human sins. However, Korean folktales cannot be sources for Christian theology because these tales do not have any historical foundation, being themselves no more than allegorical fictions devised to support assumptions of minjung theology.⁴⁹

In conclusion, no evangelical Christian would deny the need for demonstrating faith active in love by means of good works. But Christian praxis has its norm in the objective revelation of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the absolute norm of Christian praxis and theology, because their author is God Himself.⁵⁰ All the Scriptures are the very Word of God given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so they are the sole source, norm, and authority for all

⁴⁸ "Instructions on certain aspects of the Theology of Liberation," National Catholic Reporter, 21 September, 1984, X 1, 2, 3.

⁴⁹ Gyung Yon Jun, "Assessment of Minjung Theology," in A Study of the Minjung Theology in Korea (Seoul: Korea Christian Academy, 1984), pp. 80-81.

⁵⁰ The Westminster Confession of Faith (Inverness: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976), 1, 2, 4.

Christain preaching, teaching, and practising.⁵¹ The Westminster Confession of Faith reads,

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. ⁵²

To Christians, revelation has already been given in the Scriptures. Christian responsibility is to submit praxis to the inspired written Word of God, instead of giving supremacy to praxis.⁵³

⁵¹Gospel and Scripture: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (November 1972), p. 10: The Inspiration of Scripture: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (March 1975), p. 14.

⁵²The Westminster Confession of Faith, I, 6.

⁵³Emilio A. Nunez C., Liberation Theology, trans. by Paul E. Sywulka(Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 151.

CHAPTER V

THE WORD "MINJUNG"

"Minjung" as Understood from the Scriptures

Minjung theology has sought to find Biblical equivalence of Korean "minjung" in am ha-arez (people of the land), ochlos (the crowd), habiru (the Hebrews), "my people" of Micah, and anawim (ptochoi; the poor) of the Scriptures, and has used them as Biblical references for minjung.

am ha-arez (People of the Land)
and ochlos (the Crowd)

It is Byung Mu Ahn who investigated the usage of am ha-arez and ochlos in sociological terms mainly through an analysis of materials in Gerhard Kittel's Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuem Testament.¹ Ahn interprets these materials as follows:

Before the New Testament, the Hebrew term am is translated into the Greek laos in the Septuagint as many as two thousand times. In the Greek source it is mostly used to denote a national group and often means a privileged group "belonging to some ruling community" (for example, Gen.

¹Byung Mu Ahn, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark," Minjung Theology (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), pp. 138-152, citing Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuem Testament IV, ed. Gerhard Kittel.

41:40; "Pharaoh's laos").² Of course, laos is used especially for "God's people." On the other hand, laoi, plural of laos, has the meaning of "crowd" (ochlos),³ which is not its substantial meaning.

In the New Testament, the word laos occurs about eighty-four times in the Lukan writings, which indicates that it is a favorite word of Luke.⁴ Luke seems to use it consciously since there are several aspects peculiar to his use of this term. First, laos and ochlos are often used interchangeably and carry the same meaning as ochlos in Mark.⁵ Second, Luke seems to prefer the term laos for Israelites, though understood on the same lines as ochlos in Mark, to distinguish them from other national groups (Luke 19:47; 22:66; Acts 4:8; 27:5).⁶ Third, laos is in confrontation with those in power (Luke 22:2)⁷ This is similar to the use of ochlos in Mark. However, Luke sometimes takes the laos and the ruling class together (for example: "the elders

² Ibid., p. 148; In contrast with Ahn's translation, Hermann Strathmann writes that laos means the people as distinct from the rulers (See, TWNT 4: 34).

³ Ibid., p. 148; In contrast with Ahn's translation, Strathmann writes that laoi is synonym with ethne, which denotes "nations" (See, TWNT 4: 34).

⁴ TWNT 4: 49.

⁵ TWNT 4: 50

⁶ TWNT 4: 51.

⁷ TWNT 4: 50.

of the laos, Luke 22:66).⁸ Mark never uses the term ochlos in relation to the Jews of the ruling class. Other uses of this word in the New Testament are by and large in quotations from or allusions to the Old Testament and in the language of the rulers.

On the other hand, the word ochlos in Greek documents refers to a confused majority or to ordinary soldiers; in the Septuagint, "the mass," or the majority.⁹ Byung Mu Ahn claims that ochlos in Mark's Gospel signifies the so-called sinners who stood condemned in their society because of immoral conduct of life or dishonorable occupation. Their occupations made them sinners because these occupations violated the law of the Sabbath. On account of the nature of their occupations they were not able to rest on the Sabbath day. They were alienated and could not participate in worship, and thus were looked down upon as sinners. This condemned and alienated class of ochlos is contrasted with the ruling class of the Jerusalem temple.¹⁰

This Greek word ochlos is closely connected with the Hebrew word am ha-arez. For understanding the meaning of am ha-arez, Ahn looks not at the usage in the whole Old Testament but rather at its everyday use at the beginning of the

⁸See, Byung Mu Ahn, Minjung Theology, p. 149. Ahn misreads Strathmann, who writes "the reference here (Luke 22:66) is always to the Jewish population, namely, Israel" (TWNT, 4: 52).

⁹TWNT 5: 586-587.

¹⁰Ahn, Minjung Theology, pp. 143-144.

first century B.C. Before the exile, this word designated landlords, aristocrats, and the upper class of Israelite society; but its meaning changed during the exile and post-exilic periods. Once the leading members of the society were taken into exile, the ownership of land passed to the common people. These became am ha-arez. From the time of Ezra onward it became a sociological term designating a class of people, uneducated and ignorant of the law. Rabbinic Judaism made this term refer to the poor and powerless class which was despised and alienated.¹¹ At least during the time of Mark, am ha-arez designates a social status and indicates an object of contempt. Geographically, Galilee symbolizes am ha-arez. According to Ahn, Mark selected the word ochlos to refer to am ha-arez and took Galilee as the background designating the victims of the society of that time.¹²

Although Byung Mu Ahn tried to summarize articles of Hermann Strathmann and Rudolf Meyer on laos and ochlos, his sociological prejudice caused him to overlook many important points. First, the original and ordinary Scriptural meaning of laos (am in Hebrew) is a people as a union: the people in the sense of men liable for military service and qualified to take part in the administration of justice and to share in the cultus.¹³ In Genesis 34:22 "one people" is a union to

¹¹ TWNT 5: 589.

¹² Ahn, Minjung Theology, p. 150.

¹³ TWNT 4: 33, note 16.

be established between the Shechemites and the family of Jacob. With varying degrees of comprehensiveness, this union of people could be thought of as population of a city (Genesis 19:4), the members of a tribe (Genesis 49:16), or the higher union of a whole people (Genesis 25:8; 48: 29, 33).¹⁴ This word laos could never be used to refer to a privileged group belonging to some ruling community. Ahn misreads Strathmann, who writes,

In many cases laos means the people as distinct from the rulers or upper classes.... Thus the Egyptians are the laos of Pharaoh (Genesis 41:40). In Genesis 47:21 laos denotes the population as distinct from the ground and territory of Egypt:.... am ha-arez (Ezek. 7:27) does not mean country people but the whole population dwelling in the land.¹⁵

Second, there has been a shift of meaning of laos, so that the word is used to emphasize the special and privileged position of Israel as the people of God (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 32:8).¹⁶ Yahweh has separated Israel to Himself as a holy people on the ground of His love and faithfulness to His own promise sworn to the forefathers.¹⁷ However, the conduct of Israel does not correspond to God's election of His sovereign love. The consequence is the judgment of dispersion among the nations (Deut. 4:27).¹⁸ Israel is still God's people, because He will not fail them nor

¹⁴ TWNT 4: 33.

¹⁵ TWNT 4: 34.

¹⁶ TWNT 4: 32.

¹⁷ TWNT 4: 35.

¹⁸ TWNT 4: 36.

destroy them nor forget the covenant with their fathers which He swore to them (Deut. 4:31). In the popular use of the word laos in the New Testament there is no conceived notion of a national union.¹⁹

In Luke 2:30-31 (quoting Is. 40:5), laoi denotes the whole human race in its national and linguistic distinction. And in Luke 2:32, Acts 26:19, 23; Romans 15:10 (quoting Deut. 32:43), laos refers to Israel.²⁰ In a figurative way, laos means the Christian community (Acts 15:14, 18:10, Rom. 9:25, 2 Cor. 6:16; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9,10; Heb. 4:9, 13:12; Rev. 18:4; 21:3).²¹ This Christian community is the true laos, the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:16; 1 Cor 10:18, Rom. 9:6), the true seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29), and the true temple (1 Cor. 3:16). The expression laos is often used for the congregation assembled in worship (Acts 13:15),²² as opposed to the elders, leaders, teachers and rulers of the synagogue. In the New Testament usage of laos, Luke does not take it with the ruling class together, but it is used to refer to both Israel and the Christian community. In the case of Luke 22:66, the laos refers simply to the Jewish population, as Meyer suggests.²³

¹⁹ TWNT 4: 50.

²⁰ TWNT 4: 51.

²¹ TWNT 4: 53.

²² TWNT 4: 57.

²³ TWNT 4: 52.

Third, Ahn did not summarize the New Testament usage ochlos with open-eyed attention. He focused on Mark's usage but discarded John's usage. Ochlos is John's favorite term, which is used some twenty times in his Gospel;²⁴ while laos is used only twice in 11:50 and 18:14. Above all, it must be noted that in John 11:48-52 and the related 18:14 laos is used twice but ethnos four times for Israel. In John this usage betrays a certain effort to ignore the distinction between laos and ethnos.²⁵ At the same time, in John there is no distinction between laos and ochlos.

Overall, in the Gospels ochlos denotes the crowd of people who were the anonymous background to Jesus' ministry.²⁶ Jesus calls this crowd (ochlos) to Himself to instruct them out of His pity for them (Mark 7:14; 8:34; Matt. 15:10; Mark 6:34). But those who merely seek miraculous healing or are simply curious are held at a distance; in this way, tension is increased between Jesus and crowd (Mark 2:4-5; 3:9; 5:30-31). Often Jesus leaves the ochloi and goes into the house to give further instruction to His disciples (Mark 6:45; Matt. 14:22-23; John 5:13).²⁷

The masses of crowd are, as Ahn emphasizes, sometimes contrasted with the authorities of Jerusalem. The

²⁴ TWNT 4: 50.

²⁵ TWNT 4: 51.

²⁶ TWNT 4: 586.

²⁷ TWNT 5: 586-587.

ochlos in John 5:13 is a Galilean crowd. But in John 7:11 the ochlos is used for the Jewish crowd, the common people of Jerusalem.²⁸ Evidence shows that ochlos does not in every case denote a particular stratum of society,²⁹ so that the response which Jesus finds among the ochlos is by no means consistent. Some of the ochlos see Jesus as Messiah, but others reject Him altogether. There are those of the ochlos who fall away after first believing in Him and paying homage (John 6:15, 66).³⁰ Ahn missed this point and asserted that the ochlos were anti-Jerusalem and clearly on the side of Jesus (with reference to Mark 2:4-6; 3:2-21; 4:1; 11:18, 27, 32).³¹

Fourth, at the background of Ahn's sociological understanding of the ochlos lies the composition date of Mark's Gospel. Ahn suggests that the Gospel of Mark was written when the Jewish War had already started, or when Jerusalem was already occupied in 70 A.D. and the Jews were being expelled in mass from the land of Judea.

Often chapter 13 of the Gospel of Mark is taken as the criterion for determining the date of the authorship of the Gospel, depending on whether one takes the account as prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem or as an expression of the reality after the fall of Jerusalem. However,

²⁸TWNT 5: 588.

²⁹TWNT 5: 588; According to Rudolf Meyer, the masses of pilgrims from all parts of the country are frequently mentioned as ochlos (John 8:12; 10:21; 12:20, 31, 40, 43, 49).

³⁰TWNT 5: 589.

³¹Byung Mu Ahn, p. 141.

considering the situation of the ochlos as they appear in Mark - the four thousand people who followed Jesus for three days without food (Mark 8:1-10) - I conclude that Mark 13 reflects the situation of the people of Israel, including Christians, who had been expelled from their homeland after the Jewish War. Even the expression in Mark 6:34 regarding Jesus' attitude to the five thousand, "Jesus was moved with compassion as they were as sheep without a shepherd," is a reflection of the historical reality of the people.³²

Ahn's assumption has some weak points. The composition date of 70 A.D. is not supported by the external evidence of the early tradition reported by Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria who maintain that Mark wrote his Gospel during Peter's lifetime, subsequent to his departure from the place where Mark was. The internal evidence in reference to Mark 13:14, "abomination of desolation," cannot be used for that date without reservation. If it be granted that Jesus had the power to predict, Mark 13:14 ceases to be a crux of the chronological problem. On the other hand, the situation of the ochlos in reference to suffering and persecution cannot be used to support the date of 70 A.D. either, because they are both too general to tie down to any specific period.³³ For Example, Acts 8:1 describes a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem and their scattering throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Acts 11:28 speaks about a great famine which was taking place all over the world in the region of Claudius.

³²Ibid., p.152.

³³Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity-Press, 1970), pp. 72-75.

Fifth, it is true that ochlos and am ha-arez are used to signify those who are ignorant of the law or do not practice it.³⁴ They have a sociological sense. But biblically speaking, the sociological concept of am ha-arez is not found in the Old Testament.³⁵ Not until 200 A.D., according to Meyer, does the Rabbinic concept of am ha-arez acquire secondarily a sociological nuance.³⁶ In the Old Testament, am ha-arez denotes the free, property-owning, peasant full-citizens of Judah as the proper people liable for military service (2 Kings 11:13-18), who intervened activity in politics (2 Kings 12:20-21; 21:24). The country Levites are supposed to be the actual spokesmen of this am ha-arez (Deut. 12:12; 14:27).³⁷ The usage of the ochlos, appearing sixty-one times in the Septuagint, indicates that the term ochlos does not have any theological implication, as is also clearly shown in the Gospels, especially in John. This term ochlos is the common noun, interchangeable with laos, which had been used in the common sense with the varying degrees of comprehensiveness by the Greek-Jews. Mark's use of ochlos is definitely based upon the tradition

³⁴ Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel 2 vol. (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 1: 70-72.

³⁵ See, Chung Choon Kim, "The Old Testament Basis for Theology of Minjung," The Theological Thought 24 (Spring 1979):7-8

³⁶ Rudolf Meyer, "Der am ha-arez," Judaica 3 (1949): 194.

³⁷ Gerhard von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, trans. by David Stalker (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 65-67.

of such a community.³⁸

habiru (the Hebrews)

It is the Old Testament word habiru that is sought by Joon Suh Park, professor of Old Testament at Yonsei University, Seoul, to develop the concept of minjung theologically and biblically. In his article, "God in the Old Testament: God of the Hebrews," Park refers to the clay tablets at Amarna, Wadi Hammamat, Mari, and Nuzi to identify habiru not as the ethnic group but as the appellative of the poor and exploited group of wanderers. In these tablets, habiru are described as the anti-Egyptian powers which spread throughout all the areas of Canaan. These habiru did not belong to the ruling class in political terms, but the group resisting against the established ruling powers. These habiru were slaves who trod wine or quarried out stones, or were forced to work for the building up of a sacred temple. They were sometimes described as the lawless plunderers, a band of robbers, and the socially-alienated marginals. Through the analysis of these clay tablets, Park concludes that the term habiru is the appellative of the economically poor, the socially alienated and the politically powerless of no status who were not accepted in any place through the Ancient Near-East.³⁹ Habiru does not denote a specific

³⁸ Gyung Yon Jun, "Assessment of Minjung Theology," in A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea, (Seoul: Korea Christian Academy, 1983), p. 96.

³⁹ TWNT 3: 359.

ethnic group of blood relationship, nor a community of the same language.⁴⁰

In order to support his own conclusion, Park, in turn, refers to the Old Testament usage of the word habiru. First of all, Park acknowledges that the word habiru is a synonym of "Israel" as the specifically chosen people of God, on the basis of Jonah 1:9, "I am a Hebrew," and Philip-
 pians 3:5, "a Hebrew of Hebrews."⁴¹ But he lays aside this concept of habiru as an exception. What follows is his analysis of the Old Testament usage of the word habiru.⁴² In Genesis 14:13 Abraham is called the habiru (the Hebrew). Abraham was an alien wanderer in the land of Canaan, who moved from Ur of the Chaldeans by way of Haran. Abraham introduced himself to the sons of Heth, saying, "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you," (Gen. 23:3) and he was introduced as an alien wanderer by his descendants as well (Deut. 26:5). In Genesis 39:14, 17 Joseph is called "a Hebrew" or "the Hebrew slave"; in Genesis 43:32 Joseph's brothers are treated as the Hebrews with whom the Egyptians could not eat bread together. All these Scriptural referen-
 ces of Genesis use the word habiru in the same sense of the ancient Near-Eastern habiru.

⁴⁰Joon Suh Park, "God in the Old Testament: God of the Hebrews," in Minjung and Korean Theology, pp. 133-139.

⁴¹"A Hebrew of Hebrews" denotes a pure-blooded Jew, born of Jewish parents, inherited a strong affection for the national language, religion, and manners of life.

⁴²Joon Suh Park, pp. 139-147.

This concept of habiru as an alien stranger runs, according to Park, through the rest of the Old Testament. In Exodus 2:6 Moses is called a child of the Hebrews, those who were the forced slave-workers of the Egyptians. In Exodus 9:1, 13; 10:3 the Lord introduces Himself as the God of the Hebrews. This God is the Lord who liberated the Hebrews from the bondage of the Egyptians' house. In other words, the Hebrews' God was the God of the men who were weak and powerless socially, economically, legally, and culturally. Similarly, in 1 Samuel 13:19-22 the Philistines call the Israelites "Hebrews," because the Philistines thought themselves superior to the Israelites who did not have swords.

From the time of the Davidic reign on, according to Park, the word habiru came to be replaced by the word Israel, because David established a strong nation of the Israelite own power. From this time on, the prophets appeared to prevent the religion of the Hebrews from being the religion of the elite class ruling over the common people. This indicates that the root of the Israelite religion lies in the God of the Hebrews.⁴³

Park's understanding of habiru can be found in George E. Mendenhall, who assumes that by the process of a withdrawal, not physically and geographically, but politically and subjectively, from any obligation to the existing political regimes (and therefore, the renunciation of any

⁴³ See, Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), pp. 236-241.

protection from these sources), large population groups became "Hebrews."⁴⁴ Mendenhall claims that genealogical descent did not actually produce any tribe in antiquity, but "what constituted membership in the tribe was essentially a subject feeling of belonging and loyalty." Therefore, no one could be born a "Hebrew;" he became so only by his own socio-political action.⁴⁵

Gerhard von Rad differentiates the name "Hebrews" from "Israel" and "Judah." "Israel" is originally the name of a sacral league of tribes, which denotes the totality of the elect of Yahweh and those united in the Yahweh religion. "Judah" is the name of a tribe though only an essentially political name.⁴⁶ After the fall of the northern kingdom and the deportation of 722 B.C., "Israel" is adopted and used again for the whole of God's people as a spiritual description. This use of the term "Israel," as the name of the people of God as such, becomes normative for subsequent generations in spite of political and geographical changes. But the name "Hebrew" is not the name of a people but an appellation of those who are engaged in forced service, partly in voluntary slavery, and partly in rebellious activity. The Hebrews do not constitute an ethnic unity. Rather, this name habiru carries with it a sense, not of national

⁴⁴George E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist 25 (1962): 73-75.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 70-71.

⁴⁶TWNT 3: p. 357.

pride, but of humility and even contempt.⁴⁷

To the contrary, Jacob Milgrom contends that the ethnic unity of early Israel must be presupposed, since religious conversion is neither attested nor possible in ancient Israel before the second temple period, and in the pre-exile period a resident alien remained an assimilated unconverted ethnic entity.⁴⁸

What is the real usage of the name habiru (the Hebrew)? It is better to review the Scriptural passages to which Joon Suh Park referred, for the right understanding of the name habiru. In Jonah 1:9 and Philippians 3:5, the name habiru is most surely a synonym of Israel, the specific elect of God. This usage is supported by Genesis 14:13; 40:15; 1 Samuel 4:6, Acts 6:1 and 2 Corinthians 11:22. "Abram the Hebrew" in Genesis 14:13, had allies such as the Amorites as well as his own trained men of three hundred and eighteen; the king of Sodom also welcomed him after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:13-17). In addition, Abraham is called as God's mighty prince by the sons of Heth (Gen. 23:6), while he introduces himself as a stranger and a sojourner (Gen. 23:4). "The land of the Hebrews" of Genesis 40:15 also indicates that the name "Hebrews" denotes the family group of blood relationship,

⁴⁷ TWNT 3: pp.359-360.

⁴⁸ Jacob Milgrom, "Religious Conversion and Revolt Model for the Formation of Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature 101/2 (1982):169, 175-176; see, Burke O. Long, "The Social World of Ancient Israel," Interpretation 36 (1982):254.

namely, Jacob's family. In 1 Samuel 4:5-8 the Philistines were afraid when they heard the great shout of the Hebrews, who had the ark of Yahweh -- whose mighty hands smote the Egyptians with diverse plagues. And in the New Testament times, the same "Hebrews" was used especially of those Jews who spoke Hebrew or rather Aramaic, in distinction from the Hellenists, their fellow country men who spoke Greek (Acts 6:1).

If all these Scriptural passages support the name habiru to denote the ethnic people of Israelites, how can this understanding of habiru be designated as an exception? Likewise, how can these Hebrews be treated as the band of thieves or the wandering marginals who were economically poor, politically powerless, culturally and socially alienated? In fact, the Israelites were often chastened by their own God to be humbled in the presence of some strong nations. They were trained by God in special ways for their sanctification which is demanded of the holy nation and His possessed people.

On the other hand, in Exodus 9:1, 13; 10:3, God introduces Himself as the God of the Hebrews. In these verses the God of Hebrews calls the Hebrews as His own people, His special elect, so to speak. And, these Hebrews were themselves considered as "strangers" in the land with respect to its real owner, Yahweh their God (Lev. 25:23; Deut. 32:43; 2 Chron. 7:20; Hosea 9:3). The land was conquered not as the result of a social revolution but by God's

power and intervention (Deut. 1:36-39; Joshua 1:2; 3:9-10; 10:13-14; 11:20-23). At this point, it must be noted that the Hebrews should not be assimilated with the Canaanites (Joshua 23:12-13; Deut. 9:1-5), which is a very significant factor for the identification of the Hebrews as an ethnic group of God's special elect. Considering these Scriptural verses, the name "Hebrews" in its Scriptural usage cannot be the term designating the wandering lowly beggars marginalized from the existing political regimes.⁴⁹

"My People" of Micah

On the basis of the terms, "my people" and "this people" of Micah, Hee Suk Moon, former professor of Old Testament at Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Seoul, assumes that the concept of "my people" in Micah corresponds to the concept of minjung developed by Nam Dong Suh. In Micah 2:8 is found the most striking example of a conflict between a suffering people and the ruling class in the Old Testament. Moon follows the rendering of the Revised Standard Version, "But you rise against my people as an enemy." In this rendering, "you" indicates "this people;" and "this people" is regarded as "an enemy" of "my people."

In this respect, Micah is supposed to differentiate this people as an enemy from my people. "My people" is understood, for Micah, not as the rich ruling class of

⁴⁹See, Myung Hyuk Kim, "The View of God and the Socio-economic Characteristics of Minjung Theology," in State and Church, 2 vols. (Seoul: Naewae jonggyo younguso, 1984), 2: 261-262.

Jerusalem, but as the country people of Moresheth. The ancient site of Moreshet has been identified as the modern Tell el-Judeideh, a site occupying a strategic location. Five cities built by Rehoboam (2 Chron. 11:7-9) were located within ten kilometers of Moresheth. Control of these cities was essential for the security of Jerusalem, which was located thirty-three kilometers north east of Moresheth. Government officials and soldiers moved in and out of these fortress cities in the vicinity of Moresheth (2 Chron. 19:5). They took houses, land, and property from "my people" (Micah 2:2). In 3:8 Micah calls attention to the injustice and illegality which are done in Jerusalem by the ruling class. In chapters 3 and 5, "my people" is used to refer not only to the country people, but also to those exploited people of Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the religious leaders gave instructions and divine statutes for prices and money to promote their religious affairs.⁵⁰

Through his analysis of Micah, Moon tries to identify "my people" with the "have-nots," the victims of social injustice and "this people" with the unjust elite class such as government officials, soldiers, and religious leaders. But Moon's analysis is class-conscious and prejudicial in character, and the Revised Standard Version rendering of Micah 2:8 is problematic.⁵¹ Micah 2:8 can be translated,

⁵⁰Hee Suk Moon, "An Old Testament Understanding of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, pp. 131-133.

⁵¹The RSV renders Hebrew etmul as a compound preposition, "against."

"Recently my people have arisen as an enemy."⁵² In this translation, "my people" is regarded as God's enemy because of the evil deeds they have done. In Micah 3:4, 5 it must be noted that "my people" were led astray by the prophets to practice evil deeds, so that the Lord would not answer their crying. In this respect, "my people" as well as "this people" are wicked in the presence of God. Therefore, these two kinds of people cannot be contrasted. In fact, Micah has focused his message on "the remnant of Jacob" (2:12; 5:8; 7:18), and has announced God's judgment to all the peoples without distinguishing between "this people" and "my people" (1:2). They were sinners alike before God. All the people who were chosen as God's people have arisen as an enemy. For Micah, "my people" and "this people" are used interchangeably, and contrasted with "the remnant of Jacob."

anawim (or, ptochoi, the poor)

The word "poor" is supposed by Nam Dong Suh as Scriptural equivalent of minjung. In the Old Testament there are ani, anawim, ebyon and dal⁵³ for the word "poor;" and in the New Testament there are ptochos and penes. Among these

⁵²New American Standard Bible, New International Version, and Korean Bible render etmul as "recently" (literally, "yesterday").

⁵³ani (the afflicted) are those lacking the strength to secure their rights and are therefore completely vulnerable; anawim (the meek) means those who are humble in disposition and character, or those who bow voluntarily under the hand of God; ebyon (the needy) refers to those who lack money and general resources; dal (the poor) are those lacking a share in the wealth. (A Dictionary of the Bible, 1900 ed., s. v. "poor" by S. R. Driver).

Hebrew and Greek words, Suh picks up anawim and ptochoi (plural of ptochos) as most nearly equivalent words for the "minjung."⁵⁴

Suh refers to Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12 and Isaiah 52:13; 53:12 to illuminate the word anawim. The Book of Zephaniah is focused on the day of Judgment and the remnant of Israel. On the day of the Lord He will completely remove all things and punish all men of the earth, but the remnant of Israel will be hidden from His anger and survive His judgment (Zeph. 1:2, 18; 2:3; 3:12-20). This remnant of Israel described as the "humble" of the earth (Zeph. 2:3) and a "humble and lowly people" (Zeph. 3:12). These humble and lowly people are the ones who were made humble themselves and deeply felt a just indignation yearning for justice to be done, because they had experienced poverty, oppression, exploitation and discrimination. In these humble people, both the social suffering and the religious piety were found. The model combination of social suffering and religious piety is "the suffering servant of Yahweh" of Isaiah 52:13; 53:12. This servant is a type of Jesus, the Messiah. These humble people can be found in a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6) and "a chosen race, a royal priesthood and a people for God's own possession." (1 Peter 2:9).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 109, 309.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 109-110.

Suh's understanding of the Old Testament usage of the word "poor" seems to be biblically balanced. His comment on this word anawim is almost the same as that one given by Herman Ridderbos, a conservative Biblical scholar, who writes,

the poor represent the socially oppressed, those who suffer from the power of injustice and are harrassed by those who consider their own advantage and influence. They are, however, at the same time, those who remain faithful to God and expect salvation from His kingdom alone.⁵⁶

Suh's understanding of anawim is certainly supported by many Scriptural passages. Anawim in such passages as Job 24:4, Psalm 10:12, 17 and Amos 2:9 connotes oppression and designates the poor as wrongfully impoverished by the rich and powerful. And such references as Amos 8:5-6 (dishonest business), Habakkuk 2:6 (exorbitant interest), Micah 2:1-2 (seizure of land), Jeremiah 22:13-19 (non-payment of wages), Isaiah 5:23 (manipulation of justice), and Micah 6:12 (deceit and violence on the part of the rich), show the prophetic perspective on the poor as an oppressed socio-economic group.

The term anawim is also used to denote inward distress as well as outward oppression, especially distress over one's own sinfulness. In Numbers 12:3 Moses is said to be very poor (anaw), more than any man, in the sense of bowing before the Word of God. This term anawim has, thus,

⁵⁶ Herman Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom, trans. H. de Jongste (Philadelphia: the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1963), p. 188.

an essentially moral religious connotation. This term denotes a man's attitude toward God, rather than towards other men. Therefore, anawim are the humble-minded who bow voluntarily under the hand of God, and are submissive to the divine will.⁵⁷ Anawim are opposed to the proud evildoers (Ps. 39: 10-12).

Outward oppression and inward distress are often found together, as in Psalms 25 and 39. In Psalm 25 David begins his prayer with a plea that his enemies not be allowed to exult over him (verses 1-3). His enemies dealt him treacherously without cause. At the same time, David is very mindful of his sinfulness and need for forgiveness of his own sins (verses 7, 18). Describing himself as ani (verse 16; or, anawim in verse 8), David prays for deliverance and for forgiveness (verses 18-19). The anawim are not simply the oppressed, but they are sinners who are taught the way of the Lord (verses 8,9), who keep His covenant (verse 10), and who wait on the Lord (verse 21).

On the other hand, Nam Dong Suh finds the New Testament equivalent of "minjung" in ptochos (plural, ptochoi). While penes is the one who is poor in the relative sense, ptochos connotes absolute poverty.⁵⁸ According to Suh, the

⁵⁷Amos 2:9; 8:4; Isa. 11:4; 29:19; 32:7; Psalm 9:18; 10:12; 22:26; 24:2; 76:9; 147:6; 149:4.

⁵⁸Nam Dong Suh, p. 398; see TWNT 6: 902: According to Ernst Bammel, there is no longer any discernible distinction between ptochos and penes in the New Testament; in particular, the element of beseeching (as a beggar) is no longer present in ptochos.

ptochoi are literally beggars who cannot afford to live without depending on other's almsgiving. The word ptochoi in the New Testament, thus, denotes the poor in socio-economical terms, even though in Matthew 5:3 ptochoi is spiritualized to signify "the poor in heart." In order to support this connotation, Suh refers to such passages as Luke 14:13, 21; Matthew 11:5; 25: 35-40; Mark 10:46; (the sick and disabled), Revelation 3:17; James 2:3, 15 (the naked without clothing), Luke 3:11; 6:20-21; Matthew 25:35-36; 6:25; James 2:15-16 (the hungry in need of daily food), and Acts 3:1; Mark 14:7 (the poor beggars).⁵⁹ These referential passages are, in fact, picked up to support Suh's own sociological prejudice. In analyzing the usage of ptochoi Suh lost balance and became lop-sided to emphasize its socio-economical aspect.

But the New Testament use of the term ptochoi has the same connotation as the Hebrew anawim, in that the Septuagint uses ptochoi most frequently in translating ani and anawim. In other words, ptochoi is used both literally and figuratively and has both a religious and an economic connotation.⁶⁰ This usage is, for example, clearly seen in Revelation 3:14-21. The church at Laodicea was apparently well-off and at ease. They claimed to be rich and to need nothing. But the Lord's analysis of the situation was quite the opposite: "You do not know that you are wretched and

⁵⁹Nam Dong Suh, p. 399.

⁶⁰TWNT 6: 902, 910-911.

miserable and poor and blind and naked" (verse 17). They were materially rich, but spiritually poor (ptochoi).⁶¹

At the same time, the socio-economical status of Christ's disciples and Early Christians can illuminate that the ptochoi in the New Testament are not always poor in the literal sense: "the poor without clothing and in need of daily food" (James 2:15). In that Jesus identified His disciples (or, Christians) as the poor (Matt. 5:3), all the Christians can be called "the poor." Were His disciples and Early Christian poor absolutely, in need of daily food, in socio-economical terms? Obviously, no. His disciples had their own fishing boats and nets; James and John had hired servants of their own (Mark 1:20). Crispus was a ruler of the synagogue (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14); Erastus was city treasurer (Rom 16:23). Gaius had such a big mansion which could accommodate an assembly of Corinthians (Rom. 16:23). Aquila and Priscilla were, like Paul, tent makers (Acts 18:3) who followed their trade from place to place. And Philemon had a church in his house (Philemon 2).⁶²

In fact, these Scriptural terms for the poor are understood as theological categories, so that they are identified as those who love God (Ps. 12:1, 5; 140:12-13), who are the faithful (Ps. 40:1, 17), who are His servants (Ps.

⁶¹See, David C. Jones, "Who are the poor?" Presbyterian 2 (Fall 1979):62-72.

⁶²See, Abraham J. Malherbe, Social Aspect of Early Christianity (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), pp. 71-78.

147:6; 149:4), and who love His name and call on it (Ps. 9:9-10; 116:3-11). The term "poor" appears especially in Psalms, which are prayers not just of the socio-economically poor underdogs but of the faithful believers. David is the author of many of these psalms, which is a very significant factor for the identification of the so-called poor.⁶³

Considering these Scriptural references, it can be concluded that the term anawim (or, ptochoi) does not always mean the socio-economically poor (as Ahn and others stress), but the spiritually poor and godly in heart (Ps. 86:1-2; Matt. 5:3) in need of spiritual food, which is God's Word (Ps. 119: 67, 71).

"Minjung" as Understood within Minjung Theology

Minjung theologians have sought to analyze such Biblical equivalents of minjung as am ha-arez, ochlos, habiru, anawim, ptochoi, and "my people" of Micah, but in fact, this Korean term minjung has been originally used in the secular areas in politico-ideological terms and adopted in turn to the theological arena. Minjung theologians have added to the term "minjung" some Christian ideas based on selected Scriptural texts. In this section, the concept of minjung is outlined within minjung theology in three respects: existential, collective, and class-conscious.

⁶³ Paul L. Schrieber, "Liberation Theology and the Old Testament: an Exegetical Critique," Concordia Journal 13 (January 1987):39.

"Minjung" as an Existential Concept
Historical Subject⁶⁴: Responsible Being⁶⁵

Genesis 1:28 says, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." By making reference to this Scriptural passage, Nam Dong Suh advocates that minjung are those who eat the food produced by their own labor, who till and cultivate the soil, and keep their own nation and its culture not just with words but with their very lives.⁶⁶ In this sense, minjung are the subjects of productive labor, creators of civilization, and constructors of culture. So to speak, minjung are the subjects of history.⁶⁷

Since minjung are the subjects of history, the key of this universe's fortune is held by minjung. In order to support this idea, Byung Mu Ahn refers to Romans 8:19, "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." Ahn explains this passage in the sense that for Paul the liberation of the creatures and the revealing of the real man stand and fall together. The existential value of creatures is determined in connection

⁶⁴The term "historical subject" denotes that man has his own power and authority as the subject in making history.

⁶⁵The term "responsible being" denotes that man is the only source and authority in making history.

⁶⁶Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, p. 155; see, Hee Suk Moon, "An Old Testament Understanding of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, p. 126.

⁶⁷Chi Ha Kim, Bab (food) (Wae-gwan: Bundo Publishing Company. 1984), p. 131.

with the will of man. When the real man is revealed, that is, when humanization is achieved, the salvation of history comes to be possible.⁶⁸

Ahn has sought to find this real man in minjung in reference with 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. The classes of the foolish, the weak, the base, and the despised of the world, chosen by God to accomplish the society of egalitarianism, belong to the real man. They are practically the historical subjects and characters who have the power and authority to create a new society of glory.⁶⁹

Before commenting on the understanding of Suh and Ahn about minjung and the subjects of history, it must be noted that this sort of understanding of minjung is a reflection of the Marxist view of man. This reflection is clearly shown in Suh, who writes, "minjung are the unique subjects of history, who have played a role as the resisters under the colonial regimes and produced the values necessary for all the areas of our lives."⁷⁰ Marxism understands history as ultimately dependent on man's organization of the process through which he produces the goods to satisfy his needs.⁷¹ According to Marxism, the liberation

⁶⁸Byung Mu Ahn, Yuksa-wa Hae suk (History and Interpretation) (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1984), pp. 224-227.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 260-261.

⁷⁰Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 195, 209.

⁷¹Jose Miguez Bonino, Christians and Marxists (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), p. 93.

or emancipation of the oppressed class necessarily implies the creation of a new society.⁷² Considering the Marxist framework of study open to the dynamism of history and to a projective view of human activity and the conflicting understanding of reality, it is not difficult to denote the Marxist reflection implicit in minjung theology's understanding of man and history.⁷³

Suh and Ahn have some definite difficulties explaining the above mentioned Scriptural passages. In Genesis 1 and 2 man is commanded to subdue the earth and cultivate and keep it. But in 1:29 and 2:16, following these commands of God, it reads, "I have given you every plant yielding seed. . . it shall be food for you;" "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely." Without God's command, man cannot subdue, cultivate, and keep the earth, nor can man eat from any tree freely.⁷⁴ Man labors, but God gives man food to eat. Therefore, Jesus taught us to pray for our daily food (Matt. 5:11). Man is only a laborer as God's agent: God is the unique Creator and Giver (see, Job 1:21). Man is responsible to do God's command, but he never has real authority over the earth. Only God has authority over all. All things are from Him, through Him, and to Him alone (Rom. 11:36).

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Jose Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 34-35; for details, see following pp. 126-130.

⁷⁴When man eats from the tree forbidden by God, he shall surely die (Gen. 2:17).

In reference to Romans 8:19, Ahn explains that the liberation of creatures is absolutely dependent upon the revelation of the real man, namely, the accomplishment of humanization by the minjung in the new society. But Romans 8:19 must be explained in its context. In this context (verses 18-23), sufferings, futility, corruption, and groan, on the one hand, are compared with glory (verse 18), and redemption of body (verse 23), on the other. Paul is convinced that the sufferings and groanings of the present time are but a slight thing in comparison with the glory which is to be revealed on the day of Christ's Parousia. At the same time, on that day, our corrupted body will be absolutely transformed to a glorious one. At this point, in connection with Ahn's explanation, we must take into consideration the reason why the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. The reason is given in verse 20. The creation came to be subjected to futility and corruption, not of its own, but because of God who subjected it on account of man's fall (see Gen. 3:17-19). This God called His own sons, justified them, and also glorified them (Rom. 8:30). He will reveal His glory to His sons, and in turn, He will also set creation free into the glory of God. In other words, when at last the children of God are made manifest in glory, creation will receive again its proper liberty. In this respect, creation waits for that revealing. The first cause of both corruption and liberty of creation is God Himself. The accomplishment of humanization is not

the cause of the liberty of creation. God alone is the first cause of the glorious redemption of both His sons and creation.⁷⁵ The final redemption of all creation is absolutely dependent upon God and his sovereignty alone. The absolute authority of history belongs to God alone.

An Already-saved People

The preaching of sin and repentance to the crowd (which is emphasized by Luke but is not found in Mark except three times, 1:4, 15; 6:12) is understood as an ideology of the ruling class,⁷⁶ considering Jesus' attitude toward the ochlos. Jesus accepted and supported the so-called sinners of the condemned and alienated class without making any conditions. He received them as they were and promised them the future, namely, the kingdom of God.⁷⁷ He never rebuked the ochlos, though He often fiercely criticized His disciples for their misunderstanding of the parables (4:13; 7:1), their unbelief during the storm (4:35-41; 6:51-52), and their lack of understanding of Jesus's sufferings (8:32; 9:32; 10:32). On the basis of this assumption, Byung Mu Ahn understands minjung as the already-saved people, namely, God's chosen elite.⁷⁸ Minjung are announced and accepted as

⁷⁵ See, C. E. B. Cranfield, Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 184-199.

⁷⁶ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 105.

⁷⁷ Byung Mu Ahn, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark," in Minjung Theology, p. 142.

⁷⁸ Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation, pp. 231-252.

"my mother and brother" by Jesus Himself (Mark 3:34). Consequently, Suh contends that minjung, the so-called sinners, are not those who sin, but those who are sinned against.⁷⁹

Commenting on Luke 14:15-24, Suh writes that minjung such as the poor, crippled, blind, and lame are invited to the great banquet without any condition such as repentance of sins and faith in the forgiveness of sins.⁸⁰ The future kingdom of God, which is promised by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount, unconditionally belongs to the minjung.⁸¹

Minjung theology beautifies minjung, but in Scripture Jesus does not have any faith in them (John 2:23-25). Jesus knew what was in man. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' intimate audience is His disciples rather than the ochlos. In Matthew 5:1, 2, when His disciples came to Him and sat down near Him, Jesus began to teach them. Luke makes it clear by describing that Jesus turned His gaze on His disciples, began to speak to them, and promised His blessings to them. In Luke 6:20, the kingdom of God is promised to Jesus' disciples rather than the ochlos.

In His comment on Mark 2:17, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners," Ahn contends that Mark uses the term kalesai in order to show that Jesus called the crowd as He called of His disciples. Ahn's contention that the crowd

⁷⁹ Nam Dong Suh, p. 107.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 230.

⁸¹ Young Jin Min, "Assessment on the Significance of Minjung Theology in Trajectories," in A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea, p. 48.

are not called sinners but disciples; therefore, there is no need for them to repent. Ahn discards Luke 5:32, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," because he considers Luke's passage as evidence of the expanding authority of the apostles and the church.⁸² This, of course, is contrary to Scripture which reveals that all men are sinners before God who need to repent of their sins (Rom. 3:23).

Minjung as the Messiah

Minjung theology understands the rich as generally being outside the realm of salvation. Rich people lend commitment to the gospel by way of repentance and alms-giving, in other words, by achieving solidarity with the poor. In this respect, the poor minjung are supposed to be the historical bearers of the gospel as the subjects of God's salvation history.⁸³ A minjung theologian makes confession to the minjung as follows:

In the light of the Sermon on the Mount, the kingdom of God is definitely yours. If you forgive us, we may be forgiven; but if you don't forgive us, nobody can forgive us, because we committed sins against you . . . Even God can't forgive us . . . Our salvation depends on you with whom Jesus identified Himself.⁸⁴

Chi Ha Kim makes it clear that the most miserable of the lower people should become the subjects and the vanguard

⁸²Minjung Theology, p. 142.

⁸³Nam dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 402-405.

⁸⁴Young Jin Min, pp. 48-49.

of the work of salvation; the Messiah comes from the wicked prisoners who are suppressed by sophisticated people and live in the bitterness of starvation. He is convinced that the Messiah comes from the bottom.⁸⁵

In the interpretation of the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), Suh supposes that the man who fell into the robbers' hands plays the role of Christ. Salvation and the realization of humanity depend upon the positive response and attitude toward the man fallen among robbers. The man who fell into the robbers' hands is the secular Christ. In the midst of the suppressed minjung suffering from the structural evil, Christ can be found.⁸⁶ In this connection, it is said that to believe in Christianity is to believe in the revolt event of the Exodus of the slaves.⁸⁷ In other words, by way of the commitment to the minjung's revolt-event, man can liberate himself.

At the basis of minjung theology's understanding of minjung as the secular Christ there is the denial of the unique Messiahship of Jesus. According to the Scriptural teaching, however, Jesus is the way and unique mediator between man and God (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5). Without personal belief in Christ Jesus there can be no salvation (Acts 16:31). The weak point of minjung theology is its

⁸⁵Minjung Theology, p. 156.

⁸⁶Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 107, 116-117, 119.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 261.

failure to distinguish faith as the means of salvation from the fruit of faith as the result of salvation. Commitment to the poor minjung is actually the fruit of the believer's faith.

On the other hand, Suh's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is referred to in order to support his view of minjung as the Messiah, is presumptive as well as ideological. As mentioned earlier, the Scriptural text must be interpreted in its context, supported by other clear passages, and the New Testament passages should be interpreted against the background of the Old Testament parallel, if possible. Jesus Himself employed the hermeneutical technique of explaining Scripture with Scripture, and He identified His own interpretation with that of Scripture itself. By teaching the parable of the Good Samaritan, which echoes familiar words of Scripture (2 Chron. 28: 5-15), Jesus demonstrated that His words are a continuation of the Scripture.⁸⁸

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus teaches Leviticus 19:18 with 2 Chronicles 28:5-15. Leviticus 19:18 reads "You shall not take vengeance . . . but you shall love your neighbour as yourself." And the outline of 2 Chronicles 28:5-15 is as follows: massive number of Judeans were captured and smote by Israelites, their own brethren. They were brought to Samaria, where there was Oded, a prophet of

⁸⁸ F. Scott Spencer, "2 Chronicles 28:5-15, and the Parable of the Good Samaritan," Westminster Theological Journal 46 (1984):337.

the Lord. He gave warning to the Israelites not to bring those captives in to Samaria. So the Israelite officers took the captives, gave them clothes, fed them and gave them with oil, led all their feeble ones on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho. Then they returned to Samaria. This chapter of 2 Chronicles highlights the response of Israel's leaders to Judah's suffering.

Considering this Old Testament parallel, "a certain man" of Luke 10:30 can be considered as a Jew from Jerusalem.⁸⁹ He should not be regarded as innocent, even though Jesus does not say anything about his sinfulness. He should be a brother of the robbers. By the way, the main focus of this parable is "neighbor" who gives help to his brother in need (27, 36), rather than "a wounded man."

"Minjung" as a Collective Concept:
the Social Being

Man is defined by Suh not as an individual entity but as a collective soul of the socio-economical unity.⁹⁰ Consequently, Suh understands minjung as a collective social power.⁹¹ In this definition, Suh does not suggest any Scriptural reference except for Luke 14:15-24;⁹² rather he refers

⁸⁹William Hendricksen, Luke: New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapid: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 593.

⁹⁰"Syposium: Discussion on Theology of Minjung," The Theological Thought 24(Spring 1979): 128.

⁹¹Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 206.

⁹²Luke 14:15-24 does not have any idea about the collective concept of man. There appears the sick, lame, blind and so forth. They are no more than a crowd.

to Sok Hon Ham, a Quaker and historian,⁹³ who molded ssial, a pure Korean term for the minjung of Chinese letters. By ssial Ham means a unit of the people bound with socio-political ideal.⁹⁴ Primarily, ssial is the ordinary man who is born by his mother, a man of no status, quite in contrast with a king or ruler. This ssial presupposes the conflicting relationship between the rulers and the ruled. For Ham, ssial is the subject of history and nation, in socio-political terms.⁹⁵

Defining minjung in collective terms, Suh distinguishes minjung from people (in Greek, laos), proletariat, mass, and so forth. The term "people" denotes subjects of a ruler who are used to subjecting themselves to the rulers. But minjung are subjects of themselves who hold the key of their lives in their own hands. The term "proletariat" denotes the vital power of revolution, seen as being concerned only with an economic problem. Minjung, however, are concerned not only with economics, but also with socio-cultural problems. In other words, while "proletariat" is the term for the economic entity, "minjung" is the term for the socio-economico-cultural entity. The term "mass" denotes merely the disorderly crowd which consist of the intellec-

⁹³ Nam Dong Suh, p. 237.

⁹⁴ Sok Hon Ham, "True meaning of Ssial," in Minjung and Korean Theology, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 9-11.

tual and the rich as well as the uneducated and poor. But minjung is a defined group in a particular politico-theological concept. On the other hand, "minjung" is different from "citizen," which denotes the social group of the capitalist economic system. In contrast with "citizen," minjung is the resisting force which fights for the identity of their nation under foreign control.⁹⁶

In Suh's opinion, the poor, lame, sick, and blind of Luke 14:15-24 are minjung in the collective sense; they are men of no vested rights, no social status, no possessions, no physical condition to labor, but they are men who are invited to the new kingdom of God. Actually, however, in this Scriptural passage there is no hint that these are men who are subjects of themselves. They are dependent upon others. They are not orderly, but disorderly. They do not seem to have any socio-political spirit. How can the crowd be regarded as minjung?

Also, in this passage there is no mention about repentance of sins or other conditions to enter the kingdom of God; but in the verses following (Luke 14: 25-30, also chap. 15), Luke mentions some conditions to be Jesus' disciples. His message focuses on repentance of sins. Considering this context, Luke 14: 15-24 does not have any real connection with the collective concept of minjung. In other words, this collective concept does not have any

⁹⁶Nam Dong Suh, pp. 205-209, 224-229.

Scriptural basis.

In the Scriptures, there is indeed a collective or corporate concept of man. The word Adam is originally a common noun denoting either a human being (Gen. 2:5), or mankind collectively (Gen. 1:26).⁹⁷ And in Romans 5:12-21, Paul shows that in Adam and in Christ all men are incorporated: just as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But it must be noted that membership of the kingdom of God is determined from above (John 1:12-13) or by baptism into Christ, not determined sociologically. Incorporation in Adam is not possible sociologically, but occurs by natural birth. Collectively, man is of Christ or of Adam.

"Minjung" as a Class Concept

The Scriptural reference for minjung as a class concept is the ochlos of Galilee who were politically oppressed, economically exploited, and culturally alienated by the ruling class of Jerusalem.

The Politically Oppressed

Minjung theology refers to the Exodus as the Scriptural reference for the minjung of the politically oppressed class. According to the interpretation of minjung theology, under the Egyptian regimes, the Israelites were no more than slaves. They had neither nationality nor citizenship. They

⁹⁷ A Dictionary of the Bible, s. v. "Adam" by W. H. Bennett, p. 36.

were oppressed and afflicted with hard labor. They were to build storage cities. Their lives were made bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and all kinds labor in the open field (Ex. 1:11-14). Such poor Israelite slaves could not bear the Egyptian afflictions and oppressions, so they united in fighting against the Egyptian regime. They mixed a poisonous drug into the well-water, killed all the Egyptian firstborns, and escaped at midnight.⁹⁸

In the light of the Exodus event, Nam Dong Suh parallels the major minjung movements that originated in Korean history. The insurrection of Hong Kyung Rae,⁹⁹ the Donghak Revolution,¹⁰⁰ the March First Independence Movement(1919),¹⁰¹ and the April 19 (1960) Student Revolu-

⁹⁸ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 259.

⁹⁹ In 1811, Hong Kyung Rae mobilized the inhabitants of the north-western provinces and stood against the government, because the government discriminated against the people from this district.

¹⁰⁰ Donhak means "Eastern Learning" as contrasted to "Western Learning." The core doctrine of Donhak religion is "humanity is heaven." The Donhak Revolt of the peasants began in the 1860s as a religious movement by Jei Woo Choi, who had come into contact with Roman Catholicism and had attempted to combine certain features of its faith with that of Buddhism and Confucianism. Even though this Donghak movement was a religious reform, because of the oppression of corrupt officials, it took a political direction under the influence of several peasant revolts. Finally, in May 1874, the Donghaks, under the leadership of Bong Joon Jun, rose in rebellion in the south of Korea.

¹⁰¹ The March First Independence Movement arose in 1919 during Japanese colonial control.

tion¹⁰² are used as paradigms for the human rights struggle in Korea today. Today's struggle in Korea for human rights understands its genealogy beginning with the Donghak Movement and coming down through the March First Independence Movement to the April 19 Student Revolutionary Movement.¹⁰³ For minjung theology, minjung as the politically oppressed class has played a role as the political resistant forces against the ruling regimes in history.¹⁰⁴

The Economically Exploited and Poor

Minjung theology looks to the Code of Covenant (Ex. 20:22-23:19) as a Scriptural reference. It considers the Code as "the Code of the Protection for the weak," or "the Code of the Social Justice." The Code is called the Human Rights Protection Law for the poor, slaves, widows, orphans, lame, wandering strangers, Gentiles, and so on. The Code of Covenant was made in order to protect the weak from the exploitation by the strong. The enactment of the tithe, Sabbath, and jubilee was to prevent the laborers from economic exploitation.¹⁰⁵

Suh denounces socio-economic structural evil. He

¹⁰²The Students' Revolution of April 19, 1960 broke out under the corrupt presidency of Syngman Rhee.

¹⁰³Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, p. 171.

¹⁰⁴Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 207.

¹⁰⁵Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 186, 264-6.

assumes that the most important cause of poverty among peasants is the international dependence of economic structure, which makes certain capitalists richer through compulsory enactments of lower wages and lower prices for agricultural products.¹⁰⁶

Minjung are the economically exploited laborers under an evil economic structure. They are vulnerable. As with the Covenant Code of the Old Testament, it is imperative that society protect and aid the minjung. It is a responsibility.

The Culturally Alienated

Minjung theology considers minjung not only as the politically oppressed and economically exploited but also as the culturally alienated. Minjung is not only the class who participates in producing value by means of physical labor, but minjung is also the class considered the underdogs of society, such as the lame, the sick, women, orphans, widows, and prostitutes who are alienated by the social prejudice.¹⁰⁷ This class of underdogs are considered as impotent people, or the sinners who cannot afford to learn the law, rather who violate the law as the norm of the society.¹⁰⁸

Representatives of this class are the imprisoned

¹⁰⁶Christian Farmers' Declaration, March 18, 1982.

¹⁰⁷Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 177.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 212-213.

criminals, who travelled along the flow of the stream of unfortunate degradation.¹⁰⁹ This class of underdogs are branded as impotent sinners by the ruling regime and are alienated culturally from their own society.¹¹⁰

Evaluation

Minjung theology has sought to explain the concept of minjung in reference to certain Scriptural equivalents and passages. On the whole, however, its Scriptural basis is weak. Its methodology is partial, reductionist, and ideological in character, in that it depends on Scripture selected arbitrarily according to its own presupposition in reference to economico-sociological analysis. Further, it fails to explain those materials in the Scriptural contexts based upon more standard references. The essential concept of minjung is obviously contradictory to the Scriptural views of man which state that all men are sinners before God (Rom. 3:10) and by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). Contrarily, minjung theology regards minjung as simple and pure people, who do not commit sins but are only sinned against.

From the start, minjung theology understands the term "minjung" from the concept of the ruling and ruled in a conflict relationship. The minjung are the class of the oppressed people who are deprived of all the socio-

¹⁰⁹ See, Minjung Theology, p. 178.

¹¹⁰ Nam Dong Suh, p. 214.

economico-politico-cultural human rights because of structural evil, which is prone to act in benefit of the ruling power.¹¹¹ At the root of this understanding of minjung lies the Marxist, materialistic, sociological analysis and ideology, which emphatically contrasts the classes of the ruling and the ruled.¹¹²

However, understanding minjung as a political concept discards and ignores the interaction and consensus of the power relationship. Likewise, there is a lack of understanding about social organization means of order and social structure as the integrating function.¹¹³ It is a mistake to grasp the minjung at large in terms of the minjung revolt model.¹¹⁴ In fact, the Scriptural reference such as am ha-arez, ochlos, habiru, "my people" of Micah, anawim, and ptochoi are referred to for the purpose of focusing on the minjung revolt model, disregarding its context and intended application.

Finally, some questions can be asked about the poor. Does Scripture always regard the poor as innocent? In fact,

¹¹¹"Symposium," The Theological Thought (Spring 1979):119.

¹¹²Won Jong Lee, "A Methodological Approach to the Theological Understanding of Korean Minjung History" (Th. M. Thesis, Hanshin University, Seoul, 1984), pp. 10, 19: see, Gyung Yon Jun, "Assessment of Minjung Theology," in A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea, p. 62: Kenzo Tagawa, Mark's Gospel and Minjung Liberation, trans. by Myung Sik Kim (Gwangju: Sa-Gye-Jeol, 1983), p. 137.

¹¹³Won Jong Lee, p. 10.

¹¹⁴Gyung Yon Jun, pp. 64-65.

the poor may be equally as wicked as the rich (Jer. 5:1-13). Therefore, it is written men should not be partial to the poor in their dispute (Ex. 23:3). Is exploitation the only cause of the poverty? Poverty may come from one's own negligence (Prov. 10:4), or extravagance (Luke 15:13), or from the hand of God's wrath (2 Chron. 24:1-4; 25:1-7). And, does poverty always dehumanize man? In spite of the extreme poverty, Paul could rejoice in the Lord who strengthens him (Phil. 4:13).

CHAPTER VI

MINJUNG THEOLOGY'S VIEW OF GOD

A Hegelian Perversion

Minjung theology denounces the traditional view of God as a metaphysically dogmatized theology, and tries to define God as a historical identity which is revealed in the midst of the changing process of history.¹ Therefore, minjung theology talks about the historical God in action. At the basis of this view of God lies Hegelian thought.²

The Hegelian thought can be traced back to Rene Descartes (1596-1650), French philosophical mathematician, for whom basic certainty centered no longer on God, but on man. In other words, the medieval way of reasoning from the certainty of God to the certainty of man himself is replaced by the Cartesian approach: from certainty of the self to certainty of God.³

Under the influence of Descartes, Baruch Spinoza

¹"Symposium," The Theological Thought 28 (Spring 1980):38-39.

²Kyoung Jae Kim, "The Significance of Minjung Theology," in A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea, (Seoul: Korea Christian Christian Academy, 1983), p. 106.

³Hans Küng, Does God Exist? trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1980), p. 15.

(1632-1677), a Dutch Jewish philosopher, thought that God is in the world and the world is in God. For Spinoza, nature is a particular way in which God Himself exists; human consciousness is a particular way in which God Himself thinks.⁴ Spinoza's God is not conceived as the personal Creator of the world.

As a follower of Spinoza, Johann G. Fichte (1762-1814), German philosopher, understood God not as a living personality with a free will but as an eternally necessary being.⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, (1770-1831), German philosopher, eight years younger than Fichte, did not deify the empirical world. He did not make everything God.⁶ For Hegel, the world is not simply God, but it is God in His development: a God who comes to be a self-developing, a dialectical, self-externalizing God, coming to Himself out of alienation.⁷ He emphasized the historicity of God, rejecting the Greek and medieval metaphysical concepts of God.⁸ God acts in the midst of the world. Therefore, his concept of God can be defined pan-en-theism rather than pantheism.

As an atheist Hegelian, Ludwig. A. Feuerbach (1804-1872), German philosopher, concentrated wholeheartedly on humanity, its world, and the present time. He opposed the

⁴Ibid., p. 133.

⁵Ibid., p. 137.

⁶Ibid., p. 136.

⁷Ibid., pp. 147, 148.

⁸Ibid., pp. 187.

idea of a personal God and a belief in immortality.⁹ For Feuerbach, the notion of God is nothing but a projection of man: "the absolute to man is his own nature." In other words, "man is God for man (homo homini Deus est)."¹⁰ God is only a projection of man.¹¹ For him, men are living in a period of the decline of Christianity; faith has been replaced by unbelief, the Bible by reason, religion and church by politics, heaven by earth, prayer by work, hell by material wretchedness, the Christian by man.¹²

Under the influence of Feuerbach, Karl Marx (1818-1883), German economist and socialist, examined actual sociological reality and provided a concrete political-economic analysis of the material social conditions and the role of labor and of production.¹³ For Marx, God is a projection of man, and religion is both the product and the alienation of man,¹⁴ a protest against inhuman social conditions, and the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world; God is the echoing cry of suffering humanity.¹⁵

⁹ Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁰ Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 281

¹¹ Ibid., "Preface," xli, and p. 30.

¹² Hans Küng, p. 207.

¹³ Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 229.

Recently, Hegelian panentheism appeared in the political theology of Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Latin American liberation theology. By taking up panentheistic ideas, Moltmann tried to think ecologically about God, man, and the world in their relationships and indwellings.¹⁶ He emphasized God suffering with the creatures,¹⁷ so to speak, the crucified God.¹⁸ For him, the future, or the emancipation, is the mode of God's being.¹⁹

On the other hand, for Pannenberg, universal history is conceived as the self-disclosure of God; Christianity rests upon the general process of history, which is the self-revelation of God. In history God makes Himself known.²⁰ For Latin American liberation theology, human history is the location of man's encounter with God.²¹ God is present in the midst of each man.²² In other words, every man and

¹⁶Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 19.

¹⁷Jürgen Moltmann, "Evangelism and Liberation," The Christian Thought, April 1975, p. 106.

¹⁸Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 4.

¹⁹G. Clake Chapman, Jr., "Jürgen Moltmann and the Christian Dialogue with Marxism," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 18:3 (Summer 1981):438-439.

²⁰Wolfhart Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology 2 vols., trans. George H. Kehn (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 1: 12-14.

²¹Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, (Maryknoll, NY: 1973), p. 189.

²²Ibid., p. 193.

history is the living temple of God. Consequently, God is Known by doing justice to the poor and oppressed.²³

Following Hegelian panentheism, Korean minjung theology understands man as a process of the self-development of the universe (or, God).²⁴ God is at the bottom of history; in other words, God is in the midst of the underdogs of society.²⁵ The suffering and groaning neighbor is conceived as Savior God.²⁶

Hegelian panentheism finds its parallel in Korean Donghak thought,²⁷ whose main theme is that "man is heaven (or, God)." This Hegelian perverted view of God can also be clearly found and assessed in the following sections.

God as Being

Being-itself

The concept of God as being-itself comes from Paul Tillich.²⁸ Under Tillich's influence, Nam Dong Suh tried to understand the term God as a conceptual norm. The being of God cannot be colored or limited by any predicate such as

²³Ibid., pp. 194, 199.

²⁴"Symposium," The Theological Thought 24:116.

²⁵Chi Ha Kim, Kim Chi Ha Collection (Tokyo: Hanyangsa, 1975), p. 16.

²⁶Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1976), p. 75.

²⁷This Donghak Movement is an important historical reference for minjung theology.

²⁸Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology 2 vols, (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1: 235.

love. In other words, the correct description is "God is" rather than "God" or "God is love." God is being-itself prior to any nature. What he means by this "being-itself prior to nature" is that God's nature is within man's cognizance, but God as being cannot be the object of man's cognizance.²⁹

It can be said that all concepts of God are nothing but man-made paintings and reflections. Just as light itself is invisible, so the being-itself is not cognizable in objective terms. For Suh, the expression that God is being-itself is to stand apart from both atheism and theism.³⁰ God is not a being which exists, but God is the power of being which causes beings to exist.³¹

In this concept of God as being-itself, the main point is that we cannot have any objective knowledge of God through any means. Even through the Word of God, namely, the inspired Scriptures, we cannot know God Himself.

It is true, in a sense, that God is incomprehensible, and that our understanding of God is filtered through our own mental framework. But when we speak of the incomprehensibility of God, we do not mean that there is an unknown being or essence beyond or behind His attributes. Rather, we mean that we do not know His qualities or His nature completely and exhaustively. We know God only as He has

²⁹Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 26.

³⁰Ibid., p. 27.

³¹Ibid., p. 117.

revealed Himself to us in His written Word.

And, His attributes, which are understood through our own mental framework, are not our conceptions projected upon Him. His attributes are objective characteristics of His nature, and they are inseparable from the being of God. Through His attributes His nature is conceived. Thus, His love, holiness, and wisdom are but different ways of viewing the unified being, God.³²

In contrast with Suh's understanding of God as being-itself, which cannot be the object of man's cognition, when we say "God is," we mean that He is a substantive entity, an eternal personal Spirit with certain known attributes. Thus for God to be is, to be what He is; and the word "to be" has precisely the same meaning in reference to the creature, to be whatever it is.³³ God exists as a self-conscious personal Spirit (John 4:24). Thereby, He can be worshipped by His children (John 4:21, 24; Gen. 4:26; 12:8; Ps. 20:9), and He can have personal relationship with them, coming to and talking with them (Genesis. 3). Because God is a person, He is pictured as our Father. God identifies Himself as "I am who I am" (Ex. 3:14), by which demonstrates that He is not an abstract, conceptual unknowable being, but

³² Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983, 1984, 1985), 1: 265-266.

³³ James Oliver Buswell, Jr., A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 1: 29, 35.

a personal being.³⁴

The Mode of God

For minjung theology, which understands God as being-itself and refuses to describe God with a predicate such as love, when love is used as a predicate of God, it is not God's nature, nor His attribute, not even His property, but the very mode of His being.³⁵ God exists as love, just as water exists as liquid and steam as gas. Therefore, the one who loves is one who knows God; in other words, through the love for neighbors the love of God is realized, experienced, and known, and one can participate in the mode of God's being.³⁶ Simply, to love is to know God; love is God.

Another mode of God is history. God as the power of being exists in the mode of daily life and history.³⁷ According to Byung Mu Ahn, "I am who I am" can be better translated, "I become what I become." By this translation Ahn means that God is an historical event itself. So to speak, God is not a transcendent being, but the one who goes ahead in the plane of history. God is the one who opens the door to the future;³⁸ God exists in the mode of openness to the future. Ahn understands the act of believing in God as

³⁴ Millard J. Erickson, pp. 269-270.

³⁵ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 78.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

³⁸ Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1984), p. 71.

an historical act.³⁹

Even though, Ahn identifies God with the historical event, he tries to distinguish God from history, saying, "God is not history itself."⁴⁰ But Kee Deuk Song clearly identifies God as the historical event of man.⁴¹ Since minjung theology disregards the personality of God, God is identified with, or found in love, history, and so forth. Practically, there is no God but love, history, and so forth.

At the same time, Suh rejects the transcendent God. He knows only the immanent God who is manifested in the midst of the historical event; in the midst of man's miserable daily life.⁴²

The reason why Suh and other theologians disregard the traditional transcendent God is that they consider transcendentalism a metaphysical and ontological dogma; the immanent God is the historical God.⁴³ And so, Suh says that his view of God is panentheistic, and that self-development of history can be identified as God.⁴⁴

Because minjung theology assumes that God manifests

³⁹Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 71.

⁴¹Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1984), p. 33.

⁴²Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), p. 79.

⁴³Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 171.

Himself in the mode of history, that is, in the midst of the process of historical development, God's metaphysical transcendentalism is misunderstood as a remaining vestige of Greek philosophy.⁴⁵

A serious weak point of minjung theology's understanding of God consists in its demythologization of God's transcendence, so that it denounces God as the object of prayer. And yet, a one-sided emphasis on the immanence of God leads theology astray to become sociology.⁴⁶

The God of minjung theology does not have any personality, morality, authority as creator. But in contrast to this view, the God of the Scriptures is the self-existent, self-sufficient personal being (auto-theos) who can exist without any relationship with His creatures. "He who comes to God must believe that He is" (Heb. 11:6). God has His own origin in Himself and is independent of anything outside Himself (Rom. 11: 33-36);⁴⁷ even though He is actually present in all His creatures and fills all things, He is exalted over all creation.⁴⁸ He cannot be measured by, or included in, any local confines (Jer. 23:24; 1 Kings 8:27),⁴⁹ nor confined by the world history. As the Psalmist

⁴⁵Kyoung Jae Kim, "The Significance of Minjung Theology," A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea, p. 106.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 108.

⁴⁷John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 165.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 165-166.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 165.

praises, God has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all (Ps. 103:19). God is in the midst of history, but He is also transcendent over history and rules history.

Humanization of God

Because minjung theology does not know a personal God, the major subject of theology is not God but minjung, who have in their hands the key of their own salvation: minjung are not the object but the subject of salvation; minjung accomplish salvation for themselves. In this sense, minjung theology is humanism. God is replaced by man, minjung.⁵⁰

In this connection, Kee Deuk Song says, "the God whom man makes confession is the confession made about man himself. In this sense, theology is definitely anthropology."⁵¹ He refuses the dualistic thinking which distinguishes man from God.⁵² For him, man is God.

At the basis of this view of God are Feuerbach, who viewed God as the objective reflection of humanity, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Austrian psychiatrist, who viewed God as a father-image which is asked to suppress mental disorder, conflict, or unrest, and Karl Marx, who viewed God as an ideology of the ruling class to rationalize their

⁵⁰"Symposium," The Theological Thought 24:125.

⁵¹Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man, p. 31.

⁵²Ibid., p. 21.

benefits.⁵³ Song emphasizes the human God rather than the personal God.⁵⁴ God is conceived as the ultimate reality which unconditionally relates with our Sitz im Leben.⁵⁵

Since minjung theology is an anthropocentric humanism, it is natural that man should be conceived of as God. Chi Ha Kim is the representative exponent of this anthropologic view of God. According to Kim, every and each man has the original life alive in himself, which has no beginning, no end, no limit, and no border. This original life may be called "Han-ul-nim" (the traditional Korean term for God in contrast to the Biblical Korean term ha-na-nim), or "Buddha," or "Do" (Tao in Chinese), or "thing."⁵⁶ In other words, the total sum of life, which is innately kept alive in man's innermost, is called God.⁵⁷

An exemplary explanation of the humanization of God is portrayed by Kim in his memo on a biography of Chang Il-dam. Having escaped from prison, Chang hides in a dark street where prostitutes live. He happens to see one prostitute giving birth to a child. She is dying. Her body is rotting with a venereal disease. She has tuberculosis; and she is also mentally ill. Yet she is giving birth to a

⁵³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

⁵⁶ Chi Ha Kim, Bab (Food) (We-Gwan: Bun-do Publishing Company), 1984, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

child. At the sight of it, he says, "Ah, from a rotten body, new life is coming out! It is God who is coming out!" He kneels down and says, "Oh, my mother, God is in your womb. God is in the very bottom."⁵⁸

At the same time, "Han-ul-nim" is a laboring being, and any laboring being is "Han-ul-nim."⁵⁹ The expression that "Han-ul-nim" created the heavens and the earth indicates that universal movement began by itself. But practically, "Han-ul-nim" works through laboring man, and so man and "Han-ul-nim" are one and the same as the laboring being.⁶⁰ In other words, man is "Han-ul-nim" through labor and "Han-ul-nim" is man through labor.⁶¹ By contrast, the idle man is devil.

At the basis of Chi Ha Kim's view of "Han-ul-nim" lies the Korean Donghak thought, whose core principle is "man is God." For Donghak, the exemplary mode of God is the daughter-in-law, who was discriminated and suppressed most in the traditional Korean household community but had to do the hardest works yet. She had to serve as "Han-ul-nim." Such a laboring woman, as a typical minjung, is the very "Han-ul-nim."⁶²

⁵⁸ Chi Ha Kim, Kim Chi Ha Collection, p.13.

⁵⁹ Chi Ha Kim, Bab, p. 49.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 51.

⁶² Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 53.

In this respect, minjung theology assumes that God can be found in the faces of the urban laborers and the countryside farmers. When such laborers and farmers are served, it is God who is actually served.

Minjung theology does not seem to know the Scriptural teaching about the relationship between God and man: God is the Creator and man is His creature. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). He created man (male and female) in His own image (Gen. 1:27). We are His people (Ps. 95:7; 100:3). He created His people for His glory (Isa. 43:7). Therefore, He is always with His people, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20); He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and exist (Acts 17:27-28). He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things (Acts 17:25). He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being (Gen. 2:7). He can require men's souls of them anytime (Luke 12:20). He is God, not man (Hos. 11:9). If any man does not give God the glory, the Lord God can strike him to death (Acts 12:22-23). If any man does not honor the Lord as God, his foolish heart will be given to a depraved mind (Rom. 1:21, 28). Man cannot be a god.

Liberator God of the Weak

As mentioned earlier, God is the God of the Hebrews, according to Joon Suh Park. The immanent God of minjung theology is manifested only with, in the midst of, and through the underdogs,⁶³ and as He always stands for the

weak minjung but against the rich people of vested rights. He hears the outcry of the weak and responds with liberation.⁶⁴ The rich and ruling classes can never participate in service to God together with the poor, because God is not the God of the rich, but of the poor and oppressed.⁶⁵ Therefore, rich rulers are not worthy to say the Lord's prayer; Christianity which teaches to pray for and honor the authorities and to obey them is no longer Christianity; the God who commands obedience to the government authorities cannot be God.⁶⁶ Minjung theology knows only the God of justice who revenges the regrettable things of the weak.⁶⁷

Is it true that the Christian God stands and fights only for the weak and the poor? According to the Epistle of James 2:5, God chose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. In his Epistle, James gives reproof against discrimination between rich and poor and against faith without works. The Old Testament background of these reproofs can be found in Leviticus 19:15: "you shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your

⁶³Kyoung Jae Kim, "The Significance of Minjung Theology," in A Study of the Minjung Theology in Korea, p. 106.

⁶⁴Joon Suh Park, "God in the Old Testament," in Minjung and Korean Theology (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1982), p. 150.

⁶⁵Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 12.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 237, 262.

neighbor fairly." But as Kenneth G. Phifer points out, "this Leviticus passage cuts both ways. The poor shall not be favored nor the rich treated with subservience. James's words also imply a call to equitable treatment regardless of outward appearance."⁶⁸

It is also to be noted that in the Epistle of James, the poor are those who love God (James 2:5b), and the rich can be also called brother (James 1:10).⁶⁹ The rich and the poor are encompassed within the limitless possibilities of God, who loves the world as a whole,⁷⁰ and causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good.⁷¹ Wedges cannot be driven within the Christian community between "haves" and "have-nots." Therefore, the preacher must strike that fine balance between a forthright emphasis upon the concern for the poor and the ever-open possibility afforded by the grace of God.⁷²

Similarly, Calvin comments on James 2:5:

Not only the poor, but he determined to start with them, in order to rebut the arrogance of the rich God shed His grace on the rich and poor alike, but chose to prefer the latter to the former, that the great ones might learn not to live on self-appreciation, and that

⁶⁸Kenneth G. Phifer, "Expository Articles," Interpretation 36 (1982):278.

⁶⁹The word "brother" of verse 9 is omitted in verse 10. Therefore, "the rich" can be better translated "the rich brother."

⁷⁰John 3:16.

⁷¹Matthew 5:45.

⁷²Kenneth G. Phifer, p. 282.

the humble and obscure might ascribe all that they were to the mercy of God: thus both would be trained to have a proper and soberminded attitude.⁷³

At the basis of minjung theology's understanding of God being the God of the weak, there lies the ideologically oriented Latin American liberation theology which asserts that only a God who sides with the poor is worthy of the name God:

God always sides with the oppressed A God siding with the tyrants would be a God of malevolence; a God siding with no one would appear to be a indifference but would also be a God of malevolence, giving support to the tyrants by not opposing them; only a God siding with the oppressed would be a God of justice, a God worthy of the name.⁷⁴

On the other hand, there are many Scripture passages, which show God's answers to prayers of rich rulers,⁷⁵ and God's commands to pray for the government authorities.⁷⁶ The Scripture teaches that every person must be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority which does not come from God. The government is a minister of God to the people for good.⁷⁷

⁷³John Calvin, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries 3, trans. A. V. Morrison (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 277-278.

⁷⁴Robert McAfee Brown, Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), p. 41.

⁷⁵1 Kings 8:30; 9:3; 2 Chron. 32:24; Ps. 32:6; 51:1-19.

⁷⁶Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17.

⁷⁷Romans 13:1-7.

CHAPTER VII

MINJUNG THEOLOGY'S VIEW OF CHRIST JESUS

A Sufficiency of the Historical Knowledge of Jesus

The major concern of minjung theology about Christ is how to stage Him again in the present situation. Byung Mu Ahn is not concerned with the traditional Christology of "two natures and one person" and "substitutionary death," but "the secular Christ," "the man for others," which was advocated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.¹

The Christian belief,² Nam Dong Suh says, is the historical knowledge of the Nazarene Jesus. To believe in Christ is to follow His life style. Through historical study we understand that the Nazarene Jesus, was known as a wonderful character; He made a favorable impression on human beings.³ Christianity is to be concerned with the historical knowledge of Jesus and follow in His steps.⁴

¹Byung Mu Ahn, "The Image of Jesus in Korea Since 100 Years," The Theological Thought 19 (Winter 1977):736, 738.

²Minjung theology prefers "belief" to "faith," which is to recognize and confess the so-called dogmatized Christ.

³See, Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), p. 188.

⁴Ibid., p. 170.

In this respect, Minjung theology's Christology is ascendent in character - a Christology from below - focusing on the man Jesus who slowly reveals His divine impression. This Christology is contrasted with the traditional descendent Christology, which focuses on the God who comes down to be incarnate. However, according to Suh's Christology, Jesus is called the Son of God in that He made a religious impression on others. While all ordinary men are sons of God, the case of Jesus is different. He is worthy to be called the Son of God because He realized, to an extraordinary degree, the true original humanity through His whole life.⁵

Suh comments, "to believe Jesus is to adapt my life to the life of Jesus and find the self-identity in Him."⁶ Reflected in Suh's comment is the belief of minjung theology that the historical knowledge of Jesus is sufficient for following Him. According to Suh, Jesus can never be considered as the object of Christian faith; he militates against orthodox Christianity which strives to keep Christ central in faith and life.

The Nature of Christ

An Ordinary Man of History

Consequent to the ascendent Christology, minjung theology views Christ as an ordinary man of history. Chai Choon Kim comments on John 1:14, "It is a narrative

⁵ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 188.

⁶ Ibid., p. 189.

describing that the Godhead was revealed in Jesus' personality;" "His personality is the unique essence of being as a manifestation of God;" "In Christ we find the very man prior to the very God. We find Him as a sinner rather than another kind of man. We find man as a sinner;" "In Christ we find man as well as God."⁷ Kim seems to believe in the literal incarnation, but he never says words about the supernatural Virgin birth by the Holy Spirit.⁸ Kim only knows the human Jesus, a most religious man.

Suh emphasizes the secular Jesus, who lived a life for others (neighbors). This secular Jesus is a being for others, who reveals Himself as the incarnation of a suffering neighbor.⁹ He understands Jesus as the ordinary but religious man who loves His suffering neighbors.

Ahn understands Jesus as minjung in regard of His birth and behavior. Jesus is the country man from Nazareth - the obscure town - who had no connection with David in his birthplace or by blood relationship. Jesus is no more than minjung. Where there is Jesus, there is minjung, and where there is minjung there is also Jesus.¹⁰ Similarly, Yong Bok

⁷ Chai Choon Kim, Mordern Crisis and Christianity (Seoul: Sam-min-sa, 1984), pp. 394-404.

⁸ Byung Mu Ahn, "The Images of Jesus in Korea since 100 years," p. 736.

⁹ Ibid., p. 738.

¹⁰ Byung Mu Ahn, "Subject of History in Mark's Gospel," in Minjung and Korean Theology (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1982), pp. 180-181.

Kim understands Jesus as the servant of minjung.¹¹ All these theologians view Jesus as an ordinary man of history. This view of Jesus disregards the Scriptural passages which describe the very divine nature of Jesus. When Jesus called Himself the Son of God and claimed that God was His own Father, this was understood to make Himself equal with God (John 5:18). The Scriptural phrase found in Hebrews 1:3, "the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature," proves that Jesus is the same as God the Father in substance, equal in power and glory.¹² Jesus Christ is thus declared to be the exact expression of Deity. "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col. 2:9).

Some New Testament passages clearly assume the identity of Jesus with God¹³ and Yahweh.¹⁴ In the Gospel according to John, the prologue introduces Jesus as the very God. Then Jesus' Deity is witnessed by John the Baptist (1:15-18, 29-36), seven miraculous signs, witnesses of Jesus Himself (8:18), of the Spirit (15:26), and at last His Deity is confessed by His disciple (20:28). Thus, in John's Gospel, from beginning to end, the Deity of Jesus is sustained.

The doctrine of the Deity of Jesus is important, not

¹¹Ibid., p. 287.

¹²J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion 2 vols. 1: 112.

¹³John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 2 Thess. 1:12; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8.

¹⁴Luke 1:76 (Mal. 3:1); Rom. 10:13 (Joel 2:32). sustained.

only because it is taught in the Scriptures, but because the entire gospel of Christ's vicarious redemption is annulled without it. If Jesus is not the very God but an ordinary man, then fallen man has no divine Savior, and is therefore obliged to earn salvation by doing good works.¹⁵

A Collective Person: Son of Man

It is natural for minjung theology to see Jesus as a collective person, in that it sees man in collective terms¹⁶ and sees Jesus as the personification of minjung.¹⁷ It is Yong Bock Kim who is first to understand Jesus as the "social biography" of minjung.¹⁸ On the basis of this concept of social biography, Ahn also presupposes that the Nazarene Jesus is not a designation of one person's life, but a collective designation. He emphasizes that Jesus, His behavior and destiny described in Mark's Gospel are "not a personal biography of an individual but a social biography." Mark viewed Jesus in terms of this collective concept.¹⁹

In order to support his collective concept of Jesus, Ahn refers to the designation, "Son of man" and the analogy

¹⁵John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 257.

¹⁶See, pp. 123-126.

¹⁷Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 188, 189.

¹⁸Yong Bock Kim, "Minjung's Social Biography and Theology," in Minjung and Korean Theology, pp. 382-384.

¹⁹Byung Mu Ahn, "Subject of History in Mark's Gospel," p. 177.

between Jesus and Adam (Rom. 5:12-21). Ahn interprets the collective concept of Son of Man on the basis of Daniel 7:13-14, which indicates that to one like a Son of Man was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom so that all the peoples, nations and men of every language, might serve Him. But in verse 27, the domination, glory, and kingdom will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One. Ahn identifies Son of Man with the people of the saints, on the ground that dominion, glory and kingdom will be given to both the Son and the people.²⁰ In addition, Ahn comments that there is no clear distinction between a man as an individual and man as collective in the Hebraic thought.²¹ Ahn interprets Romans 5:12-21: "Just as Adam, which seems to be a personal name, is a collective concept of man, therefore, his transgression made the whole human race as a collective unity guilty; so Christ, who can be viewed not only as an individual but also a collective, opened the new way to the whole human race in consequence of one of his righteousness."²² So he concludes that Christ is not an individual, but a herald collective of the whole mankind.²³

Ahn's comments on Daniel 7:13-14, 27 and Romans 5:12-21 miss certain crucial points. First, "with the

²⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

²¹ Ibid., p. 178, note 110.

²² Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1984), p. 219.

²³ Ibid., p. 227.

clouds" in Daniel 7:13 is intended to indicate the Deity of the Messiah. Among the Jews the Messiah came to be known as the "Cloudy One" or "Son of a Cloud." Second, "like," which is put before "a son of man," is employed to stress the distinction between the heavenly Figure and the beasts. He is a human-like personage. Third, that title "a son of man" is applied to Christ by Himself,²⁴ and is conclusive proof for a messianic interpretation. One "like a son of man" stands for a person (the Divine Conqueror), not for the people, who are called the saints. Fourth, verse 27 of Daniel 7 cannot be employed to identify "son of man," because He is presented as a truly supernatural Deity, whereas such is not case with the people of the saints. The saints are deservedly called kings in consequence of Christ's sovereignty and the intimate communion existing between the head and the members.²⁵ Fifth, in Romans 5:12-21 Paul develops the analogy between Adam and Christ²⁶ in terms of the covenantal headship, Adam as the head of the whole human race, Christ as the head of the new humanity.²⁷ This

²⁴ Matt. 16:13-16; 25:31-46; Mark 2:10; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 14:61-62; Luke 9:26; John 12:23. The Evangelists themselves understood the Son of Man to be the Son of God, and intended to present their unity. Mark 8:38 describes the parousia of the Son of Man as the Judge in the glory of His Father. See Yoon Kim, The Son of Man as the Son of God (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 1-6.

²⁵ Edward J. Young, Daniel (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), pp. 154-155, 162.

²⁶ See, p. 126.

²⁷ John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1974), p. 179.

passage contrasts "one" with "many," which indicates that both Adam and Christ are one as an individual entity, and that because of their covenantal headships their members, whose memberships are determined by birth or by baptism, are directly influenced by the obedience or disobedience of their heads. This passage does not give any clue to the collective personality of Jesus.

The title Son of Man which Christ applied to Himself does not describe Christ as the "Ideal Man," but as the unique descendant of man, in whom the Son of God became incarnate. Hence, the Son of Man is the God-man who came to destroy the works of the devil.²⁸ By the designation "Son of Man" Jesus intended to reveal rather than to veil His Messiahship.²⁹

The Mode of Christ

The Kerygmatic Christ

In contrast with the traditional doctrine of Christ's threefold offices of priest, king, and prophet, Nam Dong Suh asserts three modes of Christ's existence in terms of kerygma, diakonia, and koinonia: the kerygmatic Christ, the secular Christ, and the cosmic Christ.

The present existence of the kerygmatic Christ is assumed to be truly described in those Scriptures which are the authentic, unique and original historical documents

²⁸John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 259.

²⁹Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), p. 314.

which bear witness to Christ. These Scriptures are the representative and overarching trajectories, namely, the historical knowledge of the Nazarene Jesus.³⁰

Suh does not differentiate the historical knowledge of the Nazarene Jesus from the Christian faith.³¹ For Suh, to follow Jesus' lifestyle of serving others is to know Him as well as believe in Him. His lifestyle as the present mode of the historical Jesus is found in the Scriptures, and so through the present kerygma (preaching) the historical Jesus appears each and every time in the new mode of Christ.³² The kerygmatic Christ is the present Christ who is encountered through the kerygma of today's mission.³³

Suh's kerygmatic Christ is different from Christ, the God-man described in the Scriptures, who is the same yesterday and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8), being with us always in person, not only through the preaching of the Gospel (Matt. 28:20). Suh's weak point is that he does not understand or believe the fact that Christ is with us always really and personally.

The Secular Christ

Suh asserts that history is the mode of God's existence, because the Scriptural revelation is an histori-

³⁰Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1976), p. 66.

³¹Ibid., p. 67.

³²Ibid.,

³³Ibid., p. 68.

cal event.³⁴ He does not distinguish the secular from the sacred. Therefore, the secular man come-of-age can encounter Christ in the secular historical context.³⁵ Since God works through the secular world and history, the process of secularization is the very process of man's coming of age.³⁶

Suh finds illustrations of the secular Christ in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) and in the narrative of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46). "The man fallen among robbers" (Luke 10:30) and "the least of these brothers of mine" (Matthew 25:40) are the secular Christ.³⁷ It is by the response and attitude to the man fallen among robbers that man comes of age; this is the process of humanization, that is, the means by which salvation is accomplished.³⁸ Christ identifies Himself with all kinds of suffering people, to the extent that anyone shows mercy to one of the suffering people, he does it to Christ.³⁹ The secular Christ is the marginals alienated from the ruling system.⁴⁰

Minjung theology seemingly does not know the differ-

³⁴Ibid., p. 72.

³⁵Ibid., p. 73.

³⁶Ibid., p. 74.

³⁷Ibid., p. 75.

³⁸Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 107.

³⁹Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 76.

⁴⁰Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1984), p. 488.

ence between faith in Christ and service for Christ, nor between Christ, the object of faith, and Christ, the very man of mercy.

In contrast to minjung theology, however, it is to be noted that in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the focus is on the Samaritan, not the man fallen among robbers. In this parable, Jesus teaches that anyone who is justified by God (see verse 29) and loves God then "neighbor as himself," must show mercy to man in need. Showing mercy is the fruit of faith and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ It cannot be the condition of justification, nor of salvation.

In the narrative of sheep and goats, the phrase of verse 40 reads, "one of these brothers of mine, of the least (genitive, plural form)." In this phrase, "these brothers" are emphasized. For Matthew, the so-called brothers of Jesus are, in fact, his disciples who do the will of God the Father. Matthew 12:49, 50 describes that Jesus stretched out his hand, pointed at his disciples and said, "Behold, my mother and brothers!"

The Cosmic Christ

On the basis of such passages as Romans 8:19-23, Colossians 1:15-20, and Ephesians 1:9, 22-23, Suh asserts that the climax of Pauline Christology is the cosmic Christ. Christ is the one who fills all in all with His own fulness and sums up all things in Him, things in the heavens and

⁴¹Galatians 5:22; Romans 12:8.

things upon the earth, in response to the inner anxious longing of the creation which waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God and hopes to be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.⁴² This Christ is called the cosmic Christ.

But practically speaking, this cosmic Christ is asserted against the individualistic, subjective, and personal reflection of human existence. This cosmic Christ is connected with the community consensus rather than the individual conscience.⁴³ Thereby the cosmic Christ understood to be "a new man in Christ," "a new humanity," "a new relatedness," and "a new organism," which is the so-called Christogenesis of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.⁴⁴ The body of Christ, which consists of men come of age, is the mode of the cosmic Christ. A new humanized organism of human relatedness, which enables each and every man to play his role to the fullest as a member of his functional society, is actually the mode of the cosmic Christ.⁴⁵

It is not Scriptural to consider every man's activities of daily life in the same category as that of Christian service of God. The Christian's service (*latreia*) does indeed extend into the "human activities of daily life." But the activities of all mankind (Christians and non-Christians

⁴²Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 79.

⁴³Ibid., p. 80.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 80-82.

alike) are not to be placed in the category of "worship." Therefore, all of mankind's relationships are not the same as "church." And, man's new humanity cannot be considered God's consummation. Scripture passages such as Romans 8:19-23, Colossians 1:15-20, and Ephesians 1:9, 22-23 describe the future glory or ultimate manifestation of God in Christ, creation's final deliverance and restored harmony, the resurrection as the final stage of sonship with God, the unification of humanity in the Christ, and the enthronement of the risen Lord.⁴⁶ Nam Dong Suh does not take into consideration the future glory of God to be revealed at the glorious second advent of Christ.

Theilhard de Chardin, from whom the idea of the cosmic Christ came, viewed Christ as the omega point of the future cosmic evolution. For Theilhard, Christ is the principle of universal vitality, who put Himself in the position to be subdued under Himself, to purify, to direct and superanimate the general ascent of consciousnesses into which He inserted Himself.⁴⁷ Christ is held to be "the universal center of unification, to which everything moves and at its focus everything converges in a process which aims at God's being all in everything and to everything and

⁴⁶ The New Bible Commentary Revised (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), pp. 1031-32, 1108, 1144.

⁴⁷ Pierre Theilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1959). p. 294.

to everyone."⁴⁸ At the basis of Teilhard's Christology lies the Marxist doctrine of man, according to which man is destined to play at the center of economic or evolutionary processes of development.⁴⁹ "One of the core principles shared by Marxism and Teilhard's evolutionism is that to be human means to change. Humankind is continually forming, kneading, and recycling the stuff of its civilizations in pathos-laden hopes of growth and improvement."⁵⁰ For Teilhard, Jesus as a human being is the result of a long process of cosmic evolution.⁵¹

Under the influence of Teilhard, Suh holds that resurrection is the collective participation in the new society of new order as a socio-political concept.^{52,53}

The Offices of Christ

Guide as a Good Example

In that Jesus is conceived of as an ordinary man and

⁴⁸C. J. Curtis, Contemporary Protestant Thought (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), p. 80; see, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Man's Place in Nature, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), p. 121.

⁴⁹Richard Lischer, Marx and Teilhard (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 2.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 3; see, Kyoung Jae Kim, Theology of Korean Culture (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1983), pp. 85-86.

⁵¹Teilhard, The Phenomenon of Man, p. 298.

⁵²Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 245, 246, 251.

⁵³See, for the resurrection, pp. 163-165.

denied His Diety by minjung theology, it can be said that Jesus did not draw the basis for the authority of His Word either from the Law or from God. He did not attempt to authenticate His Word with God's Word, due to the fact that the language of God had already become the language of the rulers and of their ideology to oppress the minjung. His stance was contrasted with that of the lawyers, whose authority was based upon the fact that they spoke the Word of God according to the Law.⁵⁴ Jesus spoke His own Word in the parabolical narrative by using the minjung's daily lives as his subject matters. By these parabolical narratives Jesus impressed the minjung as a man with authority and challenged them to decide for themselves and to be responsible for their own lives. In this respect, Jesus is held to be a companion-in-resistance of minjung as well as their guide.⁵⁵

With this view, Kee Deuk Song argues that Jesus is a good guide of minjung; He embodies the essence of human life, in that He showed us the spirit of decision to deny Himself, in order to release the pure ego and make a new future.⁵⁶ Jesus is held to be the realization of a sincere ego.

On the other hand, Song denounces the deification of

⁵⁴ Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, ed. Yong Bock Kim (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), p. 161.

⁵⁵ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 53.

⁵⁶ Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man, p. 440.

Christ as the anti-Christ heresy. He assumes that Jesus did not have a self-consciousness of the Messiah, nor did He say "Truly, I am your Christ." Therefore, it is nonsense to believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord God; to deify Christ is definitely to insult Him. Song views the deified Christ as the Christ of bourgeois.⁵⁷

However, minjung theology's view of Christ simply as a guide of the minjung is obviously contrary to Scriptural witnesses.⁵⁸ First of all, Jesus drew the basis for the authority of His Word from the Scriptures. He says, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:16, 17). In each and every chapter of the Gospels, which contain Jesus' sayings, we find sayings that are quoted from the Old Testament or which are interpretations of the Old Testament. For example, Jesus defeated the Devil in the temptation by quoting the written Word of God in the Old Testament.⁵⁹ Even as He quoted the Scriptures as He died on the cross.⁶⁰

Secondly, there are so many Scriptural passages

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 441.

⁵⁸ John 8:28, 12:49; 14:10, 24.

⁵⁹ Each one of Jesus' answers comes from Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13.

⁶⁰ Jesus' seven words on the cross are quoted from Isaiah 53:12; Matt. 1:21; Luke 2:25; Psalm 22:1; 69:21; 22:31; 31:5.

which bear witness to the fact that Jesus was conscious of His Messiahship.⁶¹ The fact that Jesus did not refuse the confession of faith which His disciples made (John 1:41, 45; Matt. 16:16) indicates that Jesus Himself knew His own Messiahship.

A Messianic Revolutionist

In that minjung theology attempts to connect salvation today with the reformation of the established social order, Ahn views Jesus as the man of resistance against the classes of vested rights.⁶² Jesus is the political Messiah, the leader of national liberation from socio-political oppression;⁶³ he is the political criminal of the anti-Roman resistance who instigated the minjung to destroy the established order;⁶⁴ he is Messianic revolutionist who did not hesitate to discard any authoritative norm or order for the sake of the restoration of humanity, especially for the human rights of the alienated classes.⁶⁵

This sociological understanding of Jesus as a Messianic revolutionist can be traced back to Herman Samuel

⁶¹Matt. 11:37 (Luke 10:22); 21:37, 38 (Matt 12:6; Luke 20:13); 22:41-46 (Mark 13:35-37; Luke 20:41-44); 24:36 (Mark 13:32); 28:19. Especially, in Luke 22:70, when the Council of Jewish elders asked, "Are you the Son of God?" Jesus answered them, "Yes, I am (ego eimi)."

⁶²Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus (Seoul: Hyun-dae Sa-sang-sa, 1979), p. 103.

⁶³Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man, pp. 218-219.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 437.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 438.

Reimarus,⁶⁶ the socialist Karl Kautsky,⁶⁷ Robert Eisler,⁶⁸ Rudolf Bultmann,⁶⁹ S. G. F. Brandon,⁷⁰ Milan Machovec,⁷¹ and the Portugese Christian Marxist, Fernando Belo,⁷² who tried to illustrate Jesus as a political revolutionist.

As regards this sociological understanding, Martin Hengel gives balanced conclusion in his book, Was Jesus a Revolutionist? He answers this question with "yes and no." Jesus cannot be party to those who seek to reform the world by violence. Hengel opposes a romantic justification of revolutionary violence now that he recognizes that there can no longer be a just war. Jesus pointed the way of non-

⁶⁶Reimarus designated Jesus as a political rebel in his essay, "Concerning the Purposes of Jesus and His Disciples," trans. with introduction by George W. Buchanan (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

⁶⁷Kautsky assumed that the execution of Jesus was brought about through an armed rebellion; Foundations of Christianity (New York: S. A. Russel, 1953), p. 390.

⁶⁸According to Eisler, Jesus was a political revolutionist of an apocalyptic stamp, who attempted an uprising in Jerusalem and was taken captive and put to death by the Romans; Jesus, a King not Ruling (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1929), pp. 71-92.

⁶⁹Bultmann asserted that Jesus was executed because His activity was misconstrued as a political activity: "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, trans. and ed. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville, (New York: Abingdon, 1964), pp. 15-42,

⁷⁰Brandon, The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), pp. 255, 324, 333, 349-350.

⁷¹Machovec, A Marxist Looks at Jesus (Philadelphia: N. p., 1976).

⁷²Belo, A Materialistic Reading of the Gospel of Mark (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 261-263.

violent protest and willingness to suffer (see, Luke 22:51).⁷³

Jesus cannot be party to those who seek to keep the status quo, either. "He broke with the proud self-assurance of the ideology about election of His people, in that He promised the Gentiles participation in the kingdom of God ahead of many Jews, or in that he confronted with the humanity of the hated Samaritan the selfishness of the Jewish Levite."⁷⁴ Jesus neither justifies nor condemns world power. True freedom from the powers begins with an inner freedom; and inner freedom is only achieved by him who has grasped the forgiveness of sins, through faith, by grace, in Christ. In this sense, Jesus can be correctly called a revolutionist. But, as Hengel suggests, "when the word 'revolution' has become so cheap and hip, even among theologians, we should refrain from calling Him a revolutionist."⁷⁵ Hengel concludes, "The truth does not lie in our 'interpreting' the figure of Jesus to accord with the latest fashion of our time - a process in which 'interpreting' all too easily becomes a falsifying; but truth lies in this, that our life is modelled and fashioned by Him."⁷⁶

⁷³ Martin Hengel, Was Jesus a Revolutionist? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 31.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

The State of Christ

The Incarnation of Christ

In the history of Jesus' life, according to Kee Deuk Song, only His political murder on the cross is historically reliable. All that the Christian church knows about the historical Jesus are only two facts: that he existed in the world in the past and that he was crucified as a political criminal.⁷⁷ The Jesus described in the Gospels is supposed to be a Christianized Jesus, namely, the deified Christ.⁷⁸ Thereby, the Scriptural doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus, according to which he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 1:31-38), is discarded as an unhistorical myth.⁷⁹ Incarnation is understood as Jesus' descent into the minjung in order to identify Himself with them.⁸⁰ Suh does not explain incarnation in terms of ontology but function. On Phillipians 2:6-11, Kyoung Jae Kim comments that the self-emptying of God is an expression of His nature of sacrificial love in that He is lavish in His gifts; on the other hand, it is an expression of Jesus' faithful obedience and unselfish service. Simply, the self-emptying is the mode of

⁷⁷ Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man, pp. 209-210.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 207-208, 441.

⁷⁹ Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p. 61.

⁸⁰ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 187.

behavior of a unique freedom and love in the divine being.⁸¹

The "form (morphe in Greek) of God" is, according to Kim, not the ontological divine substance and power, but the functional position of a man which regulates Him. That He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped means He did not contrive to stay in the divine person to enjoy all the divine honor, glory, and power as if he would usurp them.⁸²

However, in contrast to the above, what Paul means in Philippians 2:6 is that although Jesus was the same God in his essential nature, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be usurped, which forms a striking contrast to the case of Adam, who regarded the equality with God a thing to be usurped in spite of his condition as a creature.

Also, for historical Christianity there is no doubt about the incarnation, that literally and historically the eternal Son of God became man without ceasing to be God. Jesus, the very Word and the very God, became flesh and dwelt among men (John 1:1, 14). He was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). The mode of the incarnation is that Jesus took to Himself the human nature and flesh of the seed of Abraham.⁸³

⁸¹ Kyoung Jae Kim, Theology of Korean Culture, p. 25.

⁸² Ibid., p. 24.

⁸³ J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, 2 vols. 2: 28. See, Hebrews 2:16 reads literally, "For assuredly He does not take hold of angels, but He takes hold of the seed of Abraham."

The Death of Christ

The Augustinian thought of salvation by divine grace through faith (Rom. 3:24, 25) is contrasted by Suh with Pelagian thought of salvation by meritorious works (see, James 2:21, 24). Suh rejects the former as an ideology of rulers and has a high regard for the latter.⁸⁴ Byung Mu Ahn asserts that there is not any hint of a substitutionary death in John's Gospel; this Gospel describes the narrative of the Lord's Supper with Jesus' example of washing His disciples' feet, rather than with Jesus' words about His torn body and poured blood for forgiveness of sins. The phrase, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood" (John 6:54), does not mean substitutionary death, but simply human life.⁸⁵

Ahn denounces substitutionary death as a narrow-minded concept of God, which views God as a God thirsty for blood from the point of the category of law and sacrifice.⁸⁶ Jesus never considered Himself to be the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Christians put words on the lips of Jesus that give a vicarious and propitiatory meaning to His death. So to speak, the substitutionary meaning of Jesus' death is supposed to be a product more of human reflection than of divine revelation.⁸⁷

⁸⁴"Symposium," The Theological Thought 24:125, 127.

⁸⁵Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p. 50.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man, pp. 434-436; Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, pp. 13, 94.

Minjung theologians understand the death of Jesus as a political murder.⁸⁸ His death is explained in terms of social participation in the historical realities.⁸⁹ Consequently, His death is regarded as the death of minjung murdered by the hands of rulers.⁹⁰

Against this view, the Scriptures, the inspired Word of God, whose authority is objective and absolute, do not describe Jesus' death in political terms, but in terms of the vicarious redemption. In John's Gospel (10:15, 18) Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep;" "No one has taken it (my life) away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative." The words, "life" (psyche in Greek) and "for" (hyper in Greek) are also used in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45, which definitely mention the substitutionary death. Paul also describes Jesus' death as a propitiatory sacrifice (Rom. 3:25) and Jesus as the Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7).

The Resurrection of Christ

Minjung theology interprets Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection of the saints in the same politico-sociological terms. Jesus' resurrection is considered to be a minjung awakening.⁹¹ Nam Dong Suh contends that Jesus

⁸⁸ Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, pp. 16-17.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 14; Nam Dong Suh, p. 54.

⁹⁰ Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation, p. 181; Chan Kook Kim, "Revival of April 19 Spirit," Hanelmom (September 1982), p. 17.

⁹¹ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 194.

was murdered by the Jerusalem regimes for the sake of the status quo, because Jesus challenged them and their law by way of conscientizing the Galilean minjung to restore their human rights.⁹² By way of the conscientization, minjung is awakened to participate collectively in the new history of the future. This is the meaning of resurrection.⁹³

Resurrection has no more than a symbolic meaning of the restoration of human rights of minjung by way of minjung awakening.⁹⁴ Consequently, minjung awakening revolts (or, movements) such as the Donghak Peasant Revolt, the March First Independence Movement, and the April 19 Student Revolution are regarded as resurrection.⁹⁵ Suh says,

"Resurrection is protest of the murdered, revengeful resolution of 'han,'⁹⁶ and restoration of the violated justice of God Negation of death, betrayal of hidden scandals, victory of truth and life -- these are resurrection.

Resurrection is resolution of 'han.'"⁹⁷ Suh's understanding of resurrection reminds us of Leonardo Boff;

⁹² Ibid., p. 191.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 193.

⁹⁴ Ibid.; Suh interprets "resurrection" as "insurrection" with reference to Mark 13:8; Acts 5:39; 21:38; (Ibid., p. 321).

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 194.

⁹⁶ See, Minjung Theology, p. 68. "Just indignation" may be a close translation of "han," but it evokes a refined emotion yearning for justice to be done.

⁹⁷ Nam Dong Suh, pp. 318-319.

Wherever people seek the good, justice, humanitarian love, solidarity, communion, and understanding between people, wherever they dedicate themselves to overcoming their own egoism, making this world more human and fraternal, and opening themselves to the normative Transcendent for their lives, there we can say, with all certainty, that the resurrected one is present, because the cause for which He lived, suffered, was tried and executed is being carried forward.⁹⁸

As Myoung Hyouk Kim denounces, this concept of resurrection is an expression of the Hegelian panentheistic concept of the absolute spirit and of the Marxian ideal of socio-economic-political revolution.⁹⁹ As Paul said, men who deny Jesus' historical resurrection have already gone astray from the truth (2 Tim. 2:18).

Many Scriptural passages clearly witness Christ's historical resurrection. There are two types of evidence. First, the tomb in which Jesus had been laid was empty, and His body was never found (Matt. 28:1-6; Luke 24:1-3, 12; John 20:11-15). Second, many persons testified that they had seen Jesus alive (Matt. 28:9-10, 16-17; Luke 24:30-49; John 20:18-29; 21:1).

Through the resurrection Christ won the glorious victory over death and the devil (Acts 2:24; Hebrews 2:14, 15) and offered and applied to all men the fruits of His suffering and death (Rom. 4:25; 6:4; 2 Cor. 4:14; 5:15; 1 Thess. 4:14). This resurrection of Christ, on the one hand,

⁹⁸ Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ Liberator, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 218-219.

⁹⁹ Myoung Hyouk Kim, "Minjung Theology's View of God and its Socio-economic Characteristics," State and Church II, p. 265.

took place by the power of God the Father (Eph. 1:20). Thereby, God declared all sinners free from sin (Rom. 4:24, 25), in that by the resurrection God absolved Christ from our sins imputed to Him and therefore also absolved us in Him. For this reason Christ's resurrection is the object of justifying faith (1 Cor. 15:14, 17, 21).

On the other hand, Christ Himself is the efficient cause of His resurrection (John 2:19; 10:17, 18) in as much as He is true God and in possession of the same divine power as God the Father (John 5:19). In this respect, Christ's resurrection is a most powerful proof for His Deity and divine Saviorship (John 2:18-21).¹⁰⁰ Therefore, if we do not believe in the historical resurrection of Christ, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17).

The Parousia of Christ

Minjung theologians recognize the historicity of Christ but deny His transcendent supernaturalism. In this connection, there is little difference between the incarnation and the parousia of Christ. Both are no more than His historical presence in the midst of the suffering people (or, minjung). Incarnation and parousia seem to be used interchangeably.

Therefore, Suh says that the parousia of Christ is the realization of the humanity of the suffering neighbor; the parousia can be recognized in the face of the suffering

¹⁰⁰ See, John T. Mueller, pp. 298-299.

brother;¹⁰¹ Christ comes in the form of an incarnate neighbor;¹⁰² Christ comes when minjung play a role as the master of new history.¹⁰³ In effect, liberation of the oppressed minjung is regarded as the parousia.

But, Scriptures, on the contrary, teach that there will be a personal, glorious advent of Christ on the Last Judgment Day. The Scriptural term "parousia" in the first place means "presence," but also serves to designate "a coming preceding a presence," when it is used in connection with the return of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁴ His return will be physical and visible in character.¹⁰⁵ He will return for the purpose of judging the world and perfecting the salvation of His people. All the creatures will appear before Him to be judged according to their works.¹⁰⁶ While He will sentence the wicked to everlasting punishment, He will publicly justify His own people and lead them to enjoy themselves in His eternal kingdom.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, those who do not believe

¹⁰¹ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 96; A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 108, 117, 119.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁰³ Young Jin Min, "Assessment on the Significance of Minjung Theology," in A Study on the Minjung in Korea, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1; James. 5:7, 8; 2 Peter 3:4.

¹⁰⁵ Acts 1:11.

¹⁰⁶ Matt. 24:31, 31; 25:31, 32, 34-46.

¹⁰⁷ Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, pp. 353-354.

in the historical, supernatural parousia of Christ on the Last Day, do not believe in His judgment, either.

CHAPTER VIII

MINJUNG THEOLOGY'S VIEW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Misunderstanding of Joachim of Fiore

Joachim of Fiore(1135-1202) and Thomas Muentzer(1482-1525) are referred to as a paradigm from Western church history for minjung theology.¹ Against the Augustinian post-millennialism, which denies, according to Nam Dong Suh, the futuristic, revolutionary dimension of eschatology but plays a role to protect the existing order, social and political, Joachim of Fiore developed a clear historical theology. And under the influence of Joachim, Muentzer advocated that personal religious salvation itself cannot be realized without revolutionary action. Muentzer believed that under an oppressive system the image of God in man would be distorted, so that man cannot speak correctly of God in a situation of oppression.²

¹ See, Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), pp. 17-19.

² Nam Dong Suh, Minjung Theology, p. 165; Marjorie Reeves, Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future (London, SPCK, 1976), P. 141; Muentzer acknowledges that he has only read the pseudo-Joachimist Super Hieremiam, but he is convinced that the new age of enlightenment would be brought in by the activities of men themselves.

According to Suh, Joachim did not accept the traditional understanding of the Trinity as three persons in one divine unity. Rather he viewed the Trinity as revealed in three successive historical periods. Joachim is supposed to have asserted that in the third spiritual period, all the people will have progressed beyond the need for the institutional church and the literal word of the Bible and their souls and bodies become filled with wisdom and happiness in the historical reality of this world; God is the inner power of the process of humanization in history and He incarnates Himself by progressively increasing His presence in history.³

In contrast with Suh's introduction of Joachim, Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz introduce him on the basis of his trilogy: Liber Concordie novi ac veteris Testamenti (Harmony of the New and Old Testament), Exposito in Apocalypsim (Exposition of Apocalypse), and Psalterium decem chordarum (Psaltery of Ten Strings).

With St. Augustine, Joachim explains that the three persons are named in relation to each other. The Father, the Unbegotten, is so named because he has a Son; the Son, only Begotten, is so named because he has a Father; and the Holy Spirit is named in relation to the Father and the Son because he proceeds from both.⁴

Against both the Arians and Sabellians, Joachim asserts that the names of the Trinity are not empty names but denote three complete, co-eternal and co-equal persons. With St. Augustine, Joachim affirms the ineffable unity of the Trinity, so that whatever is said according to substance is said equally of Father, Son, and Spirit. The abbot states that while works and qualities are said

³Ibid., pp. 163-164.

⁴Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, Joachim of Fiore (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 53.

equally of the three persons because of their unity, nonetheless these works may by their very nature be assigned to one person.⁵

Joachim definitely accepted the traditional Augustinian doctrine of Trinity as three persons in one divine unity,⁶ for Joachim, a correct understanding of the three persons and one substance was the key to a knowledge of history and of the Trinity itself. The historical divisions which he made are related to the doctrine of the Trinity, clearly showing his conviction of the unity of the Trinity as well as the co-equality and majesty of the three persons.⁷ Each of Joachim's basic historical divisions reveals an economic view of the Trinity. According to Joachim's conception of the third epoch, the existing social structure was to be progressively reorganized and the existing leadership to be replaced by a new order of contemplative monks.⁸ But the apocalyptic faith of the fourteenth century was beginning to twist the schemas of Joachim into a dynamic of revolution replacing the progressive consummation of institutions.⁹

Joachim believed that change would occur as a part of the historical process begun with Adam. The implication was that change would occur as a result of Christian agencies at work in the world. . . . His cosmic vision of history, ever moving forward toward a new age of

⁵Ibid., p. 56.

⁶Ibid., p. 58.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 103.

⁹Ibid., p. 107.

peace and prosperity, was a seed for ideas of progress!¹⁰

Suh misunderstands Joachim's economic view of the Trinity to be a modalistic Sabellianism and his idea of the progressive change of history to be a dynamic of revolution. And he identifies the development of world history with the mode of God's existence.¹¹

Minjung Theology's Understanding
of the Spirit

The Spirit in the Old and New Testament

Suh views the Holy Spirit from the sociological viewpoint on the basis of Joachim's third dispensation of the Spirit. There is not any doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, even though there are many references to the Spirit. These references only indicate the free and limitless divine activities of the Spirit. Just as the Old Testament passages of Messianic prophecy do not indicate the Christian doctrinal understanding of God the Son, so the Holy Spirit does not yet appear in the Old Testament either.¹²

So, also, according to Suh, the doctrine of the Spirit as an independent person of the Trinity is not clearly taught in the New Testament, even though in many passages the Spirit is described as if He were a personal

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 112.

¹¹ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 127.

¹² Ibid., p. 121.

agent or God Himself; and yet these passages are presented as sufficient proof of the Spirit's personality. Some passages such as John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:13¹³ and Acts 16:6¹⁴ present the Spirit as a personal agent; but generally speaking, many passages of the New Testament describe the Spirit in impersonal terms. Those passages which indicate the Spirit as a personal agent do not suggest the Spirit as a person distinguished from the persons of the Father and the Son. Even Lactantius and Athanasius are supposed not to give a clear definition of the person of the Spirit.¹⁵ Suh concludes that in the Old Testament there is not any doctrine of the Holy Spirit and that in the New Testament that doctrine is unclear;¹⁶ it was the Cappadocian fathers who first came to integrate the Spirit in their theological system.¹⁷

Contrarily, the traditional Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit rests upon clear and decisive Scriptural passages. In Matthew 28:19 three distinct and entirely coordinate persons are described as having the same name.

¹³ These passages of John's Gospel describe the Spirit as the Helper (paracletos) and the Spirit of truth with a personal pronoun.

¹⁴ Acts 16:6 reads that the Holy Spirit forbade Paul to speak the Word in Asia.

¹⁵ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 122.

¹⁶ In this connection, Suh is more likely based upon Gregory of Nazianzen, who advocated the doctrine of the progressive revelation.

¹⁷ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 123.

Again, to the Holy Spirit are ascribed a) the same divine names as to the Father (2 Sam. 23:2,3; Acts 5:3, 4; 1 Cor. 2:16-17; 6:19-20);¹⁸ b) the same divine attributes, such as eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, goodness, and mercy (Heb. 9:14; Is. 11:2; 1 Cor. 2: 10-12; Ps. 139: 7); c) the same divine works, such as creation, preservation, and miracles (Ps. 33: 6; Job 33: 4; Acts 10: 38); d) divine adoration and worship (Is. 6: 3; 2 Cor. 13: 14; Num 6:26). Thus the true divine personality of the Spirit is strenuously affirmed in the Scriptures.¹⁹

In contrast to Suh's assertion that even Lactantius and Athanasius did not give clear definition of the Spirit, it can be shown that they knew the Spirit as the divine Person of the Trinity. Lactantius described the Holy Spirit as follows:

The Paraclete Himself, holy, powerful, and life-giving, the Spirit of truth, who spoke in the law, the apostles, and prophets; who is everywhere present, and filleth all things, freely working sanctification in whom He will with Thy good pleasure; one in His nature; manifold in His working; the fountain of divine blessing; of like substance with Thee, and proceeding from Thee; . . . send down upon us also, and upon this bread and upon these chalices, Thy Holy Spirit, that by His all-powerful and divine influence He may sanctify and consecrate them, and make this bread the body.²⁰

¹⁸ In these verses "God" and "Holy Spirit" seem to be interchangeable expressions.

¹⁹ See, Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), pp. 95-99.

²⁰ Alexander Roberts and James Donalson, ed., The Ante-Nicene Fathers 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 7: 558.

Lactantius acknowledged the Spirit as the object of adoration, one in substance with the Father, co-eternal and indivisible.²¹ So, also, Athanasius confessed perfectly and fully the faith in the Holy Trinity,²² and acknowledged the Spirit as the Paraclete who sanctifies Christians and unites them to God.²³

The Spirit in the Age to Come

On the basis of progressive revelation, Suh assumes that in the Old Testament God the Father played a role as the leading actor, and in the New Testament God the Son, and so in these two Testaments the Holy Spirit was no more than divine supernatural force. Since the fourth century, however, in the progressive process of revelation, the Holy Spirit came to play the leading part, superceding God the Father of the Old Testament and God the Son of the New Testament.²⁴ Consequently, the Holy Spirit is God who exists here and now;²⁵ He is Christ's successor, the transformation of Christ, intrinsic God dwelling in humanity. "As such, He becomes the basis for the conviction regarding the equal rights and dignity of all human beings. Therefore, the

²¹Ibid., pp. 546, 547.

²²Philip Schaff and Henry Wage, ed., The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 4: 494.

²³Ibid., pp. 336, 381, 407, 445, 494.

²⁴Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 59.

²⁵Ibid., p. 166.

period of the Holy Spirit is that of the minjung²⁶

Kwang Sun Suh considers Him to be a Spirit to ask and demand social participation; the sacrificial love suffering the death on the cross for the sake of humanity, society, and history; the divine presence, power and love which exists in human beings and the world.²⁷

Nam Dong Suh views that it is absurd to establish the doctrine of the person of the Holy Spirit on the basis of the New Testament, since the Spirit is the sign of the last days and is connected with the Age to come which began with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The Spirit is dynamic in character; the outpouring of the power of life, the invisible guide of the Christian community, and the God who rules His people in the last days.²⁸

God the Spirit is open-ended in character, possesses the freedom to go beyond the boundary of the Scriptures, and is free from each and every dogma and ecclesiastical institutions.²⁹ The Spirit is the creative divine activity who manifests Himself in the creation continually and at every moment.³⁰

²⁶ Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, ed. Yong Bock Kim (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), p. 165.

²⁷ Kwang Sun Suh, "Minjung and the Holy Spirit," in Minjung and Korean Theology, pp. 314, 316.

²⁸ Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, p. 123.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

³⁰ Kyoung Jae Kim, Theology of Korean Culture (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1983), p. 251.

The Pentecostal event is understood as the epochal event which makes mutual communication possible: it is the historical possibility which overcomes class-barriers; it is the historical embodiment of the subjectivity of minjung, through which minjung restore their own languages, human rights, and freedom.³¹

The concept of the Spirit asserted by minjung theologians does not recognize an eternal procession from both God the Father and God the Son, but knows only a universal panentheistic Spirit.³² For minjung theology, the Trinitarian God is dissolved into history. Therefore, Byung Mu Ahn regards the Holy Spirit as Jesus' social revolutionary spirit which is immanent in humanity; it is the presence of Jesus' role of social participation, and the total cessation of established order.³³ Minjung theologians do not consider the Spirit to be the personal God who has His own individual person.

Minjung Theology's Critical Position
against the Views of the Spirit
in the Korean Churches

Because traditional conservative theology is absolutely dependent upon Scriptural revelation, Kwang Sun Suh

³¹ Yong Bock Kim, "The Sociography of Minjung and Theology," in Minjung and Korean Theology, p. 385.

³² Won Jong Lee, "A Methodological Approach to the Theological Understanding of Korean Minjung History" (Th.M. thesis, Hanshin University, Seoul, 1984), p. 27.

³³ Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus (Seoul: Hyundae Sasangsa, 1979), pp. 146, 150, 151.

criticizes that there is no room for the Holy Spirit in the traditional theology which emphasizes the objective authority of the Scriptures and their sufficiency. The Holy Spirit is not to be found in the traditional theology which starts from God the Creator, but only in the social experience.³⁴

Traditional theology is criticized as viewing God as "God the Father without the Spirit," whose main characteristic is selfish and individual. Suh contends that God the Father, who does not have any power of the Spirit, religionizes as well as dehumanizes man. He concludes that because "God the Father without the Spirit" of the traditional conservative theology is formalistic and authoritarian in character, the religious culture, which emphasizes the authority of God the Father, cannot help justifying the authoritarian socio-economical system, subjecting the underdogs unconditionally to the authority of the rulers, and allowing authoritarianism and despotism in both sacred and secular societies.³⁵

Additionally, Suh criticizes the pentecostal pneumatology as "the Spirit without God the Father," which emphasizes lopsidedly the subjective and mystic experience of the Spirit. The pentecostal movement is supposed to have an individualistic and desocialized tendency, which goes hand in hand with material secularism.³⁶

³⁴ Kwang Sun Suh, p. 306.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 307-309

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 311-313.

In short, the Spirit of minjung theology is a social revolutionary power to liberate the oppressed classes of minjung. For minjung theology, the Spirit can be found in the midst of minjung's miserable defeat and helplessness.³⁷ But, according to the Scriptures, the major task of the Holy Spirit is to teach God's people all things that Jesus had taught (John 14:26). His task is limited to whatever He hears from Christ (John 16:13). Whatever Jesus taught is written in the Scriptures, and therefore, the Holy Spirit teaches Christ's church by only the means of the written Scriptures, which are the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The Spirit works with His own sword of the Scriptures. Only the written Word of God can make the biggest room for the Holy Spirit.

Evaluation of Understanding
of the Triune God

Minjung theology does not view God from a theological and Scriptural viewpoint but from a socio-political contextual viewpoint. It denounces traditional theology as a dogmatic (gyo-jo-juk) ideology,³⁸ and it consequently does not have theology in the proper sense. The major concern of minjung theology is not God but the underdogs, not the transcendent God but the minjung as the historical man.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 315.

³⁸ Korean traditional theology is criticized as "formalistic authoritarian dogmatism" (by Kwang Sun Suh) and "Herrschende Theologie" (by Nam Dong Suh) (See, Minjung and Korean Theology, p. 309; A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 306).

The God of minjung theology is not revealed in the written Scriptures, but its human God is present in the bottom of miserable human realities, for example, in the rotten womb of the deserted prostitute.³⁹

Minjung theology's view of God is, as mentioned earlier, panentheistic, historical, and socio-political in character. Therefore, for minjung theology, God is the immanent historical force of the process of humanization;⁴⁰ Jesus' crucifixion is the political murder of minjung and His resurrection is the political awakening of minjung and their revolutionary revolt raised in the name of humanization;⁴¹ and the Holy Spirit is the political decision for revolutionary humanization.⁴²

In contrast with this view of God, the Scriptures clearly speak about God, personal and divine in nature. We believe in one God (1 Kings 8: 60; 1 Tim. 2: 5; Deut. 6: 4), who is infinite in being and perfection (1 Kings 8: 27; Acts 7:48, 49; Is. 66:1), the Father all governing, creator of all things visible and invisible (Acts 17:27, 28; 1 Cor. 8:6), the Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, of the same essence as the Father (John 1:14, 18; 1 John 4:9), through whom all things came into being (Col. 1:16), and

³⁹ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 29, 103.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 194, 234, 318-319.

⁴² Yong Bock Kim, p. 385.

the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son (John 15:26; 2 Cor. 3:17; 13:13; Gal. 4:6). God is a personal being, not as a part or property of another but as that which exists of itself (John 5:26; Psalm 94:8-10; Is. 40:18-20).

On the basis of the Scriptures, traditional confessions⁴³ define God as Creator, the only foundation of all being, and teach that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons of one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal. A traditional confession rejects all heresies such as Arianism (dynamic monarchianism) and Sabellianism (modalistic monarchianism) which practically denied the deity of Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit. Minjung theology is comparable to dynamic monarchianism in that it considers Jesus as a creature and the Spirit as an impersonal force of liberation and awakening. On the other hand, its view of God is modalistic in that the dispensations of the Father and the Son have passed in the Old and New Testament periods with the present dispensation of the Holy Spirit alone, the Father being superceded by the Son and the Son by the Spirit.

Because minjung theology is based upon Hegelian philosophy, it is natural that this theology is focused on the perennial revolution,⁴⁴ man and history as the process

⁴³ Traditional confessions are such as the Creed of Nicaea (325), the Augusburg Confession (1530), and the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646).

⁴⁴ "Symposium," The Theological Thought 24: 110.

of the self-development of God (or, universe),⁴⁵ and liberation by, for, and of man himself. But actually atheism lies behind the Hegelian thoughts which posit that all social reality arises out of the master-slave class conflicts and that the function of guiding history does not belong to divinity but is the responsibility of humanity.⁴⁶

Because minjung theology does not give enough importance to the inspiration and divine authority of the Scriptures, but puts in doubt the authenticity of various portions of the Scriptures and prefers to interpret Biblical Christology in terms of theological evolution, minjung theology asserts that Biblical Christology is largely the product of the religionized reflection of the first Christians, namely the product of human devising.⁴⁷

However, in contrast to minjung theology's assertion, it is impossible to know what God, in his own inner and secret essence is, until the Holy Spirit reveals it through the written Word of God alone.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid. pp. 116, 123.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Hamilton, "Liberation Theology: An Overview," Evangelicals & Liberation, ed. by Carl E. Armerding (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 4-5.

⁴⁷ Nunez, p. 225; see, The Theological Thought 24: 127.

⁴⁸ Matt. 11:27; John 5:39; 16:13.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS

The Church

The Definition of the Church

A new community, which is established on the grounds of the egalitarian covenant, is designated as the church by Nam Dong Suh.¹ This new community is to guarantee the freedom of politics, economics, and religion. The weak must be protected from any kind of exploitation, and class-conflict between the rich and the poor must not exist. As an egalitarian socio-political system,² this new society is the standardized community in which there cannot be found any poor underdog. For Suh, the church is a community of realistic faith, which has democratic law, a social system, and a political regime of democracy, so that everyman can enjoy equal human rights and economic riches.³

Byung Mu Ahn is mainly concerned with the socio-political community of life together⁴ rather than the

¹ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), p. 264.

² Ibid., p. 266.

³ Ibid., p. 267.

⁴ Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1984), p.245.

communion of the saints. But to the contrary, God consecrated His chosen people with a continual burnt offering or the blood of lamb (Ex. 29:12, 42; Lev. 1:3-9) so that they can be holy (Lev. 11:44). They are His sheep, the objects of His prayer (John 17:9). There were the congregations who, receiving the Holy Spirit, were baptized in the name of the Lord and continually devoted themselves to the Scriptural teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:41-47).

The Christian church can be thus defined as "nothing else than the congregation of the saints, that is, the pious, believing men on earth, which is gathered, preserved, and ruled by the Holy Spirit, and daily increased by means of the sacraments and the Word of God."⁵ The church is purchased by God the Son with His won blood (Acts 20:28). Before the foundation of the world God determined that all believers in Christ would be "the church," that the saints should be holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4). By faith in the gospel the saints are made partakers of the salvation and eternal blessedness brought by Christ. Therefore, away from the visible church one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation (Is. 37:32; Joel 2:32). "God's fatherly favor and the special witness of spiritual life are limited to His flock, so that it is always disastrous to

⁵ Martin Luther, "A Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer," Works of Martin Luther, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: F. J. Holman Co. 1915), 2: 373.

leave the church"⁶ (Ps. 100:4-5). The Christian church is not an egalitarian society in socio-economical terms.

The Membership of the Church

Minjung theology views the church from the socio-political point of view. The am ha-arez (the poor village folk) of Galilee, namely, ochlos, alone belonged to the group of Jesus' disciples.⁷ The ochlos gathered wherever Jesus was, heard him, and were amazed at His teaching (Mark 2:4, 13; 3:9, 20; 4:1; 5:24, 31; 11:18). Jesus lived with them and taught them (Mark 2:13; 4:11; 7:4) and declared them his real family (Mark 3:34-35). Christ's church consisted of this sort of ochlos, namely, the alienated marginals, the have-nots, and the so-called sinners.⁸ In the church, ochlos or the underdogs, play a role as the subject of history.⁹

However, minjung theology disregards the fact that Jesus separated His disciples from the ochlos and gave them special teachings (Mark 4:11, 34; 7:17; 10:10; 11:19). This fact indicates that Jesus was more concerned about the upbringing of His disciples rather than teaching and healing the ochlos (Mark 3:7, 13, 34; 6:7). Minjung theology also

⁶John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), p. 1016.

⁷Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 14.

⁸Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation, pp. 172, 173, 175, 252-254.

⁹Ibid., pp. 229, 232.

does not consider the fact that the church as a body of Christ consists of many individual members. However, as Paul teaches, there are leaders, teachers, rich people who afford to give and show mercy, and workers of miracles in the Christian church, which includes masters and slaves, rulers and the ruled, and men and women alike (Rom. 12:5-8; 1 Cor. 12:22-30).

Since the communion of believing saints which the Holy Spirit gathers through the gospel is called the church, "the Christian church accordingly consists of all those who truly believe the gospel, that is, God's gracious message that for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction they freely have forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; or, more briefly expressed, who believe in Christ, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)."¹⁰ As Calvin asserts, this Church is made up of those "who are children of God by grace of adoption and true members of Christ by sanctification of the Holy Spirit."¹¹ To conclude, without faith in Christ (especially his substitutionary death and resurrection) and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, no one can be received into the Christian church. The Scriptures make no special case for the minjung. Many of the minjung do not belong to the Christian church (see, John 6:66).

¹⁰John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 541.

¹¹John Calvin, p. 1021.

At the basis of minjung theology's view of the membership of the church, there lies the thought that there is no distinction between the profane and the sacred.¹² This thought follows Gustavo Gutierrez, who says, "Since God has become man, humanity, every man, history is the living temple of God. The profane that which is located outside the temple, no longer exists."¹³

The Field Church

Minjung theology advocates the field church,¹⁴ which is similar to the people's church referred to by Gutierrez. Both Korean minjung theology and Latin American liberation theology avoids any dualism between the sacred and the profane.¹⁵ According to both theologies, the church is not only present in the world, but it is part of the world.

This field church is a third form of the church (besides the Catholic and Protestant churches); the Catholic Farmer's Association (CFA), various Urban Industrial Missions (UIM), the rural activities of the Korean Christian Academy, Human Rights Committee of the National Council of Churches (NCC), Friday Prayer Meetings, Thursday Prayer

¹²Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus (Seoul: Hyundae Sasangsa, 1979), p. 291.

¹³Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 194.

¹⁴The field church is a Christian koinonia engaged in a social movement. This term can be translated as "church on the spot."

¹⁵Gutierrez, pp. 260-261.

Meetings, and the Galilee Church have appeared as field churches in the present-day Korean situation.¹⁶

The activities of these field churches are focused on social movements such as the conscientization of the urban workers and the rural farmers, and prayer meetings for the captives imprisoned on account of anti-government resistance for human rights. Their emphasis is on the conversion of the church to the world. Consequently, the church is to exist in the midst of minjung for the sake of minjung and to take part in the suffering of minjung.¹⁷

For criticism of minjung theology's ecclesiology, some passages from the Vatican "Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" are relevant:

But the "theologies of liberation" . . . go on to a disastrous confusion between the poor of the Scriptures and the proletariat of Marx. In this way they pervert the Christian meaning of the poor, and they transform the fight for the rights of the poor into a class fight within the ideological perspective of the class struggle. For them, the "church of the poor" signifies the church of the class which has become aware of the requirements of the revolutionary struggle as a step toward liberation and which celebrates this liberation in its liturgy. (IX. 10)

But the "theologies of liberation" of which we are speaking mean by church of the people, a church of the class, a church of the oppressed people whom it is

¹⁶Friday and Thursday Prayer Meetings and the Galilee Church had been gathered to pray for the imprisoned resistants who fought for the human rights against the Korean government. ,See, Nam Dong Suh, "Toward a Theology of Han," Minjung Theology (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), p. 57.

¹⁷Yong Bock Kim, "Sociography of Minjung and Theology," in Minjung and Korean Theology (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1982), p. 386.

necessary to "conscientize" in the light of the organized struggle for freedom. For some, the people, thus understood, even become the object of faith. (IX. 12)

According to this view of field church, all the church organizations and holy orders and distinctions such as Catholic priests and Protestant ministers must be avoided. Yet, the Scriptures clearly outline the ordinations and the qualifications of holy orders (1 Tim. 3:1-13), and the early church leaders clearly appointed elders in the churches (Acts 14:23) that were planted.

The Function and Marks of the Church

Jesus, as a friend of minjung, was murdered by the ruling regime because He stood on the side of minjung and fought for the cause of minjung. Therefore, His church should follow His step and fight to destroy the politico-economic structural evil that it may restore them their human rights. Basically then, the function of the church is to establish the democratic society of the minjung, by the minjung, and for the minjung.¹⁸ In another vein, Suh asserts that because the territorial division between South and North Korea (which was done by the world super-powers) is the cause of all the injustice and misery, the Korean church should make a contribution to the national task of the political unification.¹⁹

¹⁸ Byung Mu Ahn, "Nation, Minjung, and Church," Minjung and Korean Theology, pp. 24-25.

¹⁹ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 139. For Suh, the goal of minjung theology is minjung nationalism.

In connection with the function of church, Suh asserts again that the church should endeavor to resolve the "han" (indignation) of minjung,²⁰ because this "han" is caused by the oppressive structural evil. In order that the church might fight against the structural evil so as to resolve the "han" of minjung, to restore them their human rights, and to achieve the unification of South and North Korea, the church must secure the freedom to love one's neighbors. The love for neighbor is a major premise of the existence of the church.²¹

Ahn equates religious duty, namely, man's relationship with God with love for the neighbor. For him, the former is based upon the latter. In other words, love for the neighbor is a unique way to love God.²² This love for neighbor is not religious but socio-economic in character. The showing of mercy, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), is a pure humanistic response to the need of a neighbor. Therefore, not only is Jesus considered a thorough humanist,²³ but the humanistic love for neighbor is deemed the special mark of the church. It is indispensable for the church, in order to be the church, to take the side of the poor against the oppressors and to become conscious

²⁰ Ibid., p. 243; "han" is a "just indignation."

²¹ Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation, p. 166.

²² Ibid., p. 161.

²³ Ibid., p. 163.

of social injustice.²⁴

Ahn's ecclesiology is not biblically founded. He does not take into consideration Scripture which states that the privilege to preach the gospel (Matt. 16:19) and to administer the sacraments belongs to the Christians alone (1 Cor. 11:23-34) and that the called and ordained pastors exercise their ministerial functions only in the name of the church which has called them (1 Cor. 1:13-17).²⁵

According to the Scriptures, the marks of the church in particular²⁶ are true preaching of the Word (recognizing it as the standard for faith and life),²⁷ the right administration of the sacraments,²⁸ and the faithful exercise of discipline.²⁹ Without these functions and marks there is no church, even though there are many displays of mercy to neighbors in need. The Christian church's primary concern is the privilege and religious duty of having the right relationship with God, through which one can love his own neighbors. The right relationship with God is the basis of the gracious attitude toward one's neighbor.

²⁴ Emilio A. Nunez C., Liberation Theology, trans. Paul B. Sywulka (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. 255.

²⁵ John T. Mueller, p. 550.

²⁶ See, John Calvin, p. 1023.

²⁷ John 3:31, 32, 47; 14:23; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 9.

²⁸ Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:23-30.

²⁹ Matt. 18:18; 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 13; 14:30, 40; Rev. 2:14, 15, 20.

The Millennial Kingdom

Nam Dong Suh, who understands Christ's resurrection as typifying minjung insurrection, views resurrection and the millennial kingdom as two aspects of faith from the viewpoint of political theology.³⁰ He explains "the land," which was promised to Abraham when he was called by God (Gen. 12:1), as the Biblical millennial kingdom which hypostatizes the human future and hope.³¹

For Suh, Thomas Muentzer, one of the Zwickau prophets, is the historical reference for the kingdom of messianic politics. He is known for the radical religious reformation which sought social reformation and ecclesiastical reformation simultaneously to secure the rights of farmers and urban workers.³² He carried on social reformation by the power of the sword and advocated the egalitarian society in which peasants resume their historical identity and human rights. Personal religious salvation itself cannot be realized without revolutionary action; the salvation of individuals must be subsumed in a social reformation. Suh believes that under an oppressive system the image of God in man would be distorted, so that man cannot

³⁰Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 58.

³¹Ibid., p. 154.

³²Ibid., pp. 60-62; see, Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church 7 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 7: 442.

speak correctly of God in a situation of oppression.³³

The millennial kingdom of messianic politics is defined by Suh as follows: first, minjung secure their historical identity in this millennial kingdom; second, the messianic political system is not authoritarian or domineering in character but is geared to serve the minjung (Mark 10:42-44); third, its content is fellowship (koinonia) and peace (shalom).³⁴ This kingdom is a world to come, full of new possibilities; participation in this new world is conditional and is contingent on the negation of the established system or regime.³⁵

Suh contrasts the millennium with the kingdom of God as follows:

While the kingdom of God is a heavenly and ultimate symbol, the millennium is a historical, earthly, and semiultimate symbol. Accordingly, "the kingdom of God" is understood as the place the believer enters when he dies, but the millennium is understood as the point at which history and society are renewed. Therefore, in the kingdom of God the salvation of the individual person is secured, but in the millennium is secured the salvation of the whole social reality of humankind. Consequently, while the kingdom of God is used in the ideology of the ruler, the millennium is the symbol of the aspiration of the minjung.³⁶

³³ Philip Schaff, *Ibid.*, p. 443; Nam Dong Suh, "Historical Reference for Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, p. 165.

³⁴ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 131.

³⁵ Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry About Man (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1984), p. 439, Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1976), pp. 129, 130.

³⁶ Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, pp. 162-163.

Byung Mu Ahn does not differentiate the kingdom of God from the millennium; but he prefers the first to the latter, in that the term "millennium" is referred to only once in chapter 20 of the Revelation.³⁷ However, Ahn's understanding of the kingdom of God is the same as Suh's concept of millennium.³⁸ Both of them are political in character.

The millennium of minjung theology is a sort of political humanism, namely, a politically standardized democracy, which "looks to the future and loves the possibilities that could become historical if man accepted the challenge to become the creator of history."³⁹ Minjung theology claims to have the power and the knowledge to transform the earth from a desert into a garden. But it must be noted that "Policies for a new tomorrow cannot be assessed by a simple statistical or quantitative evaluation of the human resources and of the power of resistance of the existing structures of domination."⁴⁰ Admittedly, this transformation will take time (see Deut. 7:22).

The concept of millennium in minjung theology is the same as the new city of human and brotherly love of Latin American liberation theology where peace and justice are

³⁷ Byung Mu Ahn, "Subject of History in the Mark's Gospel," in Minjung and Korean Theology, p. 172.

³⁸ Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation, p. 154.

³⁹ Ruben A. Alves, A Theology of Human Hope (New York: Corpus Books, 1961), p. 17.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 87.

established among all the people so that each is free to love one another. It is also the city of a better standard of living so that there is no poor man at all.⁴¹ The kingdom is not the denial of history but the elimination of its corruptibility in order to bring to full realization the true meaning of the communal life of man.⁴² It is the end of the domination of man over man; it is a kingdom of contradiction to the established powers on the behalf of man.⁴³

Both liberation theology and minjung theology emphasize that the kingdom of God is actually present, operative, and authentically realized, but it discards the otherworldliness of the kingdom.⁴⁴ Both theologies only know a just society of brotherly love on this earth which eliminates the oppression and poverty among all people. Minjung theology emphasizes the restoration of human rights and the new social order in which the alienated and despised can be treated as human.⁴⁵ This new social order is a reality in which every thing as well as every man is standardized.⁴⁶

The millennium of minjung theology is also a society

⁴¹ Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp. 109, 157, 174.

⁴² Jose Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 142.

⁴³ Gutierrez, p. 231.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 151; Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p. 134.

⁴⁵ Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p. 183.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 117, 332-333.

of life-together (or communal life) in which the poor are beloved and well-treated,⁴⁷ and every minjung participates as the subject of history by living in a friendly way, working hard, sharing the profits equally and creating together.⁴⁸

It is surely Biblical to try to achieve a society with a better living standard. Liberation from oppression and the creation of a new and better society are definitely God's good will for man. God is greatly concerned for both our bodies and our society. And love compels us to labor in both areas, seeking to promote physical health and to create a radically different social order which will bring men freedom, dignity, justice, and peace.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Biblical Christians must assert that where there is no active, operative, authentic Gospel of Christ's precious blood which secures justification, adoption as God's children, reconciliation with God, and real and spiritual eternal life, there is no liberation, even though there is a social security secured for all men.

The millennial kingdom of minjung theology is only a symbol of an open future in which minjung may participate as

⁴⁷Byung Mu Ahn, "Nation, Minjung, and Church," in Minjung and Korean Theology, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁸Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation, p. 150; Chi Ha Kim, Bab(Food) (Wae-gwan: Bundo Publishing Co., 1984), pp. 60, 61.

⁴⁹John Stott, Christian Mission (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 100.

the subjects of history.⁵⁰ G. E. Ladd biblically describes the kingdom of God as follows:

The kingdom of God is to be understood as the reign of God dynamically active in human history through Jesus Christ, the purpose of which is the redemption of His people from sin and demonic powers, and the final establishment of the new heavens and the new earth. . . . The kingdom must not be understood as merely the salvation of certain individuals or even as the reign of God in the hearts of his people; it means nothing less than the reign of God over his entire created universe.⁵¹

The kingdom of God is not a state of affairs brought about by human achievement, nor is it the culmination of strenuous human effort. The kingdom is not man's upward climb to perfection but God's breaking into human history to establish His reign, and to advance His purpose.⁵² Taking Christ's kingly office into consideration, the glorious reign of Christ extends to all nations and peoples (Dan. 7:13, 14), to all things on earth, in the air, and in the sea (Ps. 8:6-8), and even to the enemies of Christ (Ps. 110:2). But, the dominion of Christ exerts itself in different spheres, according to the different character of those who are governed. Thus Christ rules over all creatures as such by means of His omnipotent power (Ps. 2:9; 97:7, 10; 1 Tim 6:14-16; Rev. 17:14); He most graciously rules (through His revealed Word) the true members of the

⁵⁰"Symposium," The Theological Thought 24 (1979):121-123.

⁵¹G. E. Ladd, The Presence of the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 331.

⁵²A. A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 45.

Christian church on earth, who have been justified by faith (John 8:31, 32); and all true believers will forever belong to the kingdom of glory as His subjects.⁵³ The Kingdom of God represented in the Scriptures can never be only other-worldly and individualistic, but it is both individualistic and societal; both earthly and heavenly; both here and now and the beyond and not yet.

The Sacrament of the Brothers
as a "Feast" of Minjung

While traditional conservative dogmatics have taught that Christ is really present in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper,⁵⁴ Nam Dong Suh asserts that Christ is present in every human being, especially in the suffering poor neighbor.⁵⁵ Suh views the sacrament from a sociological point under the influence of Karl Rahner and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, stating that the sacrament of brothers is to participate in the sufferings of neighbors and the groanings of

⁵³John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, pp. 314-315.

⁵⁴On the basis of the passages of Matt. 26:26-27, 1 Cor. 11: 24-27, where Christ says distinctly: "Take, eat, this is my body; take, drink, this is my blood," Luther's Small Catechism, the Augsburg Confession (Art. X), and the Formula of Concord (Epit., VII, 6.7) state that in the Holy Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present and are truly distributed and received with the bread and wine. The Westminster Confession of Faith (XXIX, vii) sets forth: "the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance as the elements themselves are to their outward senses."

⁵⁵Nam Dong Suh, Theology at a Turning Point, pp. 76-77.

the imprisoned brothers.⁵⁶

Latin American liberation theology has developed this concept of the sacrament of the brothers. According to Leonardo Boff, man is the greatest sacrament of Christ, and so the resurrected Christ is present for salvation in anonymous as well as in latent Christians. Therefore, without the sacrament of the brother and sister no one can be saved. This sacrament is defined as follows:

This is independent of their ideological coloring or adhesion to some religion or Christian belief. Wherever people seek the good, justice, humanitarian love, solidarity, communion, and understanding between people, wherever they dedicate themselves to overcoming their own egoism making this world more human and fraternal, and opening themselves to the normative transcendent for their lives, there can we say, with all certainty, that the resurrected one is present, because the cause for which he lived, suffered, was tried and executed is being carried forward.⁵⁷

Gutierrez also states that Christ is in the midst of fellow men; Christ can be found in the encounter with human beings, especially with the poor.⁵⁸ He insists that our neighbor is the way to reaching God. Such thinking recalls Boff's concept of man as "the main sacrament of Christ" and his assertion that without the sacrament of the brother, no one can be saved.

⁵⁶ Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 118;

⁵⁷ Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ Liberator, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 218- 219.

⁵⁸ Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp. 151, 194; We Drink from our own Well (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 112.

Suh sees the Christ in the face of the suffering brother. He asserts that the Lord who said, "This is my body," is the same Lord who said in his last discourse, "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat." Therefore, the Christ who is transubstantiated to the bread or consubstantiates with the bread is transubstantiated to the neighbor or is present in the neighbor.⁵⁹ In other words, while the natural elements of the bread and wine are the means of the presence of Christ in the traditional theology, the social element of the suffering neighbor is the means of the real presence of Christ for minjung theology. Just as the Christians are favored with the forgiveness of sins by taking the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, so any man can be favored with redemption by having solidarity with the suffering neighbor in daily life.⁶⁰ Suh likewise substitutes the suffering neighbor for the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper as the means of grace.

However, Suh's view of the sacrament is a perversion of the Christian gospel, in that the Lord's Supper is transformed into a feast of the minjung in struggle. This perverted view follows logically from its sociological understanding of Christ's crucifixion as a political murder. Suh rejects the traditional Scriptural view of Christ's death, which is considered to be substitutionary and vicarious in

⁵⁹ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 77.

⁶⁰ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 108.

character. The Lord's Supper is no longer to be understood as the real sacramental presence of the reconciling sacrifice. It is deformed to a feast of minjung in their struggle.⁶¹

Biblically speaking, Christ instituted the Lord's Supper as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. Just as the body was given into death and the blood was shed for the remission of our sins, so in the Lord's Supper they are offered and imparted to the communicant for the remission of his sins. The Scriptures say directly: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). These words mean: "With this body and blood I offer to you the new covenant, or the gracious forgiveness of sins." Therefore, the peculiar gift of the Lord's supper is forgiveness of sins, life and salvation which the gospel conveys.⁶² That the new covenant is essentially God's gracious remission of sins is clear from a variety of Scripture passage (Jer. 31:32-34; Rom. 11:27; Heb. 8:8:12; 10:16,17): "This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." This new covenant is the covenant of the gospel, which forgives sins and announces salvation through the blood of Christ.⁶³

⁶¹"Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation," X, 16.

⁶²John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, pp. 533-534.

⁶³Ibid., p. 523.

Evaluation

The problem of ecclesiology in minjung theology is the negation of the distinction between the secular and the sacred. It is true that outside of the institutional church there can be salvation, if there is preaching of the Christian gospel there. But any universalist tendency must be repudiated; and conservatives must insist on the fact that "salvation is found only in Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures. In order to be saved, the sinner has to come personally, in faith and repentance, to the Son of the living God. The gospel traces a deep dividing line between those who receive Christ and those who reject Him (John 3:36; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; 1 Tim 2:5). The church is both a sign of saving grace and a sign of divine judgment upon the impenitent."⁶⁴ Any socio-political community of egalitarianism is not the Christian church.

Minjung theology insists that the true members of Christian church are the alienated marginals of minjung. Consequently, the church must fight for the cause of the poor minjung against structural evil. Minjung ecclesiologists, like Latin American liberation theologians, conclude that "it is impossible to manifest the true unity of the church without taking the side of the oppressed class for the achievement of a more just society in which authentic brotherhood may reign."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Emilio A. Nunez C., p. 248.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 249.

The crucial weak point of minjung ecclesiology is its disregard of the means of grace such as the true preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the sacraments. Minjung theology confuses humanitarian love with divine love which was demonstrated in the substitutionary death of Christ, and it does disregard the effects of the sacraments such as the forgiveness of sins and new life. Minjung ecclesiology is focused only on the humanitarian solidarity with the poor minjung.

In consequence, the minjung millennium consists in the reformation of the existing order and the negation of other-worldliness. It dreams of a church without classes for the present, namely, a church in which minjung play a leading role. For minjung theology, church can be found wherever minjung regain their own historical identity. But according to the Scriptures, the church can be found where the true confession of faith in Christ is made through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments (Matt. 16:16-18; 28:19-20; Eph. 2:2:-22).

CHAPTER X

SIN AND SALVATION AS VIEWED BY MINJUNG THEOLOGY

Sin

The Language of Rulers: Sin

The traditional view of sin, as viewed by the minjung theologians, is considered to be a religiously abstracted language of rulers. Sin is a label or disgraceful brand attached to the weak have-nots by the religious dominating group of the day, in order that the ruling class can justify their dominating authority. Sin is supposed to be the language which represents an ideology of the ruling power.¹ The basis of the traditional view of sin, Byung Mu Ahn asserts, lies in the social prejudice that considers menial jobs, uneducated ignorance, and economic poverty to be evil in character.²

In reality, however, the Scriptural terms for sin are not primarily sociological in nature. The Scriptures use many terms to denote sin. Some of them focus on its causes, other on its nature, and still others on its consequences.

¹ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), p. 105.

² Nam Dong Suh, pp. 106, 243; Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus (Seoul: Hyundae Sasangsa, 1979), p. 135.

1) One of the New Testament words stressing a cause of sin is agnoia (ignorance). The willful ignorance, which is due to man's hardness of heart and thereby alienates man from God, denotes "not to know the right course to follow" (Eph. 4:18).

2) The Old Testament term shagah and the New Testament term planoumai, denote the human tendency to go astray (1 Sam 26:21; Is. 28:1; Mark 13:5-6). Jesus likened sinners to straying sheep (Luke 15:1-7). These terms connote the disobedient men's going astray from God (Heb. 3:10) and from Christ (Titus 3:3).

3) Parakoe refers to disobedience as a result of inattention, that is, the failure to listen when God is speaking, or the disobedience which follows upon failure to hear correctly (Rom. 5:19; Heb. 2:2-3; Mark 5:36).

4) The Hebrew verb chata and the Greek verb hamartano stress the nature of sin. They denote the idea of missing the mark (Judges 20:16), and are used to refer to one's actions in relationship both to man and God. This sin is always sin against God, since it is failure to hit the mark which God has set, His standard. It is any want of conformity unto the law of God (1 John 3:4).

5) Particularly in the New Testament, prominent words for sin are asebeia (impiety) and adikia (unrighteousness). Asebeia denotes irreverence for God (Rom. 1:18; 2 Tim 2:16; Titus 2:12). Adikia is irreverence for God's ordinances, His holy law (Rom. 1:29; 9:14). Both represent

irreligion and rebellion against God. In this respect, these two concepts cannot be viewed as completely separate entities.³ Adikia arises out of the perversion of worship (asebeia).⁴ Adikia is present when we do not seek God's glory but our own reputation (John 7:18; 2 Thess. 2:10, 12). This is clearly shown in Romans 1:18-31. When men do not honor God as God (verse 21) but exchange the glory of God for an image (23, 25, 27), there arises a wide variety of rebellious actions against God (verses 24, 26-27, 29-32). Each and every sin arises out of unbelief, namely, idolatry, which transgresses God's first command.

6) The Hebrew word avar and the Greek word parabaino means "to transgress" (Num. 14:41-42). The people of Isreal were not to transgress God's covenant (Deut. 17:2) or His commandment (Deut. 26:13; Jer. 34:18; Dan. 9:11; Hosea 6:7; 8:1; Matt. 15:2-3; Rom. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:14).

7) The Hebrew word maal denotes treachery against God. The sin of Achan in taking devoted things is spoken as "breaking faith" (Josh. 7:1). It is affirmed that any land that breaks faith against God shall be made desolate (Lev. 26:40; Ezek. 14:13).

As discussed above, there is a wide variety of terms for sin. But a common element of these is the idea that sin is the failure to acknowledge God as God, and therefore it

³ William Hendriksen, Romans: New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 68.

⁴ TWNT 1: 156; see, J. A. Kirk, Liberation Theology (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 171.

is a failure to fulfil God's law. Sin is failure to live up to the requirements of God in act, thought, and being. Sin is irreligious in nature, not sociological. Setting one's own ideas above God's revealed Word, or seeking one's own will rather than God's revealed will is unbelief, namely, sin.⁵

The Language of Minjung "han"

Minjung who are supposedly the ones sinned against by the ruling regimes, have "han" (a just indignation) in the depth of their hearts. A Biblical example of "han" is the groan of the man fallen into the robbers' hand.⁶ The marginals who are alienated from their society by the class of rich people on account of their inability to complete the religious requirements of keeping the Sabbath and giving a tithe, also have "han."⁷ In essence, all poor people who are traditionally the so-called sinners, are the men of "han."⁸

A theological exposition of "han" is found in "Chang Il-dam," a working draft of Chi Ha Kim's poem. Nam Dong Suh

⁵ Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 3 vols. (Grands Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983, 1984, 1985), 2: 577-580.

⁶ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 107.

⁷ Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1984), p. 141.

⁸ See, Georges Casalis, "The Gospel of the Poor," Sociological Interpretation of the Bible, trans. and ed. by Byung Mu Ahn (Seoul: Korea Theological Institute, 1983), p. 135.

interprets Kim's thoughts in "Chang Il-dam" as follows:

1) Chang Il-dam is a preacher of liberation, who is an heir to both the Korean minjung tradition and the Christian minjung tradition. The starting point of his mission is "his identification with the bottom rung," namely, those who are cursed by society and expelled from it. These are the robbers, murderers, and so forth. Chang Il-dam also meets the true mind that is God in the mind of the dehumanized persons. Therefore, when the bottom is reversed upward, it becomes heaven and the Messiah of minjung can appear there. In this context, he believes that humanity is heaven.

2) The most important thesis of Kim's minjung theology is the unification of God and revolution, namely, the unification of Donghak⁹ and Christianity, the unification of the renewal of the human spirit and the revolutionary change for justice in the social structure.

3) The unification of God and revolution is an external revolution, a journey taken along the flow of the stream of the unfortunate minjung's degradation, which may be diagrammed as follows: farmer → urban immigrant → worker → unemployed → slum dweller → loss of humanity and morality → theft → crime → prison.

4) Kim's theology is the theology of "han" which goes beyond socialism. The church must break the vicious circle of violence caused by han. The church must be a sanctuary for radicals.

5) Chang Il-dam is, in fact, the Jesus of Korea, born in Korea in the 1970s. He is executed at 33 years of age. His biography is the social biography of the Korean minjung.

6) Chang Il-dam is beheaded as a vicious criminal, but three days later he revives and cuts off the head of this betrayer and places his own head upon the betrayer's body. This peculiar combination of the body of evil and the head of truth indicates that the most wicked villain will be saved without reservation at the end.¹⁰

⁹See, p. 13, note 29; p. 116, note 100.

¹⁰Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," in Minjung Theology, ed. Yong Bock Kim (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), pp. 179-181.

Biblical references for "han" are Psalm 72:2, "May he judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thine afflicted with justice:" Proverbs 31:9, "Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy;" and Luke 18:3, "Give me legal protection from my opponent." In these passages, Suh paraphrases "judge people with righteousness" into "resolve 'han' of minjung."¹¹ Likewise, minjung theology views "han" from the viewpoint of social justice.

This sociological "han" of minjung, advocated by Suh, is different from "the groanings" of the saints who have the first fruits of the Spirit, waiting eagerly for their adoption as sons, and from "the groanings" with which the Spirit Himself intercedes for the saints (Rom. 8: 23, 26). Traditional Christians groan with creation in fervent prayer, so that they can stand outside themselves in bodily resurrection before God through Christ. Their goal is the overcoming of corruptible decay and the participation in heavenly glory, which enables Christians to love and serve their neighbors and the tormented creation.¹²

The Structural Evil

Minjung theology does not understand sin in terms of the individual's religion, but in terms of the structural

¹¹ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 87.

¹² Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 237-239; see, Hendriksen, Romans, p. 271.

evil.¹³ Since it views sin sociologically, any commitment of sin is ascribed to the ruling class, not to the helpless underdogs who are sinned against.¹⁴ On account of the ideological evil power of the ruling class, the helpless minjung are compelled to commit sins such as killing, theft, adultery, and violation of religious regulations.¹⁵ Consequently, the sin of all sins is structural contradiction or the evil structure¹⁶ which exists in society. It is sin of structural evil which is the ultimate cause of poverty, social injustice and oppression.

Some radical Christians, under the influence of minjung theology, also focus on the sin of socio-political injustice and, therefore, denounce the present political regime as an anti-democratic and anti-minjung government.¹⁷ They believe the most important cause of poverty to be in the international dependence of the economic structure.¹⁸

The reason why minjung theology identifies sin with an evil structure is that in the midst of a structurally unjust society nobody can be supported to stay pure by and for himself; and therefore, no social salvation means no indivi-

¹³Byung Mu Ahn, History and Interpretation, p. 202.

¹⁴Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 107.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁷The Emergency Declaration of Korean Christian Youth, Easter Day, 1982.

¹⁸Christian Farmer's Declaration, March 18, 1982.

dual salvation.¹⁹ The social evil condition, which results in poverty is considered by Suh as "the sin of the world,"²⁰ which Jesus took away and which His church must also take away (John 1:29).

If we press this to its logical conclusion, from the viewpoint of minjung theology, practically speaking, there is no structural evil which must be renovated in the societies of the Western Europe and North America,²¹ because these societies have already been democratized and their economic structures do not seem to be dependent internationally.

But, Scripturally, sin is differentiated from evil or structural evil. As discussed above, sin is a lack of reverence for God and His holy law; so to speak, it is the failure to acknowledge God as Lord and to conform to His will as revealed in the Scriptures. Sin is unbelief, in religious terms. In Genesis 3, tempted by Satan, Adam and Eve fell. After listening to Satan's words, Eve changed God's command of the absolute norm (Gen. 2:16, 17) for a benevolent warning (verse 23).²² She became full of empty

¹⁹Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p. 136.

²⁰Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 350.

²¹Ibid., p. 226.

²²In Genesis 2:16, God said, "You shall not eat, for. . . you shall surely die," but in 3:3 the woman corrected His saying and said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you should die." She added in or corrected, as underlined. God's absolute norm cannot be corrected according to man's own will or desires.

conceit and regarded equality with God a thing to be grasped (3:5; see, Phil. 2:3,6).²³ Eve made Adam fall into transgression (3:6; see, 1 Tim. 2:14). This first transgression of our ancestors show what sin is.

This sin should not be confused with physical evil, injurious or calamitous, or with structural evil. In turn, structural evil should not be identified with Satan (as is done by Byung Mu Ahn²⁴). Not all evil is sin. We can find a clear distinction between sin and evil in John 9. Seeing a man blind from birth, Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Jesus answered them, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him" (9:1-3).

In the Scriptures, Satan is represented as a personal evil spiritual being (1 Chron. 21:1; Zech. 3:1; Luke 22:31; Rev. 12:9). Satan is the Adversary (1 Peter 5:8), the Liar (John 8:44), and the Deceiver (Rev. 12:9). Satan is described by Jesus as the father of the Jews who told lies and did not accept Jesus as the Messiah (John 8:42-44). Considering these Scriptural passages, it is clear that Satan is a very real and personal entity, not an oppressive social evil structure.

²³ Louis Berkhof, Systematic Thoelogy (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), p. 222.

²⁴ Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p. 136.

While minjung theology asserts that the oppressive social structure is the only cause of poverty and inhumanization, the Scriptures point to a great many possible causes such as the fall (Gen. 3:17), famine (Gen. 12:10), drought (1 Kings 19:1-16), hurricane (Job 1:18-19), fire (Job 1:16), earthquakes (Gen. 19:24-29), illness (Ruth 1:1-6), insects, plagues (Ex. 9:12; Joel 1), war (Gen. 14:10-11), corrupt government (1 Sam. 8:4-5), idolatry (2 Kings 14:26), breaking of the Sabbath commandment (Is. 38:13-14), neglect of the temple (Hag. 1:1-11), failure to pay tithes or offerings or care for poor (Mal. 3:6-12; Prov. 3:9-10; Neh. 13:15-18), laziness (Prov. 13:18; 21:5). Among these various causes, idolatry is the only possible alternatives to "oppressive structure" as a candidate for "the basic cause" of poverty and dehumanization in Biblical theology,²⁵ because idolatry is repeatedly indicated as the basic cause of the exile, especially in Jeremiah (11:10-11) and Ezekiel (5:6-11), and of oppression and consequent poverty in Judges (2:11-15).

Liberation as Salvation

The Deliverance from Oppression

On the basis of Luke 4:18,19, which reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery sight of the blind, to

²⁵ Thomas D. Hanks, God So Loved the Third World, trans. by James C. Dekker (New York; Orbis, 1983), p. 35.

set free those who are down-trodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord," Kee Deuk Song asserts that Jesus came to this world in order to realize its humanization, namely, to set free the politico-economically down-trodden underdogs, so that they could recover their own identity and human rights.²⁶ But contrary to Song's assertion, Lukan passage, which is quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2, has the spiritual meaning. According to Isaiah, "the poor" is "the afflicted" or "the humble," which can be identified with "the broken hearted" (Isa. 61:1 c), or "the contrite of spirit" who tremble at the Word of God (Isa. 66:2, see 57:15).

The concept of minjung salvation is humanistic in character. The precondition of salvation is a predicament which desperately necessitates salvation. To the man who is drowning, rescue from drowning is salvation; to the man who is sick, recovery from the sickness; to the man who is hungry, food to eat; to the man who is thirsty, water to drink; to the man who is ignorant, knowledge to perceive; to the captives, release; to the downtrodden, freedom; and to the man who lost his human rights, restoration of his human rights is salvation.²⁷ In a word, the deliverance from an oppressive predicament is salvation, for minjung.

²⁶Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1984), pp. 254-255.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 247-248.

The Exodus is the core event of God's salvation for minjung. Suh interprets the Exodus as a political event from a sociological viewpoint. The Exodus is a socio-economic event of the slaves' liberation, which took place as the Hebrews resisted and revolted against the Egyptian oppressive ruling regime by means of violence under the leadership of Moses in the thirteenth century B.C.²⁸

Suh, unfortunately, does not try to understand the Exodus from the Biblical viewpoint. Speaking biblically, God liberated the Israelites to bring them "to God Himself" (Ex. 19:4) and "to be to God a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (19:6) so as to serve Him alone as the true, unique, living God (3:12; 4:23; 6:7; 7:16; 3:1,8). The Exodus was not a matter of rebellion or revolution; it was God who liberated the Israelites (Deut. 26:8) to be bound to Him, to serve and glorify Him alone. Negatively, the purpose of the Exodus was to liberate the Israelites from Egyptian idolatry (20:3-5; 22:20; 23:24-25, 32-33) and to cause them to trust in the living and true God (Deut. 4:34-35). Therefore, when the Israelites refused to serve God and committed sins of idolatry, as a result, they were to be driven back to Egypt (Hosea 1:2; 4:6-10; 8:13-14; 2 Kings 21:1-9; 22:17; 23:26).

The theme of the liberation of Israelites from slavery in Egypt runs through the whole of Biblical revelation. It is important, therefore, to ask what kind of interpreta-

²⁸ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 50-51.

tion this great event receives in both Testaments. Juan Luis Segundo asserts that Biblical literature became individualistic, inner-directed, and apolitical, and that in the New Testament there seems to be a tendency to disregard or even discard any connection between liberation and politics, even though the New Testament might talk about liberation.²⁹ This assertion would clearly mean a non-political interpretation of the Exodus in both Testaments. And so Segundo writes, "Jesus Himself seems to focus His message on liberation at the level of inter-personal relationships, forgetting almost completely, if not actually ruling out, liberation vis-a-vis political oppression. The same would seem to apply to Paul and almost all the other writings in the New Testament."³⁰

In the New Testament Jesus says metaphorically, "Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin If, therefore, the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:34, 36). And Paul also says, "Though you were slaves of sin . . . having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). This metaphor comes from the Exodus event of the Old Testament (Ex. 6:6,7; 15:13; Deut. 7:8; 9:26). The Exodus from Egypt is the Old Testament redemption from the bondage of sin (see, Rom. 3:24; 6:18, 22; Eph. 1:7).

²⁹ Juan Luis Segundo, S. J., The Liberation of Theology, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), p. 111.

³⁰ Ibid.

The Formation of the True Humanity

The goal of minjung theology is the restoration of human rights and a new social order in which the alienated minjung can be treated as a human.³¹ Because the socio-economically evil structure dehumanizes man as the steward of this world, liberation aims at the formation of a new man. This new man searches for "a qualitatively different society in which he will be free from all servitude, in which he will be the artisan of his own destiny."³² Salvation is to seek the building up of a new man.

Minjung theology's concept of a new man of true humanity is different from the new creature of the Scriptures. Kee Deuk Song denounces "redemption" or "vicarious atonement" as an old-fashioned ideological language.³³ But we read in the Scriptures: "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: whom God displayed publicly as propitiation in His blood through faith" (Rom. 3:24, 25); "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17); "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us" (Eph. 1:7, 8). According to these passages, no man can be a new creature without faith in the

³¹ Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, P. 183.

³² Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973) p. 91; The Theological Thought 24: 125.

³³ Kee Deuk Song, p. 249.

vicarious blood of Christ, according to the riches of His grace. God calls those who love Him, according to His purpose, to become conformed to the image of His Son: He also justifies and glorifies these men. These men can be called new men in Christ (Rom. 8:19,30). Christ purchased His church with His own blood (Acts 20:28) and imputed His righteousness upon it (Rom. 3:24-25; 5:18), so that His saints might become new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). By the works of the law, such as by social revolution, the new man cannot be formed, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20).

The Method of Liberation

Solidarity with the Neighbor

In the paradigmatic Exodus event, Moses volunteered to identify himself with his poor, oppressed brethren. In other words, he was converted to his people. And on the way, as they marched to the new land, he tried to conscientize those who grumbled against him, to awaken them to the evil situation of dependence under Egyptian oppression. Moses was able to accomplish the liberation of Israel from Egypt by way of his identification with the Israelites and conscientizing them to reject the domination of Egypt. Against this background, both Latin American liberation and Korean minjung theologies emphasize conversion to the poor and oppressed, as equivalent for brotherly love and communal life-together. According to them, love is equated with

the poor. Men love God by loving their neighbors.³⁴

On the Scriptural basis of Matthew 25:31-46, minjung theology assumes that Christ identified Himself with the poor, thirsty, homeless wanderers, hungry, sick and the imprisoned criminals. This solidarity with the poor minjung, the example of which Christ showed, is the way to salvation. In other words, salvation is absolutely dependent upon one's positive attitude towards minjung, namely, upon solidarity with minjung. This brotherly love of life-together is the concrete reality of salvation.³⁵

This interpretation is the same as the Vatican's "Instructions" that the Old Testament commandment of fraternal love must be extended to all mankind as neighbor; that in the figure of the poor, Christians are led to recognize the mysterious presence of the Son of Man, who became poor Himself for love of mankind; that the Lord Christ is one with all in distress, and every distress is marked by His presence; and that those who suffer or who are persecuted are identified with Christ.³⁶

³⁴Jose Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 114; Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 194; Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, pp. 238-239.

³⁵Young Jin Min, "Assessment on the Significance of Minjung Theology in Trajectories," A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea(Seoul: Korea Christian Academy, 1983), pp. 12, 49.

³⁶"Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation," IV. 8-10.

At this point, however, some questions must be asked about the means of liberation in reference to one's relation with his neighbor. Is man saved if he opens himself to God and to others, even though he is not clearly aware that he is doing so? Is the only way to know God to do justice? It is certain that a true love and knowledge of God must issue in love and justice to our neighbors, but to put this the other way around and make the knowledge of God the consequence of doing justice and even to equate the two, is simply a doctrine of salvation by good works,³⁷ which displaces the salvation that comes by God's grace alone.

Biblically speaking, without the clear knowledge of God and confession of Christ as Lord (John 17:3; Matt. 16:16; Acts 16:31; Hosea 4:6; 6:6), it is not possible to create an authentic brotherhood as a response to God's grace. John makes it clear that since God loved us, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:11). This means that without God's love toward us which is manifested (or revealed) through Christ's shed blood on the cross (Rom. 5:8), there can be no brotherly love at all. But because minjung theology does not regard Christ's crucifixion as God's revelation of His redemptive love, but as a paradigm for a self-sacrificing spirit,³⁸ it is doubtful whether true solidarity with minjung can be found in minjung theology.

³⁷John Stott, Christian Mission (Downers Grove; InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 94.

³⁸"Symposium," The Theological Thought 24 (1979): 116.

The ministry and service to the poor is an important task of the church, but it is neither a unique task nor the most important one. The primary tasks of the early church were worshipping (Acts 1:14, 2:1-4, 42, 27) and witnessing (Acts 2:14; 3:12; 4:8-12; 6:3,4). While the task of ministry to the poor was important, it was secondary. Acts 6:2 reads, "It is not desirable for us to neglect (the service of) the Word of God in order to serve tables." Therefore, without the preceding worshipping and witnessing (namely, preaching and teaching the gospel), ministry to the poor is of little use; it cannot work for true liberation. Only the balanced threefold task of the church can achieve liberation for the poor and oppressed.

Class Struggle

Conscientization

In connection with class struggle, two things, namely, conscientizing evangelization and revolutionary violence, must be considered. In the Exodus event, Moses was continuously conscientizing the oppressed Israelites to be aware of their situational bondage, because Moses knew that in order for their Exodus of liberation to be authentic and complete it had to be undertaken by the oppressed underdogs themselves and so must stem from the values proper to these underdogs. Likewise, the church is considered to be responsible for the conscientizing evangelization of the

poor and oppressed minjung.³⁹ In Korea, Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) and Catholic Farmer's Association (CFA) are two major institutions of conscientizing evangelization.

Only minjung can afford to liberate minjung themselves. Therefore, it is not the theologians' duty to conscientize and liberate minjung: their task is to prepare the way for the minjung.⁴⁰ By way of a conscientization movement minjung can become a united voluntary force, win a victory over the ruling class, and have a hold on the initiative of history, so that they can play a role as the subjects of history. Yet, practically speaking, without the conscientization under the leadership of the elite minjung, there can be no liberation for minjung.⁴¹

The Revolutionary Struggle against
the Established Order

Ahn interprets Christian love in such a broad way as to state that it may include condemnation, criticism, resistance, and rejection.⁴² In the same vein, Giulio Girardi gives a similar interpretation:

Undoubtedly the gospel commands us to love the enemy, but it does not say that we should not have enemies or that we must not combat them . . . The Christian must

³⁹Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 117; Sung Jae Kim, "A Study on the Methodology of Minjung Pedagogy," in Minjung and Korean Theology (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1982), p. 399.

⁴⁰Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man, p. 487.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 475.

⁴²Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology, p. 122; Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, pp. 103, 196-197, 235.

love everybody, but not all in the same way . . . In this way, paradoxically, class struggle not only does not contradict the universality of love but becomes demanded by it.⁴³

Therefore, in fact, the negative aspect of love can be equated with the social class struggle. Gutierrez says that "to advocate class struggle is to reject a situation in which there are oppressed and oppressors," and that "to build a just society today necessarily implies the active and conscious participation in the class struggle that is occurring before our eyes."⁴⁴ Ahn replaces the term "class" by "the established evil social structure,"⁴⁵ and "a political regime."⁴⁶ Indeed, he seems to be more concerned with the struggle against the political regime than with the class struggle, a major theme of communism. He consciously avoids the term "class struggle" so as not to be regarded as pro-communist. But, in effect, he advocates class struggle, in that he contrasts Galileans, (the alienated, exploited "have-nots) with the privileged ruling class ("the haves") of Jerusalem.⁴⁷

Although resistance is advocated by both liberation and minjung theologians, it seems to be quite

⁴³Giulio Girardi, Amor Christians y lucha de clases (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1971). p. 57, cited by Miguez Bonino, p. 122.

⁴⁴Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 274.

⁴⁵Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p.109.

⁴⁶Byung Mu Ahn, "Nation, Minjung, and Church," in Minjung and Korean Theology, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁷Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p. 237.

different outwardly from the Marxist concept of revolutionary violence. Jose Miguez Bonino, in his Doing Theology, seems to reject Marxist violence; and so does minjung theology. Miguez Bonino and Ahn advocate that nonviolent action is most appropriate, not only to the Christian conscience but also to the revolutionary purpose. Victorious revolutionary violence runs the risk of simply substituting one form of oppression for another and thus becoming really counter-revolutionary.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Miguez Bonino recognizes, in his Christians and Marxists, that violence of some kind cannot be avoided, especially considering the strategic and necessary alliance between Christians and Marxists for the mutual challenge of revolution in relief of the dependent situation of Latin America. He continues to say that "to do nothing now is to support the violence of the existing system."⁴⁹ Minjung theology agrees. Byung Mu Ahn says that minjung must have the sword for the purpose of self-protection against the oppressive structure; he argues that to draw the sword is one thing and to have a sword is another,⁵⁰ with reference to Luke 22:35, "buy a sword" and Matthew 26:52, "all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword."

⁴⁸Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology, pp. 125-127; Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, pp. 110, 216.

⁴⁹Miguez Bonino, Christians and Marxists (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 23-24; Richard B. Ramsay, "Miguez Bonino's Uneasy Alliance" (Th. M. Thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, 1982), p. 59.

⁵⁰Byung Mu Ahn, The Liberator Jesus, p. 222.

For Ahn, the "sword" seems to mean the socio-political power figuratively.

Suh and Yong Bock Kim also openly recommend violence of some kind.⁵¹ Minjung theology advocates "dan" (Korean word for "to break"), which indicates the break or solution of "han" on the basis of minjung's experience in and through the Korean traditional mask dance.⁵² But the actual means for the solution of "han" are retaliation against the privileged class of vested rights and redistribution of riches and powers, by having recourse to violence.⁵³

In contrast to all this, the Bible does not encourage or support any kind of violence or class struggle. In Luke 22:36, was Jesus speaking of a literal sword for protection against robbers and persecutors? If so, why did Jesus rebuke Peter when he wielded his sword? (see, 22:44-51). And when His disciples said, "Lord, look here are swords" (verse 38), why did He say, "It is enough?" His disciples misunderstood, as if Jesus had been talking about the necessity of having and using literal swords. But by answering, "It is enough," Jesus stopped their childlike misunderstanding. In this connection, the term "sword" in

⁵¹Minjung and Korean Theology, pp. 274, 301, 338; Minjung Theology, p. 179.

⁵²Young Hak Hyun, "A Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea, "Minjung Theology, pp. 50-51; See, p. 13, note 32.

⁵³"Symposium," The Theological Thought 24 (1979): 130.

Luke 22:36 must be interpreted figuratively.⁵⁴ His disciples needed to cultivate courage at this point when Jesus was going to depart, namely, to be crucified; therefore, He asked His disciples to make provision for missionary travels. They had to be courageous for their missionary travels, not for political campaign.

The church must not stand for some people and against others, even though it is true that the church must take more care for the poor and oppressed than the rich and oppressors (Jer. 29:7; James 2:1). Jesus did not start or suggest a political revolution. Neither did He side with the Jews who were sympathetic with Roman domination. He taught His disciples to live a life style of compassion (like the Good Samaritan, Luke 10: 25-37), of loving even their enemies (Matt. 5:44), and of sharing unselfishly their own material possessions (Matt. 6:40-42). He denounced selfish materialism which proposed the violent overthrow of rich oppressors (see, Matt. 19:21,22). It was through this radically changed life style of the disciples that the poor and oppressed were to be delivered.⁵⁵ In some congregations of the early Christian church the number of slaves was very great. However, Jesus and His disciples never emphasized class struggle; "much less did they encourage an uprising of the slaves against their masters in a rebellion that would

⁵⁴ William Hendriksen, Luke: New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 976-977.

⁵⁵ Richard R. Ramsay, p. 43.

have turned out to be useless for Christianity, for society, and for the disciples involved in such a conflict."⁵⁶

Evaluation

The sociological hermeneutics drives minjung theologians to be interested in the social structural conflict rather than the religious relationship between God and man. Minjung theology focuses its view of sin on the sigh of the oppressed underdogs and their protest against the evil social conditions. For minjung theology, religion seems to be a crying of the suffering underdogs in their quest for consolation and satisfaction. This view is similar to Ludwig Feuerbach's view of religion. He interprets God as "the echo of our cry of anguish," "the uttered sorrow of the soul," and "a tear of love, shed in the deepest concealment, over human misery."⁵⁷

At the same time, minjung theology understands liberation (or, salvation) as deliverance in socio-economic-political terms from an oppressive predicament. It tries to understand sin and liberation outwardly with reference to the Exodus event. But, the Scriptures portray the Exodus from Egypt as redemption (Ex. 6:6; 15:13; Deut. 7:8). The Israelite condition of slavery is portrayed as an enslavement to an alien power, that is, to an objective realm of

⁵⁶ Emilio A. Nunez C., Liberation Theology, trans. Paul E. Sywulka (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), pp. 250-251.

⁵⁷ Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, trans. by George Eliot (New York: Harper Torch books, 1959), pp. 121-122.

sin and evil (John 8:33-36; Rom. 8:20-21). In fact, the Israelites were delivered not merely from outside foreign bondage, but from inward spiritual degradation of the idolatrous practices of the Egyptians (Joshua 24:14; Ezek. 28:8, 19, 21; Lev. 17:7), which is disregarded by minjung theology. They were idolatrous (Joshua 24:14), stiffnecked and rebellious (Deut. 9:6-7), and the same as the Egyptians, to an objective realm of sin and evil (John 8:33-36; Rom. 8:20-21).

Redemption is not possible by the ability of man or politico-economical developments, but by the power of God. In the Exodus event, Moses first tried to deliver his people and failed (Ex. 2:11-15). In regard to the method of the deliverance, the emphasis is throughout thrown on the divine omnipotence (Exodus 15). Israelites knew who was rescuing them. The plagues and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart show man's inability, on the one hand, and God's power, on the other. But practically, God does not redeem His people apart from shed-blood, without which they would not have been saved (Ex. 12:13). This blood-sacrifice always refers to substitution and expiation (Ex. 12:29). This sacrifice is the type of Christ, the Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7).⁵⁸ Only Christ is the unique key to our salvation, outward and inward as well (John 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5). Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24).

In regard to violence, one may ask: can there be a

⁵⁸ See, Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 109-121.

justifiable violence? No, Jesus did not appeal to violence in order to promote his kingdom.⁵⁹ He did not show His love to His enemies by fighting them. Even though He reprimanded them harshly for the sins of which they were guilty, he did not try to change the structures of power in the society of His time by means of violence. He did not oppose active non-violence, but rejected any kind of violence; He did not want to close his eyes to causes of injustice at the national and international levels.⁶⁰ God's people are still responsible, at all times and in all places, not to be indifferent to the sins that surround them.⁶¹

It is impossible to find in the example of Jesus of Nazareth justification for destruction of an enemy. And it must be noted that as the Bible says, all men have a tendency to be violent and can be violent in an unjust way. "There is none righteous, not even one . . . their feet are swift to shed blood . . . the path of peace have they not known" (Rom. 3:10-18). Active non-violence suffers violence because of speaking or acting against violence without

⁵⁹In Matt. 11:12, Jesus says "Men of violence take it (the kingdom of God) by force." By these words Jesus means that there is taking place a great popular uprising, as if men were violently storming and occupying the kingdom of God, aspiring after God with burning affection and so to say breaking through by a vehement effort. Jesus talks about the true nature and way of faith, not a physical violence (see, Calvin, A Harmony of the Gospels: New Testament Comentarries II, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grands Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), p. 7.).

⁶⁰Nunez C., Liberation Theology, p. 229.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 260.

practising it. "But the one who suffers in that way is on the road of authentic Christian discipleship: following Jesus." ⁶²

The serious weakness of minjung theology is its blindness concerning the nature of sin. Because of its failure to recognize the horrible nature of sin, minjung theology declines to accept Christ's sacrificial death for the reconciliation and redemption of this world of sinners.⁶³ Sin is rebellion against the holy God, our supreme Lawgiver, and therefore is lawlessness (anomia in Greek). Therefore, it is awful in nature, "for it is written, cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them" (Gal. 3:10). But "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13) and "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). There is not a sin which is not damnable and mortal in its nature,⁶⁴ and there is not a sinner who is not in danger of God's judgment (Matt. 5:21, 22). Each and every sinner needs the cleansing of Jesus' sacrificial blood.

⁶²Ibid., p. 272.

⁶³Carl F. W. Walther, The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928), p. 324.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 329.

CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

Challenge of Minjung Theology to the Traditional Church

Emphasis on the Realized Eschatology

It has been said that Korean minjung theology was born from the womb of a socio-politically oppressive situation and in reaction to the evangelical church's lop-sided other-worldliness and spiritualism.¹ Nam Dong Suh asserts that minjung theology is compelled to emphasize the reform of the social structure, in that conservative traditional churches in Korea have taught a religious spiritual experience for individuals, with an emphasis on the other-worldliness.²

It is true that the eschatology of Hyung Yong Park, whose theology is basically Reformed, and who is a standard for the conservative churches in Korea, is poor in the

¹ Won Yong Ji, "Conflict Between Salvation Theology and Minjung Theology," A Lecture given in Pusan (August 9, 1982): 4; Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), p. 192.

² Nam Dong Suh, p. 196; Suh's definition of millennium is different from that of Hyung Yong Park's. The one is the elimination of structural evil, and the other is the final consummation yet to come.

aspect of inaugurated eschatology. He focuses his eschatology on the future life after death, so to speak, on "the age to come" which will be introduced by Christ's second coming.³ He tries to distinguish "the last days" from "the age to come." He does not disregard the presence of the kingdom of God in this world and the so-called realized eternal life today, but he insists on restricting his eschatology to "the age to come," centered on Christ's return and Millennium.⁴

Park fails to describe a relationship between the realized eschatology and the not-yet-come eschatology and looks forward to the other world. As Anthony A. Hoekema says, New Testament eschatology looks to the coming of Christ which had been predicated by the Old Testament prophets, and affirms: we are in the last days now. But New Testament eschatology also looks forward to a final consummation yet to come, and hence it also says: the last day is still coming; the final age has not arrived.⁵ Hoekema sees the blessings of the present age as the pledge and guarantee of greater blessings to come.⁶ He is balanced by relating these two eschatological stages as sequent events. So, he can say that the kingdom of God is a present as well as a

³ Hyung Yong Park, Mellonology (Seoul: Korea Christian Education Study Institute, 1977), p. 45.

⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

⁵ Anthony A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 19-20.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 20-22.

future reality; fulfillment within history and consummation at the end of history.⁷

By contrast with Hoekema, Park does not emphasize the present aspect of eschatology. As a result, the Korean Presbyterian Church, the largest Christian body in Korea, became poor in Christian ethics and social concern. Park understands the present earthly life as a preparatory process to the world to come after death.⁸ His lop-sided eschatology leads him to emphasize only an individual pietistic life style.⁹ His basic grounds for pietistic life in this world is based on the preparation for the eternal life of the age to come.¹⁰

On account of Park's strong influence, the Korean conservative church eschatology is lop-sided by over-emphasizing the other world and disregarding this present world. Minjung theology is critical about this other-worldliness and individualistic pietism. It would be wise, therefore, for Korean conservative evangelicals to confess that minjung theology is in reality God's instrument for the refinement of their own commitment to the gospel by which they might undertake the social changes in the name of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It must be noted, however, that the millennium of

⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

⁸ Hyung Yong Park, pp. 70-72, 98-99, 114.

⁹ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

minjung theology is only concerned with this world of the present time, here and now. For minjung theology, salvation is not something other-worldly; the elimination of misery and exploitation is a sign of the coming of the Millennium.¹¹ It is, therefore, all the more imperative that the Korean conservatives recognize their social responsibilities and administer proper services in the unique context which the gospel gives, offering a renewed faith and life in Christ for the present and for the eternal life to come.

Sense of Community in Faith and Life

As mentioned above, the traditional church in Korea has been concerned about individual piety, so that it became destitute of the sense of community. For minjung theology, the Christian Church is a community of concrete faith and life, namely, a community of material egalitarianism, which redistributes material riches so as to eliminate the misery of the poor, naked minjung.¹² Kee Deuk Song asserts that Jesus lived together with the marginal dregs of society such as prostitutes, tax-collectors, lepers, and poor wanderers, accepting them without demanding any condition of faith and repentance.¹³

The liberation of men from every form of oppression is not only a desirable goal, pleasing to God the Creator,

¹¹ Nam Dong Suh, p. 197.

¹² Ibid., pp. 266-267.

¹³ Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry About Man (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1984), p. 468.

but Christians should be actively involved in pursuing it alongside other men of compassion and goodwill. God created all men and cares for all of them. He means for human beings to live together in peace, freedom, dignity, and justice. In every society these things are the concern of God, for the God of the Bible is a God of justice as well as justification; and He hates injustice and tyranny.¹⁴ In this regard, the goal of minjung theology, the communal life-together, is quite correct. God's concern for the poor and oppressed is clearly seen in many places of the Bible (Ex. 3:7, 23:10-11; Lev. 19:9, 10; Deut. 24:19-22; Psalm 146:7-9; Is. 3:14-15; Jer. 2:34; Amos 2:7; Luke 1:52, 53, 3:7-14, 4:18-19, 7:22, 10:25-37; Acts 4:32-35; Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:10; 2 Cor. 6:10). Notice especially what God did after the Babylonian Captivity. He Himself restored the land to the poor. Because Israel would not treat them justly, the Lord sent the oppressors to Babylon and left the vineyards to many of the poor (2 Kings 25:12, Jer. 29:10).

Minjung theology's criticism on the individualistic life of conservative evangelicals should remind, encourage, and stimulate conservatives for a "life-together" participation with the dregs of society. The Scripture says, "He who gives the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses" (Prov. 28:29).

Under the influence of Western and American Eavngel-

¹⁴ John Stott, Christian Mission (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity press, 1974), p. 91.

icals, Korean evangelical churches have been rather more inclined to defend the gospel than to practice it.¹⁵ As Stephen C. Knapp points out, for evangelicals, justification by faith has been abstracted and its forensic aspect emphasized at the expense of its other practical declarative aspect of faith in action.¹⁶ Consequently, the socio-religious character of poverty tends to be spiritualized by evangelicals, while liberationists of minjung theology reduce it to a universalizing externalization in which the emphasis is on social alienation and class struggle. As a result, liberationists reduce the world's pain to a merely social or economic dimension, while evangelicals reduce it to a merely pietistic dimension.

We Christians must be balanced. Sharing one's personal faith and loving our neighbor are equally important in the Christian life. The gospel must be proclaimed and demonstrated. Evangelism and social concern go together. Each is empty without the other. Because faith works through love (Gal. 5:6), love cannot be separated from faith (Eph. 6:23) and love comes from a sincere faith (1 Tim. 1:5), faith and love must be balanced in our Christian life.

¹⁵ See, Clark H. Pinnock, "A Call for the Liberation of North American Christian," in Evangelicals & Liberation, ed. Carl E. Armerding (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 128; David O. Moberg, The Great Reversal (New York: A Halman Book, 1979), pp. 26-30.

¹⁶ S. C. Knapp, "A Preliminary Dialogue with Gutierrez; A Theology of Liberation," Evangelicals and Liberation, p. 30; James Buchanan, The Doctrine of Justification (London: Billing and Sons, 1961), pp. 247-263.

The Lausanne Covenant expresses this balance clearly:

"Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ."¹⁷

Minjung theology's criticism indeed gives conservative evangelicals a needed focus toward a participation for life-together with the dregs of society. Exemplary enough, Jesus lived a life to make the poor rich. For our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). . . a truth that contains both physical and spiritual ramifications which we would do well to consider. But a community of material egalitarianism, as that which is advanced by minjung theology, is never said in the Bible as the goal of the Christian Church.

Theological Radicalism

The theological radicalism of minjung theology can be primarily attributed to the political ideology and reductionist reading of the Scriptures. On account of both an ideological prejudice and reductionism, minjung theology has a tendency to disregard the vertical dimension of the Christian gospel which is the vital motivation for the life of

¹⁷"The Lausanne Covenant," para. 5, cited by John Stott, Christian Mission, p. 101

brotherly love. Subsequently, it becomes doubtful whether any adherent of minjung theology could say the Lord's Prayer and actually mean or believe it.

Theology as a Political Ideology

The Vatican "Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" can consequently be applied to Korean minjung theology; minjung theology is a theology of class. Minjung theologians start out with the idea that the viewpoint of the oppressed and revolutionary class is the true single point of view. Theological criteria for truth are thus relativized and subordinated to the imperatives of the class struggle. The key mistake of minjung theology is not in bringing attention to a political dimension of the readings of Scripture, but in making this one dimension the unique principle or exclusive component. This leads to a reductionist reading of the Bible.¹⁸ The hermeneutic criterion for minjung theology is political option, or ideology. It emphasizes class struggle and collective or social sin, and thinks primarily of social justice and the salvation of society, of the whole of humanity, rather than the sin and salvation of individuals.

Minjung theology reads Scriptures in reductionist terms as follows:

a) minjung (ochlos in Greek) is the poor, oppressed and alienated class of people; poor in economic

¹⁸"Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation," X, 1-5.

terms, powerless and oppressed in political terms, and ignored, disregarded and alienated in cultural terms.

b) In Mark's Gospel, Galilee and Jerusalem stand in conflict with each other. Galilee stands for the exploited land of poor minjung and Jerusalem for the exploiting land of rich rulers.

c) The Exodus from Egypt is the collective struggle against the Egyptian regime. The Hebrew slaves dropped poison into the water, murdered the first sons of the Egyptians and escaped at midnight. The Exodus is the revolt event of the Hebrew slaves.

d) The "tribes of Hebrew" are not an ethnic group of the same ancestry, but a wandering group of the socio-economic-politically poor slaves.

e) Yahweh God is the God of slaves who protects the human rights of slaves, promises them liberty and hope, and avenges the social evil on the ruling regime.

f) Jericho city is notorious for class conflict, because the distance between the rich and the poor is very great. The slavery system of Jericho was abolished by the cooperation of the Jericho peasants within and the Hebrew escapees without.

g) Israel is an egalitarian society, a democratic system.¹⁹

h) Christ was murdered because of His political

¹⁹ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 255-267.

resistance; and His resurrection is the political event that demands minjung resume their human rights.²⁰ Korean revolutionary events such as the April 19 Student Revolution are equated with the resurrection of Christ.²¹ Therefore, minjung theology asserts that to believe in Christianity is to believe in the revolt events of minjung.²² It also advocates a detheologization which substitutes political murder for the vicarious death of Christ, and Christ's resurrection for the restoration of human rights.²³ This detheologization is in practice the politicization of theology.²⁴

Part of the problem of the reductionist reading of the Scriptures lies in the assumption that the Scriptures simply do not supply much data of the sort which is useful for sociological analysis. There is also the failure of taking the Scriptures seriously in their literal, historical dimension and to relate their theology and history to their typological rather than their paradigmatic fulfillment in Christ.²⁵ On this account, minjung theology is called

²⁰ Ibid., p. 54, 136.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 136, 218

²² Ibid., p. 261.

²³ Ibid., pp. 298-299.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 140, see, Kyoung Jae Kim, "The Significance of Minjung Theology in terms of the History of Theology and Its Assessment," A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea (Seoul: Korea Christian Academy, 1983), pp. 106-108.

²⁵ Book Reviews by Paul L. Schrieber on Anthropological Perspectives on Old Testament (Semeia 21) (ed. by Robert Culley and Thomas Overholt, Chico, CA: Scholars Press,

counter-theology,²⁶ which is interested only in a socio-political reformation.

Reductionist Reading of the Scriptures

Because of the prejudice of political ideology, minjung theology carefully selects its supportive Biblical references. For minjung theology, the core of the Old Testament²⁷ is the Exodus event and the formation of the Israelite community. The historical beginning of the Old Testament is the establishment of the Israelite nation in Canaan, which was made possible by the Hebrew conquest, through the peasants' revolt against the Canaanite regime of concentration in 1250 B.C. These core events are called historical revelation by minjung theology.²⁸ By the same terms, Jesus' ministry in Galilee is the core and starting point of the New Testament Christianity.²⁹

On this account, minjung theology discards other Scriptural materials such as God's work of creation, the patriarchs of Genesis and Jesus' incarnation in the Gospels, which are regarded only as mythical legends.³⁰ Minjung

1982) and Inheriting the Land: A Commentary on the Book of Joshua (E. John Hamlin, Eerdmans, 1983), Concordia Journal 12 (January 1986), pp. 34, 36.

²⁶ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, pp. 305-306.

²⁷ Nam Dong Suh, A Study of Minjung Theology, p. 184.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 232-233.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 259.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 260.

theology is concerned only about revolt events. According to minjung theology, the proto-revelation is the religio-economic history of the proto-Israel of the period of the Judges (1250-1050 B.C.) and Jesus' three-year-period Galilean Ministry. This proto-revelation consists of the history of socio-economics of Galilean minjung. Consequently, the Christian gospel is the gospel of the poor minjung, and the way by which the church can appropriate the gospel is to have solidarity with the poor minjung.³¹

Nam Dong Suh asserts that the social revolutionary theology of minjung is not based upon Paul but James; not Genesis, Galatians, and Romans, but Exodus, Mark's Gospel, and the Epistle of James; not the doctrine of justification by grace through faith (Rom. 3:24, 25; Eph. 2:8) but the doctrine of justification by the ortho-praxis of the conversion to the poor minjung.³² Suh regards Pauline theology as the deformed ideology of the ruling class of the "haves." Therefore, there is no room in minjung theology for the doctrine of justification by grace through faith.³³

In that minjung theology understands history as the dynamic relationship between the ruling and the ruled classes from Marxist viewpoint, it is natural for this minjung

³¹ Ibid., pp. 378-379.

³² "Symposium," The Theological Thought 24: 128, see, Won Jong Lee, "A Methodological Approach to the Theological Understanding of Korean Minjung History," (Th. M. thesis, Hanshin University, Seoul, 1984), p. 24.

³³ "Symposium," The Theological Thought 24: 127.

theology to look at the Scriptures through its own colored spectacles and interpret them from a prescribed socio-economical viewpoint.³⁴ For minjung theology, where there is minjung revolt, there is always revelation.³⁵

Since minjung theology understands the Scriptures only as a reference for theological reflection on minjung revolt, it thereby disregards the divine authorship of the Scriptures, their fundamental internal unity, and their divine authority. However, the Scriptures are the product of the unique and miraculous action, namely, inspiration of God the Holy Spirit upon His chosen prophets and apostles whereby He spoke His Word in their words, so that He is the true Author of their every word. And because of their divine authorship, the Scriptures are absolutely normative as the only source and norm of Christian faith and life, and are fundamentally unified in their theological content.

If the Scriptures are an organic unity, it can be assumed that any part of the Scriptures is related to any other part, and that the Scriptures cannot be interpreted against themselves. There are no contradictions in the Scriptures. Therefore, the Westminster Confession of Faith says, "The infallible rule of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, it must be searched

³⁴Gyung Yon Jun, "Assessment of Minjung Theology," A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea, p. 73.

³⁵Won Jong Lee, pp. 25, 136.

and known by other places that speak more clearly."³⁶ The task of the interpreter is to discover the underlying unity of Scripture and not, as is done by minjung theology, to seek out contradictions.³⁷ The Scriptural text must be interpreted organically.³⁸

If the Scriptures are of divine origin, they have the causative and normative authority: the power to create saving faith and to regulate doctrine. The twofold authority of the Scriptures derives from the operation of the Holy Spirit,³⁹ which is definitely denied by minjung theology. The Scriptures are the only true norm according to which all teachings are to be judged and evaluated.⁴⁰ For minjung theology and its hermeneutics, the Holy Spirit does not play any role in regard to divine revelation and the Scriptures. And, because minjung theology sees the Scriptures only as a reference, it denies any causative and normative authority to them. However, the divine and saving wisdom which the Scriptures impart can be understood and believed only as the Holy Spirit graciously empowers Christians to hear what God

³⁶The Westminster Confession of Faith, I, 9.

³⁷See, Jacob A. O. Preus III, "The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology: A Lutheran Confessional Response to the Theological Methodology of Leonardo Boff" (Th. D. Dissertation, St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1986), p. 135.

³⁸Sidney Greidanus, Sola Scriptura (Toronto; Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979), p. 135.

³⁹Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, The Inspiration of Scripture, A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, March 1975, p. 14.

⁴⁰The Westminster Confession of Faith, I, 10.

is speaking to them in His Word.⁴¹

If the Scriptures as a historical phenomenon communicate God's eternal truth in literature, written in history by men in human idiom, and comprise literary forms common to other human literature, it is self-evident that Biblical interpretation requires a thorough knowledge of the original languages, acquaintance with and recognition of the literary forms employed by Biblical authors for effective communication, and taking the historical dimension of the Bible into account.⁴² Therefore, the Biblical interpreter must understand what the original situation was in which the words were first spoken; what the words meant in that particular historical context; and what their continuing meaning is for all subsequent times and circumstances. And he must use all the information made available by historical and archaeological research relative to the history of Israel and of all the other nations whose history touches Israel's. Historical research has value for illuminating the meaning of a Biblical text.⁴³

In contrast with this historical-grammatical hermeneutics, minjung theology presupposes the peasant's revolt model and interprets the Scriptural texts relative to that model from the socio-economico-political viewpoint.

⁴¹ Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation (March 1973), p. 12.

⁴² Ibid., p. 9.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 10.

Disregard of Vertical Dimension
of the Christian Religion

As a consequence of political ideology and a reductionist reading of the Scriptures, minjung theology is primarily concerned about social justice, the liberation from structural evil, and the new society of egalitarianism. It focuses on the horizontal dimension of dikaiosyne (righteousness), disregarding its vertical dimension.

According to the Old Testament usage of "righteousness" (tsedeg in Hebrew), God's righteousness as His judicial reign means that in covenant faithfulness to His people He vindicates and saves them (Deut. 32:4; Hos. 2:19; Jer. 50:9).⁴⁴ This "righteousness" can be used for "loving-kindness" (or, mercy; chesed in Hebrew; eleos in Greek; Gen. 15:29; 24:29; Ex. 15:13; 34:7; Ps. 35:10), and for "truthfulness" (amet in Hebrew; aletheia in Greek; Is. 38:19; Dan. 8:12). These usages indicate that God's righteousness is closely linked with His loving-kindness, truthfulness, and salvation.

In the New Testament dikaiosyne occasionally means the just judgment of God exercised by Christ at His Return (Acts 17:31; Rev. 19:11), or the just rule of God in the guidance of the community (2 Peter 1:1).⁴⁵ But in the non-Pauline writings of the New Testament it is almost always used for the right conduct of man which conforms to the will

⁴⁴ TWNT 2: p. 197.

⁴⁵ TWNT 5: pp. 199-200.

of God, for rectitude of life before God, and a right state before God.⁴⁶ This righteousness must be in accordance with the will of God which is revealed in the Scriptures. The main content of this doing of dikaiosyne is brotherly love (1 John 3:10).⁴⁷

This "righteousness before God" is made possible by deliverance (or, liberation) from sins through the blood of Christ. This righteousness follows logically from commitment to Christ, the dikaios (Righteous Man; Matt. 27:19; Luke 23:47), not from human anger (James 1:20). The union of faith and "doing righteousness" (works as the fruit of the Holy Spirit) is emphasized by James. According to James 2:23, Abraham was justified before God by faith which found fulfilment in works. In other words, "righteousness before God" cannot be achieved by means of Law (Gal. 2:21), but through God's grace (or, mercy; Titus 3:5). Man can be righteous and thus enjoy true fellowship with God, only through His own sovereign, gracious and decisive intervention for man in Christ, by imparting His own righteousness as His pardoning sentence (Rom. 3:25-26). In a word, through the righteousness forensically ascribed to the man who believes in Christ, he can be right before God.⁴⁸

"Righteousness before God" follows logically from "righteousness from God" (Phil. 3:9). God's pardoning and

⁴⁶TWNT 5: p. 200.

⁴⁷TWNT 5: P. 202.

⁴⁸TWNT 2: p. 207.

forensic righteousness is the living power of the new life which overcomes sin (Rom. 5:17, 21).⁴⁹ It is a normative living force (Eph. 6:14),⁵⁰ which enables brotherly love. Therefore, without faith in Christ's blood and God's sovereign grace and truthfulness, it is obvious that there can be no motivation for the brotherly love, the main content of doing righteousness.

On the other hand, on the basis of the assumption that original political essence of Christianity was projected onto a transcendent dimension of the heavenly world beyond human history which is apt to promote an other-worldly faith, minjung theology denies the transcendent God of traditional Christianity.⁵¹ And under the influence of theology of history, advocated by Wolfhart Pannenberg, minjung theology identifies God with the future, and the heavenly kingdom with the new society to come.⁵² Minjung theology is focused on secular history. Accordingly, this theology prefers Korean historical revolts to Scriptural events of driven revelation as its theological reference; and as its historical subject (yuk-sa-juk ju-che in Korean) it prefers minjung to God. For minjung theology, the major

⁴⁹ TWNT 2: p. 213.

⁵⁰ TWNT 2: P. 214.

⁵¹ Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of in Minjung," Minjung Theology, ed. Yong Bock Kim (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), pp. 162-163.

⁵² Kee Deuk Song, Inquiry about Man, p. 471.

subject of theology and history is not God but minjung.

In consequence, since minjung theology is focused on the worldly commonwealth rather than on the transcendent God, who is immanent as well, it is concerned about economico-social alienation. Therefore, minjung theology advocates class struggle in order to overcome alienation and achieve liberation from alienation. This liberation is the so-called humanization.⁵³ Practically speaking, minjung theology substitutes humanization for the transcendent God.

However, to adapt the concept of liberation from alienation to the ideology of the regime in power and to deny the transcendent God for the sake of humanization does not solve the problem. It must be noted that "God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt because He wanted His people to have full freedom to serve Him in the presence of all nations."⁵⁴ Theology must be focused on God first and on human rights second, and this sequence cannot be reversed. The reversal of this sequence results in the denial of the transcendence of God.

As a result of disregarding the transcendence of God, minjung theology is more concerned about "brotherly faith," which implies that the priest in particular should approach his fellow men as brothers. Our neighbor here and now is our actual brother, even though he rejects the Chris-

⁵³ Ibid., p. 248.

⁵⁴ Emilio A. Nunez C., Liberation Theology, trans. Paul E. Sywulka (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 29.

tian faith.⁵⁵ Nam Dong Suh asserts that every minjung who participates in the struggle against ruling class for the sake of human rights is called Christian,⁵⁶ even though he has never heard of Christ and His gospel, nor confessed his faith in Him. Therefore, as Kyoung Jae Kim points out, the minjung church can include even Buddhists and humanists who fight for the restoration of human rights.⁵⁷ They are the so-called anonymous Christians.

In contrast with minjung theology's anonymous Christianity, the Scriptures teach that Christians are men who have the Spirit of Christ and belong to Him (Rom. 8:7). The Westminster Confession of Faith writes that man "not professing the Christian religion cannot be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested."⁵⁸ This Confession is formulated on the basis of such Scriptural passages as John 1:13; 14:6; Acts 16:31. Without being born again of God and having faith in Christ, no one can be called Christians or enter the kingdom of God.

⁵⁵Karl Rahner, Belief Today (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), pp. 54-55.

⁵⁶Nam Dong Suh, "Historical Reference for a Theology of Minjung," p. 165.

⁵⁷Kyoung Jae Kim, "The Significance of Minjung Theology in Terms of the History of Theology and Its Assessment," in A Study on the Minjung Theology in Korea, p. 116.

⁵⁸The Westminster Confession of Faith, X, iv.

A Negation of Christian Prayer

It is not easy to overlook the painful social and economic reality which minjung theology points out, even though its method and theological thought are easy to refute. The proper response to minjung theology, as is the case with liberation theology, is not only to reject its theological methodology and thought, which certainly must be done, but also to hear its call for justice and human rights.

However, alongside minjung theology's positive challenge for today, we must lay this salutary warning. Judging from the major themes of minjung theology, we have grave doubts whether minjung theologians can truthfully have any place for prayer. Prayer is the means of grace and the chief exercise of faith, without which no Christian can enjoy intimate fellowship with God. Let us consider the major pattern for prayer, the Lord's Prayer. Minjung theology asserts panentheism rather than the personal God who is not only immanent but also transcendent. How can this minjung theology of panentheism say the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who art in Heaven?" Minjung theology grasps minjung as the subjects of history and it does not recognize the divine sovereignty. How can the theology of minjung say the Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come?" Minjung theology does not recognize the normative authority of the Scriptures and regards the Scriptures only as secondary reference for theology. For minjung theology, the Scriptures are not the

absolute norm of faith and practice. Consequently, minjung theology does not have any objective standard or universal norm. How can this minjung theology say the Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth?" Minjung theology does not consider Christ's death from the viewpoint of the vicarious atonement, and it denies the historical resurrection of Christ risen from the dead. How can minjung theology say the Prayer, "Forgive us our debts?" Minjung theology denies the personality of Satan and regards sin as an oppressive ideology of the ruling class. Can this theology say the Prayer, "Deliver us from evil?" In conclusion, can minjung theology, which holds major reservations even concerning the Lord's Prayer, be judged a true Christian theology, even if it tries to assume Christian responsibility for the betterment of the poor oppressed minjung?

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