

Donghak and Daseok's Understanding of Christianity Seen through
Cheon-bu-gyeong: An Attempt to Find a Point of Contact for the
Indigenization and Globalization of Christianity¹⁾

Prof. Lee, JungBae (Methodist Theological University)

It has been more than a decade since I was first interested in Daseok (多夕) Yu Yeong-mo's understanding of Christianity. Recently, I have come to the thought that the scholars in the Daseok school, such as Ham Seok-heon (咸錫憲), Kim Heung-ho (金興浩), Park Yeong-ho (朴永浩), Lee Gi-sang (李基相) and so on, would be a good match with the scholars in the Kyoto school who put forth a Buddhist understanding of Christianity.²⁾ As an indigenous theologian, I cannot miss noticing that the Kyoto School has interpreted Christianity through the eyes of Buddhism, while the Daseok School firmly found their understanding upon Christianity. In short, the Daseok School understood Christianity firmly on the basis of indigenous Korean thoughts. It also found its core principle of theology in *Cheon-bu-gyeong* (天符經) as well as in the cultural traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.³⁾ I once termed this "a heuristic hermeneutics," as borrowed from Panikkar's terms. What is important in Daseok's thought is the idea of the three foundations of heaven, earth and human beings (天地人 三才). He regarded heaven(·), earth(-) and human beings(l) as the voices of heaven calling out to our nation. From this train of thought, Daseok interpreted Hangeul, the Korean phonetic symbols, as the heavenly text (天文) or the revelatory language or language of meaning.⁴⁾ Since then, his theory of the three foundations (三才論) has always been the hermeneutical foundation of his interpretation

1) This is a summary of my longer paper, with the title above for this conference. In this summary, I will try to make some points for those who had to take a long way to come here. Because this is the shortened version, I may not clearly deliver the original scale of the paper, but I will try to show the structures and contents in this paper.

2) Lee Jung-bae, "Daseok hak pa eui Gidokgyo lihae wa Mun hwa sinhak eui mi rae [The Daseok School's Understanding of Christianity and the Future of Korean Theology of Culture]," *Korea Journal of Christian Studies* 50 (2007): 249-279.

3) Yu Yeong-mo, "Cheon-bu-gyeong puli [Interpretation of Cheon-bu-gyeong]," in *Buddhism understood in terms of Daseok's Thoughts*, ed. Park Yeong-ho (Ban-Ya-Sim-Gyong, Du-re Publishing, 2001), 378-407.

4) Lee Jeong-ho, *Hun-Min-Jeong-Eum guzowa lihae* [The Structure and Principle of Hun-Min-Jeong-Eum: Study of its Dynamics], (Asian Publishing Co., 1990); Lee Jung-bae, "Hangeul gwa gidokgyo, Hangeul ro sinhak hagi (Hangeul and Christianity: Doing theology in Hangeul)," *Daseok Yu Yeong-mo's East Asian Thoughts and Theology* (Sol Publishing Co., 2002), 262-298.

of the essences of Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity, and he was able to produce his own unique system of meanings from this theory. It does not seem to be a mere coincidence that Daseok himself explicated the 81 letters of *Cheon-bu-gyeong* in Korean native language.

What especially matters to my scholarship is the relationship between Su-un(水雲)'s Donghak (東學) and Daseok's thoughts. As scholars have analyzed, Donghak (東學) is the Korean native system of thoughts, which was derived and developed from the world view of *Cheon-bu-gyeong*, especially from the theory of its three foundations (三才論).⁵⁾ In fact, there have been quite a number of articles and writings about the relationship. Although it has often been criticized that they have not enough examined it through historical investigations, I think their attempts are still meaningful. However, what embarrasses me is the fact that Daseok never mentioned Donghak in his writings. I deeply regret to say that Daseok, the person who translated and interpreted *Cheon-bu-gyeong* (天符經) into the Korean native version and took its theory of the three foundations (三才論) as his world view and methodology, never considered Donghak, which has been regarded as a synthesis of Korean thoughts.⁶⁾ Thus, this paper will examine the relationship of Donghak and Daseok's thoughts in the light of the theory of the three foundations in *Cheon-bu-gyeong*, and I will also examine the meaning of their encounter in the contexts of Korean culture and world history; for there is a history that Su-un, stimulated from *Chun-Ju-Sil-Ui*(天主實義), also rediscovered the God of *Cheon-bu-gyeong*, as Daseok reconstructed a Korean Christianity under the framework of the theory of the three foundations. After all, from my scholarly judgment, there are some striking similarities between Daseok's theory of indigenization and Su-un's Donghak, given that the former regarded the theory of the three foundations as an archetype of the national culture and that the latter tried to return to the primal origin in his attempt to overcome the impact of Western Christianity. The theologian Yu Dong-shik (柳東植) once mentioned that the deep and profound Dao (玄妙之道) in the NanRang Inscription (鸞郎碑序) had something to do with the Dao of the three foundations in *Cheon-bu-gyeong*, and this seems to support my argument in this paper.⁷⁾

1. The theory of three ultimates (foundations) as the framework of Donghak and Daseok's thoughts - explained through *Cheon-bu-gyeong*

5) Choi Min-ja, *Donghak sasang gwa sin mun myung* [The Thoughts of Dong-hak and New Civilization] (Hosting People Publishing: 2005), 204 ff.

6) I have found only one occasion in which he makes comments on Su-wun's Donghak in his book 多夕講義 [Daseok Lecture] ed. Daseok Society, (Hyeon-am Publishing Co., 2006), 282.

7) Yu Dong-sik, *Pung-Ryu-Do wa Johan bok eum* [Pung-Ryu-Do (風流道) and John's Gospel] (Handl Publishing Co., 2007), 52-63.

In this chapter, I elucidate the 81 letters of *Cheon-bu-gyeong* according to its scriptural order from the first to the third. The first scripture explains the heavenly principle (天理); the second elucidates the vicissitude of cosmic nature; and the third concerns the matter of being human.⁸⁾ In the first verse, the eternal One branches out into the three foundations of heaven, earth and human beings, and they then are reunified into the One. The second scripture deals with the world of use (用), whose body (體) is the eternal One of the first scripture, and is none other than the cyclic process of life which makes ten thousand things come alive. The third scripture, which is the core of the entire book, illustrates that the One, which is the primal origin of the cosmic process, is nothing but the real "I" and that to find it is to return to the One. In short, heaven and earth are in one within the human being (人中天地一). Here, one can find that this resonates with Su-un's notion of "my mind as your mind" (吾心即汝心) and with Daseok's notion that God is after all the true "I". Western scholars may have difficulty understanding such Donghak notions as that of my mind as your mind. For it presumes that A can be equal to a non-A (不二). The notion of A as non-A is not like a Western notion of institutionalized divine grace where any notion of praxis in life has been watered down and then fossilized. Unlike them, Daseok reinterpreted Christology in the structure of heaven and earth within human beings (人中天地一).

The impact of *Cheon-bu-gyeong* upon Su-un and Daseok can be structurally illustrated as follows.⁹⁾ Both of them put stress upon the mystery of the One who has neither its beginning nor its end and who generates "ten thousands things in the world" (宇宙萬物). The One is beyond our comprehension so that it can only be represented as nothingness (無). This One is represented in our human memories along with the notion of "the divine being without being" or that of hosting the lord of heaven (侍天主). The One resides within everything and at the same time transcends everything. The world view of the triad ramification (三數分化, 一即三, 三即一) illustrates this very well. The relationship between the primal One and the three polarities of heaven, earth and human beings is that of the not-two (不二) or the inseparable.¹⁰⁾ Daseok analogically illustrated the relationship as that of individual and whole, and as that of the absolute and the relative. The notion of the divine being without being embraces both the absolute and the relative, individual and whole. This all-encompassing is also found in Donghak's notion of hosting the heavenly lord (侍天主), which is its translation of the oneness of heaven and earth within human beings (人中天地一).¹¹⁾ This imposes a certain sense of rightness upon human life that the purpose of human life is the return to the One. It requires a disciplined process to come to this absolute

8) The following is a summary of Cho Min-ja's *Cheon-bu-gyeong puri* [Commentaries on Cheon-bu-gyeong, Dam-Il-Sin-Go, Cham-Jeon-Gye-Gyeong] (Hosting People Publishing, 1982), 56-120.

9) Yu Yeong-mo, "Interpretation," 379.

10) Yu Yeong-mo, "Interpretation," 387-388.

11) Yu Yeong-mo, "Interpretation," 402.

consciousness within a human being. In this vein, Donghak emphasizes the notion of hosting the heavenly lord, and Daseok the elimination of desires for sexuality, food and material goods (貪瞋痴). Although one may realize that the divine life and one's life are one on the level of the true "I," one still needs a disciplined process for its concrete actualization.

Given the branching out of the three foundations (三數分化), both Su-un and Daseok learnt from *Cheon-bu-gyeong* the doctrine of the return of the three into one (會三歸一) and described their own religious experiences on the basis of it.¹²⁾ The major doctrines of the divine spirit within (內有神靈), the force of becoming without (外有氣化) and the individual acknowledgment of nowhere else (各知不移) respectively correspond to heaven, earth and human beings in the scripture, all of which derive from the One.¹³⁾ These three, which explain the word "hosting" (侍), presume the original oneness. Daseok also explained heaven, earth and human beings (天地人) as "Gye" (계), "Ye" (예) and "Geut" (긋) in pure Korean, and connected them to the three Buddha natures of "seeing the true nature" (見性), "doing ascetic practice" (苦行) and "attaining Buddhahood" (成佛). In turn, he elucidated them as the way of heaven's calling leading up to the very nature (天命之謂性), the way of nature leading up to the Way (率性之謂道) and the way of practicing *Dao* up to teaching (修道之謂教), and he then even interpreted Christianity in this way. God as the divine being without being (없이 계신 하나님), Jesus Christ as the actualization of filial piety and affection (父子有親) and the Holy Spirit as the true self are the examples of his Korean interpretation.¹⁴⁾ What is important here is the Son's filial piety (孝) and his becoming one with the heavenly Father which is exemplified in his act of crucifixion. This corresponds to the preservation of the mind and the straightening-up of the force (守心正氣) in Donghak. Nonetheless, Jesus Christ is the one and only teacher for Daseok. Daseok pointing out the kernels of Buddhism and Confucianism in the light of *Cheon-bu-gyeong* was a way of the indigenization of Christianity. At this point, I think it should be mentioned that Donghak, which recovered the forgotten God through the impact of the West, is so theological that it itself takes a form of theology which emerged indigenously(土發).¹⁵⁾ This is the reason why I want to see Donghak in the light of Daseok's thoughts.

2.Christianity in Daseok's thoughts - the nature and actuality of indigenous understanding of Christianity

Here I try to make clear the reality of indigenous Christianity in Daseok and will

12) Yu Yeong-mo, "Interpretation," 386-387.

13) Choi Min-ja, *Commentaries*, 48-49.

14) This scheme is well illustrated in *Oh Jeong-suk, Da seok Yu yeong-mo eui hangukjuk gidiggyo* [Da Seok Yu Yeong-mo's Korean Christianity], (Misba Publishing Co., 2005.)

15) Shin Il-cheol, *Donghak sasang eui hae* [Understanding the Thought of Donghak] (Social Critique Press, 1995), 124-129.

attempt later to reflect Donghak within Daseok's thoughts. Daseok considered *Cheon-bu-gyeong* as a meaningful idea because he considered that the three polarities of heaven, earth and human beings return to the One. In the East Asian perspective, the One cannot be expressed but as 'nothingness' (無).¹⁶⁾ Thus, this One, which lets everything be and which itself is none other than whole, becomes the divine being without being. This nothingness (or not-a-thing-ness) may be understood in the contexts of the "mysterious being of true emptiness" (眞空妙有) in Buddhism and of the "Great Polarity as non-polarity" (無極而太極) in Neo-Confucianism. Daseok regarded the theory of the not-Two (不二論), which is immanent in Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, as not different from the One in *Cheon-bu-gyeong* (天符經). The 'not-two' (不二) is none other than an epistemological (or pneumatological) foundation, which mediates one and three. Presupposing the above, Daseok's understanding of Christianity is so unorthodox that it already lies outside the established frame of Western theology.¹⁷⁾ This is because Daseok sought a way to the divine being without being (빈탕 empty space) within human beings, that is, in his Ba-tal (바탈 original nature). "It seems to transcend, but it is actually digging into its own root."¹⁸⁾ It is never logical to describe the "divine being without being" as the bottom of human innate nature (바탈 本然之性). It means that God becomes the true "I" (얼나 Eol-Na); but this can only be attained as the fruit of the ceaseless bodily practice of awareness.

For Daseok, Jesus has nothing to do with the Western theistic framework regulated by its substantial thinking. Jesus realizes that he is the descending from the One or the child of the empty space (虛空) after he suffered from the one hundredth death and one thousand difficulties (百死千難), and he then becomes understood in an indigenous way as "God as not different from the Son" (父子不二 – Father and Son are not two). Jesus is the first-born Son, who realizes that his innate nature of existence (바탈) is God and who takes seriously his responsibility for this. Nonetheless, in his thoughts, whoever realizes that s/he is the only begotten so that s/he lives the life of the absolute can become the only-begotten. Daseok read in the cross of Jesus the perfection of filial piety in Jesus offering himself to the heavenly (Father). There is no one like him, who yearns more for the being of the One, the absolute life. Therefore, he takes Jesus as his only master, who actualizes intimacy between Father and son(s) (父子有親). The master as the naked being (脫存) is the representation of an absolute human relation, which transcends the blood ties of familial relations, and s/he leads us to the

16) Yu Yeong-mo, "Interpretation," 386. Lee Ki-sang, "Taeyang eul ggeura-zonjae jungsim eui sayro buteu haebang [Turn off the Sun-Liberation from the Being-centered Thinking]," in *Daseok Yu Yeong-mo's East Asian Thought and Theology*, 51.

17) In this regard, I have pointed out that the essence of the Daseok School's understanding of Christianity lies in the theological principle of the not-two.

18) Park Jae-soon, "Sayuga narl bultaeyunda" [Thoughts burning me up: Descartes and Yu Yeong-mo], unpublished article, (23 October 2006), 10.

absolute (one). This master Jesusology developed into the *Eol* Christology (spiritual Christology).¹⁹⁾ This *Eol* Christology assumes the world of a non-object-related enlightenment, which is the awareness of the non-difference between self and other (自他不二), rather than that of object-based faith, and it naturally leads to pneumatology.

For Daseok, the Spirit is, in a word, the Spirit of God, and at the same time, the innate nature (本然之性) of human beings. Put differently, the Spirit of God is the cosmic life as whole, the inner kernel within 'my'self (바탈) and also the absolute spirit that transcends the realm of the relative.²⁰⁾ The universe keeps on running ceaselessly through creation and evolution, and any human being has potentiality to reach the absolute spirit (Christ), because the spirit of God (숨 breath) is immanent in every human being and everything in the universe. However, in order to become the absolute life, a human being as individual must burn up his/her life. What religion aims at, and the role of the Spirit, is to return to *Bin-Tang* (the empty space; that is, the absolute life) by burning up one's innate nature (바탈) with *Mal-Soom* (말숨, Word-Breathing), which is the Word.

Daseok extended his master Christology into his *Ul* Christology in the pneumatological context. For there is in every human being the spirit of God, which is *Ba-Tal* (바탈), and everyone would thus be able to become Christ, which is *Eol-Na* (얼나) in Daseok's Christology.²¹⁾ This *Eol* Christology can be said to be a radical indigenous appropriation of Western pluralistic theology. This Christology, which allows human beings a general possibility of salvation, understands the Western theology of pluralism in the East Asian or pneumatological way. It naturally encourages us to revise the established exclusive or heteronomous thought of redemption (代贖).²²⁾ What Daseok saw in Jesus on the cross is his elevated will and executive power. Daseok would not have produced his thoughts without the will elevated by Jesus (the realm of the absolute) and the way of the cross he put upon his shoulder. In the East Asian practice-focused tradition, he reinterprets the cross of Jesus in terms of self-forgiveness (自贖) in opposition to the idea of redemption that is heteronomous forgiveness - and conceptualizes it into his notions of meditative sitting and dieting, sincere speaking and always walking (一座食 一言仁). The cross itself was also the way of self-forgiveness (自贖) for Jesus himself. However, when Jesus' self-forgiveness requires of us the

19) Daseok Lecture (多夕講義), 781.

20) For Daseok, Jesus 'Eol is Christ, life, spirit, and the ground of human beings. Yo Yeong-mo, *Jukeumye saengmyung eul, julmangye himang eul* [Life to Death, Hope to Despair] (Honglk-Je 1993), 341.

21) Yu Yeong-mo, *Myungsangrok* [Meditations: Truth and Cham-Na with Park Yeong-ho's Commentary] (Du-re 2000), 93.

22) His disciple, Ham seok-hun, also agrees with this term. "Hanguk Gidokgyo muulhana [What will Korean Christianity Do?]," in *Complete Works of Ham seok-hun, vol.3* (Han-gil Press 1986), 202-203.

same self-forgiveness, it rather functions as redemptive salvation. In this way, God's salvation takes place in the way of the not-two of self and other (自他不二).

3. Daseok's indigenous understanding of Christianity and Su-un's thoughts of Donghak - Comparison of the two in their foundational structures and contents

In this chapter, which is the kernel of this paper, I deal with some of the basic structures and correspondences of Daseok's understanding of indigenous Christianity and Su-un's Donghak in their respective contents. One thing to be mentioned is that, although Su-un never had a Christian identity in himself, one can say he seemed to know a way to understand Christianity within the structure of Donghak, because he had already read Matteo Ricci's *Chun-Ju-Sil-Ui* (天主實義) and suggested a way to reflect on and overcome the Western legacy of Christianity. That is, he seemed to think that, although there is no way to communicate with the Western teachings (西學 or 西教 western religion), one could find a common ground between Donghak and the thought system of the so-called New Occidentology (新西學). Back then, what really mattered to him was the lack of understanding of the cosmic and personal vitality in the Western teachings (西學).

My argument is that there are conceptual pairs between Donghak's doctrines, such as "hosting the heavenly lord" (侍天主), "the divine spirit within" (內有神靈), "the force of becoming without" (外有氣化) and "the individual acknowledgment of nowhere else" (各知不移), and Daseok's notions of Korean Christianity, such as "the divine being without being," "the filial intimacy of Jesus Christ" (父子有親) and "the Holy Spirit as the true self." First, let me elucidate the notion of the "divine spirit within" from the perspective of the "divine being without being." Both of them disclose the nature of heaven in its ceaseless unfolding with neither beginning nor end. As Daseok explains heaven is "heaven in the middle" (天中) with the kernel (속알, which is the only-begotten and a seed from heaven), Donghak also talks about the living spirit within human beings in terms of the divine spirit within (內有神靈). For them, heaven is never metaphysical or ontological. The divine spirit within is the personified expression of the One that is the unconditional life, the primal source of the cosmos, which is ever changing and yet never exhausted in itself. It should be clear that the One cannot be reduced to a concept of person. As the dynamic creative act, the Spirit arises within human beings over and over again. This heavenly One (*Han-Wool-Nim* 한울님) cannot be separated from human beings, as fish and water cannot be separated. Rather, the human being becomes heaven (*Han-Wool* 한울). At this point, the divine spirit within (內有神靈) is not much different from the divine "being without being," in terms of which Daseok regards God as the true self. Donghak has developed a diachronic logic that synthesizes everything in terms of the notion of "the no as the yes" (不然基然).²³⁾ In this diachronic logic, the impersonal force of the universe, the coming force of becoming (至氣), can become the personal divinity (한울), that is, the heavenly lord

(天主), and, if so, it seems to be possible to speak of "my mind as your mind" (吾心即汝心). This awareness that the "I" is the Creator and the creature at the same time is derived from *Chun-Bu-gyeong*, and this was passed over to Su-un and Daseok and became the core of their thoughts. In other words, the notion of the oneness of heaven and earth within human beings (人中天地一) is nothing but the idea of hosting heaven (侍天) and also that of the divine being without being. A scholar read this as the coming world of the spiritual "Divinities."

Secondly, I will attempt to explain the idea of the force of becoming without (外有氣化) in Donghak in the light of the *Eol* Christology that speaks about the intimate relationship of father and son. These two concepts, given the structure of *Chun-Bu-gyeong*, are the stories about the earth that speak of the harmonious working of the logic and the force of the One. In other words, they refer to the processes in which the divine spirit within the human body unfolds outwardly. One can imagine along with these the theological concept of incarnation, which contains the idea that God becomes a human being. For the incarnation of God is God's work for the recovery of things in the universe and for their total salvation. The force of becoming without (外有氣化) means the ceaseless changes that repeat growth and decline in the universe, as incarnation also assumes the change of the deity itself. Here, the force or *Ki* (氣) is more than matter in our physical world and is not different from "the divine spirit" (神靈). Here we can find a semantic correlation between "the force of becoming without" (外有氣化) and the *Eol* Christology. As seen above, Daseok understands the ten thousand things in the universe (宇宙萬物) as the activities of God that are absolute life. The spirit of God has never stopped working, even in a moment, in the universe and in its history. As the divine spirit for Su-un is the force of becoming, the unconditional life in human beings (*Ba-Tal*) and the cosmic life for Daseok are the same. In this regard, one can say that Jesus in his not-two-ness (不二) of father and son took off his bodily self, rose high as *Eol-Na* (the spiritual self) and embodied the cosmic life in himself.²⁴⁾ In Donghak's terms, Jesus is a being that fulfills in him the unity of the divine spirit (神靈) and the force of becoming (氣化). By participating in the becoming of the cosmic life in his enlightenment of the absolute life, Jesus was able to become the cosmic Christ, who sustains every form of life as it is. It is only the absolute life of Jesus united with the cosmos (*Eol-Na*) which is meaningful for Daseok. Donghak expresses this as the preservation of the mind and the edification of *Ki* (守心正氣), which means that one realizes his/her nature of hosting the heavenly lord (侍天主) and keeps observing it.²⁵⁾ Daseok's Jesus could be spoken of as the

23) Chapter on "Bul-yeon Gi-yeon (不然其然)" in *Dong-gyung-dae-jeon* [(東經大全 Complete Scripture of Donghak], ed. Society of Korean Traditional Culture, "Chapter on Donghak," World Religions in their Scriptures, 310-311. Kim Sang-il, *Dong-hakgwa sinseohak* [Donghak and New Occidentology] (Knowledge Industry Press 2000), 126-127.

24) Kim Ji-ha, *Dong hak slyagi* [A Story of Donghak], 34. 39-40.

25) "Master Hae-wol's Sermon on Preserving the Mind and Rectifying Chi," a part of

incarnation of the principle of preserving the mind and edifying Ki (守心正氣).

Finally, Daseok's *Ba-Tal* (the ground) and Donghak's "individual acknowledgement of nowhere else" (各知不移 unchanging individual awareness) cross over at their respective understandings of pneumatology. This can offer a ground to universalize the understanding of Jesus as the incarnation of the principle of preserving the mind and edifying Ki (守心正氣) and who participates in the becoming of heaven and earth. As seen above, Daseok seeks for God as being without being in the inner ground (밑둥) of human being, and, in so doing, he reminds us that this is the reality of the spirit. This is his explanation of the oneness of heaven and earth within human beings in *Cheon-bu-gyeong*. A human being cannot find God, when s/he leaves his/her own *Ba-Tal*. In this regard, Donghak also explains "the individual acknowledgement of nowhere else" or "unchaining individual awareness." It asks all of us human beings to live in the oneness of life beyond individual selves by realizing that the divine spirit within human beings and the force of becoming without are one.²⁶⁾ This is a reaffirmation that every human being is a spiritual being with the absolute life. This witnesses that the existence of Jesus and the life he carried out are all the universal potentiality for human beings. Its pneumatological understanding of "the individual acknowledgement of nowhere else" or "unchanging individual awareness" is concretely developed into its ritual form of "setting the position toward the self" (向我設位). As a matter of fact, this is an emancipatory declaration of the unity of eating and ancestor worship, the oneness of religion and the ordinary, of transcendence and immanence. It corresponds to Jesus' teaching that humans are not for the Sabbath day; rather, the Sabbath is for humans. This is a radical transformation from objective religion toward non-objective religion, which opens a way of nonobjective faith to find God within the self. By having faith in one's own *Ba-Tal* (ground) as the presence of the divine being without being, one should respect oneself in order to embody the actuality of the faith. When Su-un calls his *Dao* (道) the becoming without doing (無爲而化), it takes place within the same context of the pneumatological understanding of "unchanging individual awareness" (各知不移). After all, all of these are possible through the awareness of hosting the heavenly lord and the experience of the presence of the divine being without being. Both of these thoughts announce a postmodern subjectivity, with which any one can become the cosmic absolute life by burning up one's own *Ba-Tal* (ground) and suggest a realm of spirituality, in which divinity and reason are conjoined.

4. The Encounter between Donghak and Daseok's understanding of Christianity, and its implication for the history of civilization and theology of life

"Chapter on Donghak" ed. Society of Korean Traditional Culture, *World religions Seen through their Scripture*, 353.

26) I owe this interpretation of "unchanging individual awareness" (各知不移) to Choi Min-ja; Choi Min-ja, *Commentaries on Cheon-bu-gyeong, Sam-il-sin-go, Cham-jeon-gye-gyeong*, 48

In conclusion, I examine the meaning of their encounter in the contexts of the history of world civilization and of life theology. As shown above, inherent in both thoughts is the belief in the notions such as the absolute oneness without beginning or end, and the thought of the return to the One and the world of the three-fold ramification, all of which are at the core of the scripture, *Cheon-bu-gyeong*. It turns out to be that the integration of the three major religions (包含三教) which Choi Chi-won talked of is also not fundamentally different from the One in *Cheon-bu-gyeong*. These thoughts see that the essence of religion is that religions are expressions of the absolute One in order for all human beings to return to the One.²⁷⁾ They commonly have an insight into the world view of the absolute oneness, which expresses a relationship between one and three, between essence and phenomena from the perspective of the not-two (不二). In this vein, I think it would be more correct to see Daseok's understanding of Christianity not as an indigenous (土着) but as a natively emergent (土發) Christianity.²⁸⁾ I once called this a creationism beyond indigenization. Then, what general meanings does it bring on?

In the first place, Donghak and Daseok, both of whom accepted the principle of the oneness of heaven and earth within human beings, had developed a diachronic and universal thought of people as foundation (民本).²⁹⁾ It is radically different from the Western notion of individuality, because it talks of an individuality which contains within itself the entire universe. It is a notion which implicates relationship between part and whole, between one and many. It is a mode in which the universal life, the particular *Ul* within myself and the *Eol* of Jesus become one. The wisdom of the oneness of heaven and earth within human beings (人中天地一), which refers to the fact that individual life is always connected to whole life, reminds us of the equality of all humanity on a new level. Secondly, I think their thoughts can play an important role in a theology of life, which concerns our ecosystem of this planet. For both Daseok and Donghak, the universe is originally the oneness of life. It is the manifestation of the One, which is the absolute life. Donghak expresses its view of life as "the heaven as that which eats a(nother) heaven (以天食天)." The idea that heaven (한울) eats heaven already presumes the idea that everything existing comes from heaven. Out of this context, emerged the thought of the three respects (三敬) of respecting heaven, respecting human beings and respecting material. This thought of heaven as that which eats a heaven may coincide with the essence of Eucharist in Christianity, because it is understood in Daseok as redemption: "grains and vegetable I am eating now are redeeming me for my life."³⁰⁾ In this light of heaven as that which

27) Daseok Lecture, 740. This is the feature of 'religious monism' in Daseok's thoughts.

28) Hwang Jong-ryeol, *Tochakhwa sinhakei Guzo* [The Structure of Korean Indigenous Theology] (Juk-tae-won 1996), 32-34.

29) Kim Young-ok, *Do-ol Sim-deuk: Dong-gyeong-dae-jeon* [So-ol's Awakening within Mind: Complete Scripture Scriptures of Donghak] (Tong-na-mu Publishing Co., 2004), 38.44.

30) Daseok Lecture, 567.

eats a heaven, redemption becomes a universal discourse of life, which opens our eyes to a divine relationality, which embraces even an impersonal life, the universe beyond the narrow boundaries of human beings and Christianity. Thirdly, these thoughts redefine the essence of religion itself in a newer way. They are suggesting not an ontological, metaphysical religion but the praxis-based theory of religion. As recent studies of the historical Jesus disclose, religion based upon praxis-focused and empirical religion is replacing the institutionalized and/or empirical religion. Donghak and Daseok revive the feedback loop structure of the divine and the human by being based upon the East Asian thoughts that have still contained the shamanic layer (巫層), which is the archetype of human religiosity.³¹⁾ Both Daseok and Donghak show us the praxis-based feature of religion, given that the former confessed God as his true self in the end and understood one's kernel (속알 original nature) as the Spirit and that the latter emphasized the ritual form of "setting the position toward the self (向我設位)," which derived from the idea of hosting the heavenly lord. Given that the primary feature of the post-modern understanding of religion is "praxis-focused,"³²⁾ one can at a glance imagine the value of these thoughts in our age. Finally, one should not miss seeing that Su-un's and Daseok's thoughts, both of which accept the thought of the return to the One, imply a theory of religious unity. From the perspective of the great "One," they include Western thoughts as well as East Asian religions. This is the expansive reproduction of the idea of the integration of the three major religions (包含三教). As I described above, Donghak incorporates the features of East Asian and Western religions together in terms of the notions of the divine spirit within and of the force of becoming without. This is really different from a form of religious syncretism, a thing which has been regarded as heretical in the West. The thought of the return to the One is more than simple syncretism. It is the reason why Daseok respected every religion as revealed from heaven.³³⁾ One said he lives by eating not only the Bible but also the scriptures of Confucianism and Buddhism. The real matter is how one can unite with heaven's calling (울일름 *Uh-il-reum*), that is, the absolute One. These natively emergent Korean thoughts cannot be judged either as inclusivism or pluralism by the West. Also, Daseok's *Eol* Christology is not the same as the divinity-centered pluralism in the West. His belief that only Jesus is the one and only teacher for him cannot simply converge into the relational truth, which emphasizes the notion of Ortho-praxis. Nonetheless, his perspective that Jesus is an unfinished draft (未定稿)³⁴⁾

31) Yasuo Yuasa, *Mongwa WooJu* [Body and the Universe], tr. Lee Jung-bae (Knowledge Industry Publishing, 2005), 28-29.

32) What I am mentioning here about the studies is the summary of the following articles I have written: Lee Jung-bae, "Dong-hak segyegwanei gldokgyojeok lihaewa suhang [A Christian Understanding of Donghak's World view and its Doctrine of Practice], A Study of Avantgarde Indigenous Theology in Korean Protestantism, (Korean Christian Literature Society, 2003), 412-422.

33) Daseok Lecture, 804.

34) Ibid., 805.

strongly suggests the need for praxis-focused truth and religious dialogue in the so-called age of the second axis.

Abstract

What I pay attention to in this article is the relationship between Su-wun (水雲) and Da-seok(多夕) in their thoughts. As is generally known, Dong-hak(東學) has been recognized as an independent national religion which rediscovered the forgotten God of Korean People. It is indicated by the fact that Dong-hak is a system of thought which has inherited and developed the theory of three foundations(三才) as the worldview of *Cheon-bu-gyeong*. In this paper, what I find to be missing in Da-seok's thought is that he did not mention Su-wun's Dong-hak. Given the fact that Da-seok had much interest not only in Buddhism and Confucianism but also in *Cheon-bu-gyeong*, it is more or less unexpected that he took Dong-hak, which was closely related to the scripture, out of the question in his writing. For this reason, the main task of this article is to correlate Su-wun's Dong-hak and Da-seok's thoughts(Understanding of Christianity) in the framework of the idea three foundations(三才) originating from *Cheon-bu-gyeong*. In order to make these points clear, I will discuss the following in order: First, the theory of three foundations proclaimed in *Cheon-bu-gyeong* as the fundamental framework of both Dong-hak and Da-seok's thoughts. Second, the fundamental feature of Da-seok's understanding of Christianity. Third, comparison of Da-seok's understanding of Christianity and Dong-hak in term of their fundamental structure. Lastly, the encounter between Da-seok's Christianity and Dong-hak and its implications for the world history and theology of life.

Keywords

Dong-hak, Da-seok, Cheon-bu-gyeong, Three foundation, Batal(Human ground) Indigenization, Globalization.