

## Seed: Metaphor of Minjung

- - Minjung Theology from the Perspective of Ecology and Spirituality - -

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For a long time in Korea, Minjung theology worked to bring down the socio - political walls within which the people were oppressed, exploited, alienated, and within which they endured the same pains as people everywhere else in the world. Korea is no exception to the fact that it is always the people who suffer the most socially and economically. However, unlike before, it has recently become more important that they rise up and subjectively and responsibly reinvent their lives by themselves.

Although a collective body within the socio - econo - political structure, the Minjung is a concrete person. When we focus our attention on its collective structural aspects and disregard its concrete personal aspect, we are apt to abstract and ideate it. The individual Minjung as a person bears not only collective and social characteristics but also the internal and spiritual aspects of a concrete person.

Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a seed and lived the life of a seed. Like a seed which drops down to the ground only to multiply in death, he offered his own life on the cross to open the way of inter - living (mutual living) for humankind. He opened the heavenly kingdom by emptying and sacrificing himself. Throughout his movement for the Kingdom of God, in which he always presented the vision of universal life, he was very much concerned about the concrete individual person as shown in the parable of the lost

lamb. Jesus worked to reinvent human beings and societies by healing and caring for individual persons in the light of the Kingdom of God.

In order to carry on Jesus' movement today, it is necessary to break up all those existing economic-political structures and eliminate socio-cultural barriers and also to invigorate the spirituality of the Minjung. Thanks to today's globalized ecological crisis and the encroachment by globalized industrialized cultures, we have come to understand all anew that the inside and outside of human beings, the individual and the whole society, are interconnected with each other without any distinction. No matter whether we like it or not, we must realize that social conflicts and evils have already invaded us to stay within us, and that the devils of social and cultural principles and forces are holding us in captivity. It is also true that our society is ailing and getting worse because of our self-centered greed and desire to dominate.

The seed is an appropriate metaphor in that it shows very clearly both the individuality and wholeness of the Minjung. Deep in a single seed there is hidden the life which is going through billions of years. A single seed contains in itself all the sources of its flowers and fruits as well as its leaves and stems. A seed is a being that grows by itself to spread its universal life through the joining of water, sunlight, wind, and earth.

The seed represents the spiritual depth of the Minjung and the harmony and oneness of universal life. Through the metaphor of the seed, it may be possible to examine the subjective spirituality of the Minjung and to close up the ecological aspect of mutual living.

Moreover, the seed is a very effective metaphor for making people aware of all those sins of the devil which our social institutions and structures have within. It also leads us to see the power and wisdom of life which is unique to the Minjung who fight on their own to continue with their living against all the evils lurking in invested interests, institutions, and systems. For this reason, the seed may provide the Minjung (who are carrying around their necks the yoke of institutional oppression) power and wisdom, so that they can win freedom and equality in their life and break out of their plight.

#### 1. Story of the seed, flower, and human beings.

It is half a billion years ago since the ozone layer came into being, together with the seed plants and forests lush with trees more than ten meters tall. Shortly later, some 300 million years ago, dinosaurs measuring only 60 centimeters each devoured all the plants around them so much so that they grew to measure 50 meters each in length. These giant dinosaurs with long necks, small heads, and sparse teeth, were destroyers of the forests of seed plants.

Those coniferous trees, which are gymnospermous, came to be followed by flowering plants, which are angiospermous, bearing seed inside and producing flowers and fruits. Flowers, fruits, spores, and honey are all divine efforts in the guise of lure to promote the mutual relationship of life between the flowering plants and mammals or insects. By giving off their spores, fruits, and honey, these new plants with their splendid colors and attractive shapes could entice mammals and insects to disperse their seed in exchange for tasty and nutritious food, thus becoming able to grow fast and wide in a great variety.

When the gymnospermous plants were followed by flowering plants, the destroyer dinosaur became extinct because it failed to adapt itself to the new developments. It totally vanished from the earth some 65 million years ago when a meteor 10 kilometers in diameter hit the earth and as a result, a large blanket of thick dust spread to bring long cold winters which the dinosaur failed to survive. In contrast, smaller mammals were able to live on together with the new type of plants and multiply through rapid evolutions enduring global disasters such as long winters with the help of good nutritious fruits.<sup>1</sup>

The Will of Life to live together produced beautiful flowers, seed and honey. These are also a divine design for mutual - living. The beautiful shapes of flowers, the splendid colors of flowers, and the various appearances of flowers are a call towards inter - living, and at the same time, a sign of the beautiful will of the Creator to let all live together.

Some eleven thousand years ago when the North American glaciers melted to flow down into the Pacific causing the temperature to fall, the forests and grass fields got so sparse that people came to suffer from food shortages. But around this time, people found a cold resistant variety of wheat and started to plant it. Ever since, the world's population has been growing continuously till now and bringing today's civilized society.

The world population increased rapidly through agriculture. Five thousand years ago it already reached one hundred million. (8, 28) Such factors as natural environments, rules of oppression, the evolution of “the survival of the fittest” all failed with humankind. People proved to be outside evolution. Compared with those animals of the same size as humans, humans consume energy as much as forty times more and their population density is thirty times higher. Ecologically speaking, the greatest population for the earth is reportedly 180 million, as against today’s 5.6 billion. The earth is losing its capacity to feed all the people in the world. From the year 2030 the world population will decrease due to a higher death rate.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Minjung: The Seeds of History and Society

### 1) The Metaphor of Seeds

Ham Sok - hon<sup>3</sup> used to call the Minjung the “Seeds (Ssial)”, who sustained the life of the Korean people in spite of all the sorrows and woes they had suffered at the bottom of history and society. Within a single grain of seed is concentrated the history of life spanning over millions and millions of years, yet capable of going on and on infinitely. To illustrate, a single seed holds in itself the history of life whose flower underwent repeatedly the cycle of blooming and falling for billions of years. And through it, millions of flowers would bloom from generation to generation in the future. Therefore, it may be said that eternal universal life is concentrated in the seed. Like it, the Minjung is the carrier of eternal life. Though their woeful hearts weighted down by the layers of sorrows and wishes they have endured for nearly 5000 years, the Korean people would continue to develop their living through the life of the Minjung.

As a being that holds within itself the power of life and many other potentials, the seed is an example of spontaneous life that sprouts, grows, blooms, and fruits all by itself. Under favorable conditions, seeds can make life flower anytime and anywhere. By neither physical forces nor legal orders alone could a seed be made to work on life. No flower could be made to bloom by use of guns and swords. The Minjung is a subjective and voluntary being which carries with itself an inexhaustible reservoir of power and wisdom

for historical and social living. It is also a being that can directly relate itself to God - the eternal life - all within itself. For this reason, the Minjung would wise up, grow up, and act for themselves.

Only by falling down to the ground, in other words from the lowest position, can seed work on its life. It cannot make its shoots sprout when it stands on other seeds. It cannot start songs and dances of beautiful life even in a treasure box of gold and silver. Not until it fell down to the ground could it ever open itself to make life bloom. As it is round in shape, a grain of seed can keep standing even on a dot, if available, anywhere and anytime. In the same manner, the Minjung, without any recognizable names and social statuses, endured all the historical disasters and sufferings down at the bottom of society, only to see their life bloom and usher in a new age. When he or she craves for a better position, a Minjung would come to give up his or her historical mission and turn against others. As a seed falls down to the ground to become its master, the Minjung would become the master of history and society from the bottom.

Through its own death, the seed makes life bloom in abundance. If it does not die, a seed remains just as a seed - nothing else. From the fact that life can flourish only through death, we would learn the principle of life that a seed is promised a new life in reward for its death, as well as the social way of life that our neighbors get better off through our sacrifice. The Minjung have always been forced to live a life of sufferings and sacrifices historically and socially. Due to all the sufferings and sacrifices the Minjung had undergone, their life became sublimated and abundant. This means that they, through the long history of five thousand years, learned the truth of "life through death". According to Ham Sok - Hon, as Jesus became the Messiah of humankind by dying for all the sins committed by human beings, the Minjung would be able to usher in a new age of justice and peace by willingly going along the path of death and hardship carrying on their shoulder all the sins of Korea and the world.<sup>4</sup>

Deep in a single grain of life lies the whole life, and every seed has its root in the whole life. The life of a human being has nothing different from it. Everyone has in themselves God, the center of universal life, that is, the life of humankind. By directly relating humans to God, it becomes possible to connect them with the whole society. A

human being's good deed or sin doesn't remain with that person alone but goes beyond to involve the whole society, and its future depends upon the thoughts and deeds of individuals.<sup>5</sup>

Seed can sprout its shoots even thousands of years later as long as it could keep its shape adequately. As it can make its life bloom after going such hardships as stormy and cold seasons for a long time, the Minjung, in spite of all history's tribulations and hardships, may well save the world as long as they keep their body and soul as they should.<sup>6</sup>

## 2) The Minjung is the Seed of Society and History.

The fact that the Korean Minjung, in their turbulent 5000 year history, have survived innumerable harsh disasters and calamities and overcome all the accompanying sorrows and death, and likewise, the fact that the Dalits in India are alive and well after going through all the inhumane oppression, alienation, and exploitation which they had suffered for thousands of years economically, socially, and politically, because of their caste system, attest to the fact that both the two peoples are blessed with great force and spiritual wisdom of life. Just as a single grain of seed is holding an inexhaustibly abundant store of life in itself, every member of the Minjung or the Dalits is carrying within themselves an enormous amount of the power and wisdom of spiritual life. Like all those forests and giant dinosaurs and mammoths which were buried millions years ago under the ground or sea bottom, after going through ages and ages, hard pressed by the big mountains and great rocks, metamorphosed themselves into such sources of energy as coal, gas, and oil, and into such beautiful gem stones as diamonds, there could be found tremendous amounts of spiritual life energy and a great deal of spirituality as beautiful as gems in the life of the Dalits/Minjung. They have managed to overcome all the wounds and tribulations while groaning at the lowest level of history and society for many thousand years, without ever succumbing to such historical and social burdens as oppression and exploitation.

Though the ruling class in Korea readily gave out and was easily assimilated everytime any new foreign culture or force came around, the Minjung, even though they

looked feeble, was different in that it was they who had always kept up high the national pride and spirit. This is the reason why the true life of the people and humankind and also the national spirit and pride have been best kept in the hearts of the Minjung. Neither polluted nor spoiled by any man - made systems or ideas, the Minjung may said to be a being that best preserves the essence of life, that is, the image of God.

Grass bends ahead of the wind and rises up ahead of the wind. Likewise, when the formidable current of oppression and exploitation initiated by the ruling class was unleashed, the people, together with their culture, bend and rise up ahead of the tides. No matter how much oppressed, plundered, and pushed away from their place of living, the Minjung rose up again, stronger every time than last, just like the wild grass which, no matter how hard trampled down, would always rise up straight and strong. As new shoots come out of the frozen ground, and as the seed which sprouts to flower after going through the bellies of cows and horses, so the Minjung keep going with their living despite all kinds of oppression and exploitation suffered over a long history.

Seed grows and renews itself. It is a symbol of “self - doing”. This has something in common with “self - causing” (freedom: 自由) and “self - becoming” (nature: 自然). Self - doing is the fundamental rule of life. What I can never live in place of others is their life. No one can eat, sleep, excrete, produce children, and grow up in my substitution. No one can live my life or die my death. The Minjung is an existence that lives its own life. The ruling class employs and relies on others, while the Minjung do for themselves. Therefore, it is they who come closer to life itself.

Life which is self - doing is self growing. According to Ham Sok - Hon, history, universe, and human beings are all self - growing existences. Jesus, too, is person - growing in our life. God is also an unfinished being that is growing all the time. From this, it may be said that “I” am an existence striving to be, an existence that believes it would be. Ham says thus, “God is growth. An eternal unfinished being. ‘I’ am nothing but the faith to be, aspiration to be”.<sup>7</sup>

Self - doing means to transcend oneself ceaselessly. Minjung who live by themselves are going beyond themselves everyday. To transcend oneself means to become free and establish one’s own subjectivity.<sup>8</sup> Like a lotus blooming out of the mud

and like roses flowering out of garbage, the kingdom of God will be opened first with the life of Minjung at the bottom of the society. The Minjung who lives by a free spirit is free like the wind, aloft like stars, innocent like wild grass, and brave as lions.<sup>9</sup> A laborer, Chon Tae - il, who literally burned himself to death in 1970 for the right to live of workers who had been working a long period under murderous conditions, has now become a star shining in the hearts of the Korean people.

No matter how hard or bad their environment and conditions may be, the seed just keeps on working to live its life as dutifully as required by the nature of life. Look at those wild flowers blooming beautifully and faithfully, though grown out of the sewage holes or under the prison walls, complete with stems and leaves. Look at the life force of those wild flowers which are blooming in all splendor, though nameless and hardly visible. Nameless, without pride or pretence, the Minjung just go on to live beautifully and seriously, and like wild grasses, endure everything tenaciously, even in such circumstances as there is no way out without the risk of death. As the dandelions that let their spores float freely upon the wind and open flowers of life wherever they go, all the Minjung, including immigrant workers, the disabled, and the comfort women, settle down wherever they might be, do their best to make the flowers of life bloom as beautifully as possible, keeping their life ever aflame.

Wild flowers know no suicide. They keep rising up freshly no matter how hard they are trampled down. For the Minjung who live in blood and flesh without getting involved with any man - made systems or ideas, to live is unconditional. However oppressed, down - trodden, and marginal, they live on dutifully abiding to the nature and will of life, without ever getting involved with any false ideas and systems. Life is an order to live.<sup>10</sup>

The Minjung don't live for the sake of themselves. Many of them who have barely managed to live on against all odds keep saying that they should have died but for the kids, to which our fathers and mothers are no exception. For the Minjung, living itself is the objective and task of life. In fact, under such circumstances as where it was impossible to keep living without being stared at by death, or where there was neither hope nor reward, they kept on living to the end only for the sake of their children, thereby reaping happiness and reward of life at long last.



Plants that pass on and maintain life in the form of seed constitute the basis of the food chain in ecology. Deer and rabbits feed on grass only to be eaten by foxes and wolves which are preyed upon by lions and tigers, which then in turn, upon death, rot under the ground to present themselves as food for grass and flowers in the form of fertilizer. Like the seed which live the life of inter - living and co - existence while providing themselves as food for all living things as they lived on themselves, the Minjung have kept living, sticking to the rule of inter - living and co - existence by feeding humankind as they groaned at the bottom of history and society.

The Minjung is the foundation of the world of life. As the seeds feed all kinds of life, the Minjung farm to feed and weave to clothe the people. It is also they who manufacture all kinds of merchandise, build shelters, open roads, make cars and feed others. Minjung can live by letting others live.

Though they are playing the role of fathers and mothers of society, they are down - trodden and marginalized. Though they feed others, they starve; though they clothe others, they are scarcely clad; though they build good houses for others, few have houses to call their own. In fact, they are the owner of life, but they live subjugated. The liberation of the Minjung is the liberation of life, labor, and society. It is also to release (liberate) into the life of community those anti - communal ruling elites.

As grass get scarce, so life becomes scarce. When grass grows in abundance, other lives would enjoy a plentiful life. As the living for the Minjung gets harder, so is the whole life of the society. The source and vitality of life are ever ready to spring out of the Minjung. The joy and vitality of living are on the side of the Minjung. Their life is joyful, lively, and vivacious. The man - made, gorgeous looking life of the upper class people is, in reality, insipid, blasé, and tasteless like artificial flowers. Like a grain of seed that looks feeble, individual members of the Minjung are small and weak infinitesimally. It is possible that they may not be aware of all the potential of their own being because they have narrowly managed to subsist through oppression and hardship for a long time. Because of all those hardships and pains they have suffered for thousands of years, the Minjung might have been wounded in their hearts or harboring Han (the deep sense of having

been wronged, with accompanying anger or resentment), thereby becoming touchy, ill - tempered, twisted, or sullen. After all, the hearts of the Minjung are bolted tight.

As it is impossible to make seed sprout with guns and swords and flowers bloom with cannons, you cannot open the hearts of the Minjung with suspicion or by force. You can open the tightly shut hearts only with love and trust, just as flowers could be made to bloom by the warm sun and balmy wind and the shoots to sprout by the soft soil and seeping water. Without first stooping to and learning from them, you would never be able to teach or enlighten them. It would never be the case that any dictators, leaders, intellectuals, or elites might offer them salvation or liberation, for it would be the Minjung themselves who would look for their salvation like the seed which develops their own life.

In order to be faithful to the principle of self - doing, you must respect what others think, mean, and feel. For this reason, the seed (ssial) thoughts resist against all types of physical or institutional violence perpetrated to oppress human independence. The more self - assertiveness (independence) is established, the stronger grows the invincible spirit of resistance and fight against the rule of violence. Because this is a fight against violence designed for the purpose of disrupting the life of self - doing, it is truly a fight for peace.

In order to become the true mover of history and society, as well as the chief agent for globalization, it is necessary for the Minjung, who is the seed, to fight against that nationalism which is bent on justifying the collective violence of the ruling class. It regards the Minjung as a target to govern. In contrast, the Minjung is the seed and grassroots aspiring to establish the grassroots democracy through the local autonomy system. The grassroots democracy would never be possible with political motivations or slogans alone. It would come true only through a higher set of values and objectives aspiring for faith and love.

### 3) Unity of I, Minjung, and Jesus

As the seed is full of the mystery and breath of the universal life, the life of the Minjung abounds with the existence and activities of God as well as the breath of the Holy Spirit. The Minjung who are engaged in production by way of nature at the bottom of

society, take part in the creation and operation of the natural life, as creative workers for God. Ham Sok - Hon tried to identify today's "I" with the passion of Jesus and the sufferings of the Minjung. For him, the identity and substance of the nation is Minjung, and therefore, it is quite natural to find a nexus in the linking of Jesus - Minjung - I. By identifying the three elements of I - Jesus(God) - Minjung as one, he was able to develop a subjective and all - inclusive faith that stresses today's "I" equipped with a firm spiritual determination to practice what he believes.<sup>11</sup>

As long as you turn away from the Minjung, you would in no way be able to meet God. As long as you keep them far off, you would never be able to make any reform of history and society. Any true historical or social reformation (or revolution) could be achieved only through and by the Minjung. With the oppressed and marginalized people left out in the cold, no really good and healthy society could be established. The liberation and salvation of history and society would come only through the Minjung. God will open the way for salvation and liberation in his kingdom through and with the Minjung. In order to meet God and to renew history and society, we must go into them. It is they who lead us to see the true God and Jesus.

The relationship of Jesus with the Minjung is like that of fish with water. A Jesus who is separated from the Minjung is a dead Jesus. Jesus living in you would lead you to the Minjung. When Jesus, 'I', and the Minjung come to be one, the Kingdom of God will emerge amid history and society.

### 3. Seed in the Bible: Seed of Faith and Spirit

#### 1) Seed of the Human and the Dragon.

Humans are made in the image of God - into beings capable of creating, invested with responsibility, dignity, and freedom, and of standing on their own two feet. With the help of science and religion, an infinitely wide and high world has been open for human beings. The erect human is charged with freedom and responsibility, by God's design, to be qualified for and capable of bringing about a creative community for living with neighbors and nature in harmony, and with God at the center of life.

When erect humans degenerated into self - centered beings, they couldn't but leave Eden and get trapped in a world where people kill each other. Because of those who conquer, rule, and plunder, all the creatures, including seed and green leaves, are trembling under the shadow of imminent judgment and curse - the crisis of permanent destruction. We can call it the completion of God's work and the achievement of salvation only when we have escaped from the abyss of killing and cursing to the realm of mutual living.

In the Bible, the seed of humankind that is charged with the task of setting up a community of co - existence and inter - living is called the seed (posterity) of woman (*Hawa* - the mother of life). The forces of sin, curses, and killing and those of conflicts and killing each other, all of which would destroy God's work for creation and salvation, are all depicted in scriptural allegories of the serpent or dragon.

In Genesis 3.15 the enmity between a serpent (a symbol of evil) and the seed of woman is described. There is a confrontation between the serpent (evil) which seduced humankind into the Godless abyss of sin and death and the seed of the woman (*Hawa*) who fell victim to the trap. The victimized woman is holding her salvation and victory deep in the bosom of her life. The seed of woman is an existence capable of bringing forth salvation in the history of fallen man. The serpent bites at the ankle of the seed of woman, while the seed breaks its head. According to Chapter 12 in Revelation, there was another confrontation between the dragon and the seed of the woman. Here the woman is made a symbol of the suffering righteous *Minjung* struggling in the cause of God and Church. Woman is the *Minjung* undergoing the throes of childbirth before producing the seed of man, the righteous (the authority of the Kingdom of God), by which to govern all the nations on the earth.

The serpent as well as the dragon represents that dinosaur which once ruled the world of life with its voracious appetite and violent power. In contrast, however, the same dragon symbolizes kings and royal powers in both east and west. Even in the Bible, the dragon represents such imperialistic nations as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome, together with their rulers.

The Messiah, who is the seed of woman, is the Son of Humankind who is going to open a peaceful world in which children and vipers and wolves and lambs could live together. The Son of Man appearing in the book of Daniel and the Gospels is meant to be the seed of humans. The Son/Daughter of Humankind, that is, the seed of a human, is the Minjung free from such transients as riches, powers, and positions. From among human seeds, from among the sons and daughters of humans, that is, from among the Minjung, will come the Messiah. In the book of Daniel the Son of Man is meant to be the persecuted people of Israel and the collective personification of them. Jesus, Messiah, himself is the Minjung and the personification of their life and death. In order to save man, the human seed will fight against imperialistic state powers.

## 2) The Growing Seed and the Kingdom of God

Jesus was born in a poor farming village called Nazareth, Galilee. He preached and conducted his movement for the kingdom of God primarily in peasant villages shunning those big town areas which were dominated by Greek civilization. It is for this reason that his teachings reflect rural languages and cultures. For instance, he compares the Kingdom of heaven to such things as the growing seed, sowing farmer, grains and weeds, and the mustard seed and yeast.<sup>[12](#)</sup>

The parable of the seed shows that the Kingdom of heaven, which will be in human life, is the joint being of nature and history. For Jesus, the Kingdom is a historical and social reality - a universal reality directly related to the secret of natural life. The dichotomic division into history and nature is nothing but the tradition of western thought which is human - centered and chiefly concerned with ideas. The soul and body of humans, who have already become the principal agent of history, are linked to the ecological circle of nature. Even such human biological activities as eating, sleeping, and excreting are already important factors in moving and making history.

From those activities which Jesus conducted to set up the rice table community to share with the Minjung and heal their bodies of ailments, we can see that natural life constitutes the base and contents of the new history. All such things as sharing meals, Eucharistic rites, and feasts show that the seed, that is, crops, are parts of the human

body and also the basis of community. Choe Hae - Wol, second leader of the Tonghak, declared, "A bowl of cooked rice (seed) is heaven (God)." According to Jesus, "Rice (seed) is my body". Through rice we join in the body of Jesus to become one with him. By so doing, we might be able to become one with him in life. The mystery of the heavenly Kingdom is nothing but that which lies deep in the fellowship between body and heart.

The seed grows, and grows invisibly, not by human efforts, but by the joint work of such elements as the sun, water, wind, and earth. God, the Creator, grows the seed. The parable of seed teaches us to have faith in the life power of God as well as that of the Great Nature. However much it may look fragile or like a failure in appearance, the seed will bring an abundant and beautiful harvest in the end. Things in the Kingdom of God are just the same as farming with seed. It won't expand artificially, systematically, or mechanically. It grows by the spirit and truth of God when we empty and open our heart and humble ourselves. In the wretchedness and weakness of the Minjung, the great performance of the heavenly Kingdom would take place. Though it looks tiny or as if it were not there, or dead in the cold winter, when the spring comes, the seed would wake up to grow and cover all the ground in beautiful green. Likewise, the Minjung, the master of the heavenly Kingdom, although they might seem not to be existing or to be dead sometimes, will eventually prevail to assert its being as the master of history and society in the end. As a little mustard seed grows to become a big tree and provide shelter for birds, the Minjung, however small and nameless, would come to declare themselves the master of the world. All those rulers, elites, and dignitaries who are reigning as freely as the birds flying in the sky would inevitably come to be embraced in the bosom of the Minjung. As a matter of fact, it is those little things started by little people which make real changes in the world.

Those little wild flowers which are so elegant and beautiful seem to tell us to dedicate ourselves to the kingdom of heaven. You can see the glory and work of God, the Creator, in the bloom of an anonymous wild flower that was brought forth from a tiny grain of seed. Don't you think that the wild flower humbly blooming in a remote place is calling upon us to abandon all human greed, arrogance, hatred, falsehood, and violence and dedicate ourselves for justice and peace in the Kingdom of Heaven? The wild flower

conveys to us the word of God that we must come out of the life of killing, from falsehoods and hatreds, and return to mutual living. In the teachings of Jesus, the beauty of the wild flower is closely related with our faith in the grace and providence of God and our sound dedication for the justice of the Kingdom of Heaven.

### 3) Green Leaves and Human Reconciliation

In the Bible, the life of humans and the life of nature are inseparably combined together. Blessings and curses upon humans are the same as those uttered upon nature, and blessings and curses upon nature would be understood to be meant for humans. After the fall of Adam and Hawa the productivity of nature and soil came to be under curses and judgment. Farming is a hard backbreaking job. Even nature is getting worse through wars and injustice. Evil and injustice committed by people and social and political oppression and exploitation tend to turn human labor and natural life to waste and ruin farms.<sup>13</sup> However, God's blessings upon humans appear in the form of plentiful fruition of seed.<sup>14</sup> The seed seems to feel and respond to God and humans.<sup>15</sup>

“On that day I will answer, says the Lord, I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel” (Hos 2. 21 - 22)

According to Tagore, the poet, “Leaves of grass save humans.” In Genesis, the tree of life stands amid human life. In Chapter 22 of Revelation, it is said that the leaves of the tree of life heal the nations. Green leaves and seed are neither simple objects nor tools without subjectivity or consciousness, but are capable of feeling the joy of living and enjoying music as they are. They also seem to exude their joy of living in the realm of creative community. By reconciling self with green leaves and seed, humans might be able to enter God's Eden of life.

As the foundation of the world of life on the earth for millions and millions of years, the green leaves nursed and protected the world of life under their shelter. In spite of the fact that they grew under the same shelter, people have exploited, trampled down, and destroyed these mother - like green leaves for hundreds and hundreds of years. Human beings, senseless and degenerate, should repent before the green leaves and come into

their bosom. Human beings who are diseased of such malaises as ego - centric greed and paranoia must repent and go through death on the cross in order to come to reconcile themselves with the green leaves. Through this process the green leaves, too, would become free from the shadow of curses and judgments.

#### 4. The Seed that lives by Death.

##### 1) Faith and the Power of Life

The life of a seed is in common with that of the universe. There lies in “I” the Seed of Life of God.<sup>16</sup> Faith is the foundation and power of life. The Minjung who have nothing but body and soul live by their faith in their own life and the power of God. To believe in God is in no way to constrain “I”, but to liberate “I” to truth and love. “To believe in God .....is to surrender all the matters of life and death, failure and success to Her/Him so that we, as human beings, might work as fully as possible.”<sup>17</sup> Faith, subjectivity, and responsible activity are all one same thing.

Though different in being, God and “I” come to be one in the realm of faith. In this context, it may be said, “There is neither a subjective nor an objective in faith.”<sup>18</sup> We find God and “I” are in a paradoxical tension and accord at the same time. “When I become aware that the Absolute Being is far from me, far away to the end of the absolute limit, I, to my wonder, realize his Being in me. The absolutely farthest is the absolutely nearest.”<sup>19</sup> “When I become one with God within me, I feel an enormous amount of life power surging up in me. When I am directly related to God, I become the “HAN” (Great One) - the being of unlimited enormity, with whose straight axis as a lever, it might be possible to turn the whole Universe around.”<sup>20</sup>

When I am one with Jesus, a capacity of redemption and the power of salvation come forth in me. The source of all powers lies in believing that Jesus is the foundation of my life.<sup>21</sup> Because they carry within themselves the life of Jesus, the Minjung can produce power.

While the traditional theory of redemption tends to separate Jesus from “I”, the thought of seed joins “I” with Jesus in one. Unless you are identified with Jesus, you



would never be redeemed. No redemption is possible with the bloodshed of Jesus alone. It is necessary for me to shed my own blood for my redemption. It is for this reason that Ham Sok - Hon asked, "How could there be the blood of Jesus where there is no blood of you?"<sup>22</sup> There would be no Jesus where I am absent. No my blood, no Jesus' blood.

Jesus is he who is alive in me, and who becomes complete in me. He is the real seed of life. This is why Ham Sok - Hon says, "The Person of Jesus is still growing at this moment ... The history has been in the process of enhancing his Person all the time."<sup>23</sup> For him, Jesus is not an entity that died 2,000 years ago. Jesus, the incarnation of God who is living in the heart of every human, is the personified community of all the humankind.

## 2) A Grain of Seed That Drops into the Ground and Dies.

In the Gospel of John, 12. 24, we can find a description of the life and death of Jesus in the following words: "If it (a grain of wheat) does die, then it produces many grains." Jesus died just like that grain. His was a life of emptying himself of and casting away everything without reservation and completely burning himself in flames for his all - out fight. The cross was the natural consequence of his life and faith. The cross represents that he, until his death, emptied himself and abandoned his life. The fact that he was nailed to it through his hands and feet means that he entrusted himself to God totally.

The cross is an abyss of sins and death, that of curses, conflicts, and hatred, that of frustrations and naught. And also it is an abyss of failure and defeat, and of nothingness and meaninglessness. It is further an abyss of killing where guns and swords rule. It is a place that is reserved for the Minjung discarded down to the bottom of history and society. It is also the place where the flower of life blossomed in resurrection. And it is also where the Kingdom of God was opened to let each other live mutually.

Today's Minjung, too, are living in the abyss of the cross. They are living barely managing their daily load at the bottom of history and society. A boundless abyss lurks in their hearts. The disabled and now - aged comfort women are, because of their paranoia,

tormented by self - reproof, hatred, anger, inferiority complex, nothingness, and meaninglessness. Though fallen in the abyss of self - torment, outrages, and nothingness, the Minjung is doing their utmost to make their flowers of life blossom just like a grain of seed that brings forth a lotus out of the mud or beautiful wild flowers by the walls of a prison.

Life takes adventures at the risk of death. To win a new life - a bountiful life in the future - it is necessary for me to risk my life through adventures. Unlike clams and conches whose flesh is enclosed in bone - like substances, shut within hard shells, the fish, with their bones covered in flesh, evolved into mammals and human.<sup>24</sup> The seed puts forth a new life by breaking up and abandoning itself. By giving itself up for others to eat in the form of flowers and fruits, the seed lives on and expands widely. It also demonstrates the principle that I can live by giving up or abandoning myself and by letting others eat and live. The seed practices indeed the sharing principle of life. By submitting to the earth and its environment, the seed can produce bountiful lives. This principle of feminine submission is that of letting each other live. This is the principle of life professed by Jesus and the reality of the Minjung's life.

When the power that is stored in human beings clashes with the structural brute force of the existing systems and institutions, it is bound to be accompanied by suffering and sacrifice.<sup>25</sup> Suffering is the path to salvation and a principle of life. When I force affliction upon others in order to indulge myself in pleasure, the communal life of humankind would be destroyed and my soul would turn into evil things worse than beasts. Only when and if I carry all the burdens of suffering and hardship upon my own shoulder like Jesus, the community of love and peace would materialize and the soul would be sublimated high.

The pacifism of the Minjung who take voluntarily the path of suffering, that is, the path of the cross, is not a defeatism but is based on our optimistic trust in the history of humankind as well as universal life. All this is underlined by trust in the subjective capacity of the Minjung and in life itself, combined with religious conviction in God. It is also based upon the Christian faith in the resurrection, that the killing of me wouldn't end just in my death, but would continue to reproduce a whole new life and complement that whole life.

“If you cut me, a new shoot would come out there.”<sup>26</sup> As the seed makes a new life - flower by breaking up and dying, humans gain the force of new life through suffering and death.

The thought of denying and killing myself is in common with the oriental thought of Nothing and Abandonment. As from Nothingness (Emptiness) comes Great Compassion, and as true possession comes from abandonment, the killing of myself is the way of reaching a new life and carrying on in practice. When I throw myself away into death, that is, the abyss of Nothingness, there would be a new opening of my life and a new history. Suffering and death are intermeshed with the absolute affirmation of life.

The way of suffering and sacrificing is the way of forming a community by overcoming all the barriers between you and me. It is also the way of getting over to you in a real sense by getting rid of egoistic attachment. God works through my death to save the whole. Only when it breaks up itself and dies, the seed could join with the sunlight, water, soil, and wind. I could be united with all the creatures in the world - the universal life into one only by emptying and opening myself. Only then the seed could be fused into union with heaven and earth. And also, carrying the cross of history and society on their back, the Minjung would proceed towards the Sea of Life where they could join together with God, neighbors, and all the creatures on the earth.

Being the seed of life and rice for us, Jesus enters our blood and flesh. He is planted in our body and spirit as the seed of resurrecting life. To have faith in Jesus means to plant his seed of life in our life, in our flesh and blood. Faith is to make this seed of life sprout and grow.

### 3) The Spirituality of the Minjung Welling up from the Bottom

The whole earth has been integrated into the market economy system. The world is ruled by the philosophy and ethics oriented by greed, competition, and domination. Because of these, not only the ruling elites but also the life of the Minjung and children are polluted.<sup>27</sup>

How can we begin a new life and spirit of inter - living? Of course, we must begin with ourselves. As the seed first breaks itself up to make a new life sprout, there would be a new beginning of life when we break up ourselves. And also, then, the World of the Universal Life led by God and shared by our neighbors and all the creatures would open. The biblical teaching that I would be given righteousness only through my faith is in common with another biblical teaching that I would enjoy a prosperous life through the seed - like self - denial, self - emptying, and death. By breaking up and denying myself, I can make a new life come forth and prevail upon the evils of history and society as well as upon the power of sins and killing. In order to give rise to a new trend of inter - living by working around loopholes in the market economy system, there must rise in our spirit and life a wind of inter - living.

The spiritual wind for inter - living would rise up from the bottom. Those who wish to preserve the system of greed, competition, and domination would resist the new wind of change at all cost. The wind of new spirit and life will start to blow from those corners where such people live as those who, despite their being inured to and dependent upon the existing system, are so disillusioned at and fed up with the life of greed and competition, and so pained, alienated, and marginalized by it, that they have come to themselves to seek for the deep being of spirit.

Yes, it is true. Because of their deep sufferings and sorrows, and because of all those historical and social contradictions and conflicts, the Minjung is attracted by the union of the spirit with the universal life and by their experiences with their heart and body. It is true that they are closer to the religious world of bountiful spirit and the world of faith and grace. Today, there is no mistaking that the deep spirituality and the religious vitality are being tempered and gushing out from among the Minjung who are impoverished and marginalized, among those citizens who are displaced in highly developed industrial societies, who are feeling insecure within the industrialized and mechanized system and within the structure of domination and exploitation, and who find the principle and system of greed and competition intolerable.

Come, Creator Spiritus! Break up the chains of society, rise up Dalits and  
Minjung for Inter - Living!