

Justice and Faith, a Panentheistic Reflection on Experiences of Minjung and Dalit¹⁾

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Introduction

Is justice a mere illusion or a promise in vain? A psalmist cries, “How long must I bear pain in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” (Ps. 13:2) Why is the psalmist lamentation ceaselessly ringing through the history although there are numerous promises of God’s justice? We listen to such outcries today also in the sigh and despair of minjung, dalit, and those in other names over the world. How can Christian theology be responsible to them?

This paper is to discuss a possible way to speak of justice that illuminates the experience of the oppressed. Keeping within the legacy of minjung theology, this paper adapts panentheism as a more refined theistic lens to develop the theological tradition. The panentheistic approach is needed to break up the ill marriage of Asian political theology with the traditional super-naturalistic theism, a transcendental deism that is now unbelievable and too bad to believe. In this paper, panentheism comes to be a way of radical ‘dissenting’ from ‘the root cause’ of numerous misunderstandings in biblical interpretations and doing contextual theologies.

Panentheism and its non-dualistic ideas are not only used for interpreting social phenomena but also for establishing a theory of subject in faith. Especially, the issue of justice must be approached from the perspective of the oppressed and further to seek a way of establishing the oppressed as the subject of their own destiny. In that point, Christian faith takes its role. This paper first interprets the issue of justice from below and discusses biblical and theological schemes in which justice is related to faith. Then, the role of faith is explained as the establishment of the subject, a subject whose justice is based on discernment and spirituality.

Two faces of Justice, Law or Faith?

Korean society has been seething with sorrow for the past two and a half years from the tragedy that three hundred and four passengers of Sewol ferry were buried in the near sea on April 16, 2014. Still, we don’t know the reason why the ferry was only allowed to take off into the thick foggy night and sank with all suspicions, and why the government disturbed the rescue and manipulated the

1) This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government. (NRF-2013S1A5B5A02028955).

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mass media. Nothing has been disclosed for the truth in spite of all kinds of truth-seeking protests of the bereaved families and co-workers. Meanwhile, the people could learn an important truth. The government desperately concealed the facts and thereby revealed a bigger truth that the hiding must be its fate. However, the distress of the society is located in a deeper level. The truth was not only veiled by the government's hidings but also needed not to be spoken out because the truth is much close to the dominating atmosphere of the society in which people voluntarily submit themselves to the transparent lies of the government.

The ferry tragedy was not a one-time accident. It exposes the terminus ad quem of the society, a society whose blessings necessarily involves the death of the weaker. Therefore, we understand the accident as an indicator of the current civilization. It reveals the social grammar and the institutionalized culture of our time. Our culture of neo-liberalism misguides the way of life, drives people into unrest and horror, and distorts the spirit of truth and justice. Its grammar interprets greed as alright and diffuses the inhumane air in which the poor only deserves contempt or pity. We have seen after the tragedy a clear evidence of the spiritual death, a politics of hate that successfully removed the national wave of mourning. With the help of this social atmosphere, the government attempted to appease the bereaved families with the compensation money and at the same time to imprison sympathetic participants in the protest of the sad families. That is the way that the social grammar rules as the law, a law that works like a judge of social justice.

As the neo-liberalism took roots in all social areas for the past three decades, the Korean church has been rapidly degraded in losing the spirituality of honest poverty, the power of consolation, and the creative transformation. As a result, religious illiteracy was internalized in the church. After the ferry tragedy, most Protestant churches did not console the people of sorrow and remained as a wholesale market for the gospel of prosperity. Their message is much similar to the social grammar itself so that the preached messiah is no more than an incarnation of greed and desire of neo-liberalism. God is dead in the churches in which the social grammar is replaced with a divine promise. Indeed, God is dead since the faith community cannot witness to the mercy and creativity of God any more.

Meanwhile, some conservative pastors organized prayer rallies in order to mobilize the religious flattery to the government. A prominent Presbyterian pastor addressed a notorious speech, "God sacrificed the students by sinking the ferry in order to provide Korean people with a chance to repent."³⁾

What an insane god greedy for hundreds of innocent sacrifice! His god must be a

3) He is the former moderator of PCK, the largest Presbyterian denomination in Korea and the chair of the Hosting Committee of the 10thWCCGeneralAssemblyin2013.

captive of the social grammar and function as the sanctioner of the law. The divine justice in this case is a merely religious interpretation of the dominating social grammar.

However, there was another religious voice. Choi Soon-Hwa, mother of a high school student victim in the ferry tragedy, spoke painfully: "Someone said 'this is the will of God.' I don't ever think of it like that. Yet, I as a Christian have an assignment to solve why my son had his untimely death. This must be my own task to get an answer before God.⁴) She criticized the mainline churches, rejected their theology, and sought a new answer like Job. Divine justice still remains totally hidden for her who 'scraped herself with a piece of broken pottery among the ashes.' Then, who can be a company on her pilgrimage that could arrive at divine justice only through faith? What kind of theology can guide it to the place of justice where she would say, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you?" (Job 42:5)

Here, we see two kinds of justice in religious thinking. The one is justice in law that is apparently working as the social grammar. Everyone in a society is destined not to be free from the judgment of the law. Justice in law works for the maintenance of status quo, and therefore to be just is to follow the social grammar and to preserve the law. Justice in law would be named as justice for the purpose of control. The other is justice in faith that is often hidden and even suppressed by the prevailing justice in law. It is motivated only by/in faith that can imagine the world beyond the present order. It is activated in the place where the social grammar becomes broken up. The justice in faith works like fantasy that goes through the present without evidential realities. The evidence for this justice is only within the heart of the person in faith. Justice in faith is requested justice of the oppressed for dreaming in resistance. Now, we'd rather clarify the distinction between justice in law and justice in faith and inquire the different nature and function of the two.

Biblical Justice and Theological Reflections

We can see many passages in the bible that describe the nature of God as justice. Hebrew words *mišpāt* and *tsēdāqāh* are translated into justice and righteousness, and the Greek word *dikaiosunē* has the same meaning. All of these words indicate the main characteristic of God and the Christ and therefore imply the request of faith toward justice. The biblical justice is primarily linked with the nature and pathos of God/Christ, not with a human virtue or social programs. The understanding of the nature of God as justice can be the basic capacity for the biblical faith communities to overcome historical limits of tribalism and nationalism. The idea of justice appears in covenantal accounts and Deuteronomy,

4) The Document Group of the Sewol Ferry Tragedy, *Come Back on Friday* (Seoul: Changbi, 2015), 140.

and yet its full-fledged meaning is discovered by prophets who sought redemption by justice, not by national belongingness. Now, "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her penitents with righteousness" (Is 1:27).

This redemptive justice cannot be displaced by the retributive justice with its compensatory theory but oriented to the grace of God given to the whole creation. So, the biblical justice toward the divine grace is always more than the distributive justice. Rather, it has something related to what can be revealed only by faith. Paul, once a Pharisee, man of law, turns to be a most sensible person in the bible to this matter and declares, "The justice of God is revealed by faith to faith: as it is written, 'The man of justice will live by faith'" (Rom 1:17).

Paul's understanding of God's justice is not a simple conviction of the divine law, a law that must go through the world by divine omnipotence. Rather, God's justice is hidden in the present order which has been domesticated by the social grammar, the caste system of the time. The grammar creates all kinds of discrimination between Jews and Gentiles, masters and slaves, and men and women, and furthermore sharply demarcates the religious community into Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews, and Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. The discrimination admits legal exploitation of the weaker, and the demarcation screws up the creative experiment for a new kind of human relationship (*koinonia*) in the early Christian community (Gal 2:11-14). How can we overcome the sinful order that has been structured by the law? This is the Paul's main question to his time.⁵⁾ The answer is not simple because the person who seeks to overcome the sinful order is also the wretched man who is brought into the "captivity to the law of sin" (Rom 7:23).

The complexity of the biblical justice needs further explanations of the contrast between law and faith. For Paul, law (*nomos*) is not sin but holy in itself (Rom 7:7,12). However, the law's commandment (*entolēs*) gives an opportunity for sin to produce all kinds of covetousness (Rom 7:8). The law becomes the instrument through which sin could live and construct the order of death. Then, the world is governed by sin when the covetousness operates like the order working with various social grammars. As we live along with the law, so we cannot avoid the order of death. Here, we can find Paul's revolutionary idea. People usually think that the world can be the place of justice when there is no law-breaker and everyone observes the law. According to Paul, it is totally illusory. That life is only a slavery of the law which is the death of life. That is, "the death of life is the Self (in the position of the dead). The life of death is sin."⁶⁾

5) Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary behind the Church's Conservative Icon*, trans. by Kim Joon-woo (Seoul: Korean Institute of the Christian Studies, 2010), 215.

6) Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. by Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 82.

Therefore, justice is not protected by law-keepers but created by people of faith who cross over the world of the law. Unless people of faith appear, law's commandments—social grammars—continue to rule the world of sin in which the weaker always suffer as a prey, and people sigh, 'This is the law of our time!' Faith must neither be assent to certain religious creeds nor agreement with the moral codes of the (religious) law. Faith is primarily to see both the dead self—a slave of law—and living sin, which controls the life of death inside/outside the self. People of faith are the person who realizes "the powerful paradox in this disjunction between (dead) self and (living) sin"⁷⁾and cry,

"Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24) People of faith, however, do not remain in pessimistic crying with the reiterating Christian mantra, 'we are sinners!' They imagine the entirely new life that is freed from the law of death/sin by the law of the Spirit of life in the Christ (Rom 8:2). This imagination can make the people of faith a new 'subject' who abides within the love of Christ and therefore can cope with "hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword in the struggle for the justice of the Christ" (Rom 8:35). They are a new subject, the witness to the coming Kingdom (*basileia*).

Now, we can contend that the biblical justice is justice in faith, not justice in law. The law makes a subject dead so that a self subjugates oneself to the legal structure. The self under the law lives along with the automated structure of sin. Justice in law is a kind of social grammar for the self under the law, a grammar that maintains the order of sin. By contrast, faith creates a new subject who participates in the life of the Christ by the grace of God. Justification is not a magical transfiguration but a conscious subjectivization that is to escape from the dominion of the law of sin. Justice in faith, therefore, is the biblical justice that discloses the justice of God to people of faith, and that empowers them to participate in the justice of the Savior Jesus the Christ (2Pet 1:1).

Failure of Modern Theodicy and Panentheism as Alternative

The tragedy of modern Christian theology lies in its historical failure that resulted in the emergence of atheistic secularism in/after the mid 19th century. The atheism, represented by K. Marx in social science, C. Darwin in natural science, F. Nietzsche in philosophy and S. Freud in psychoanalysis, is different from the previous one. While the previous atheism is usually a named atheism, still a theism anathematized by orthodoxy, the atheism in 19th century is close to a total negation of theistic speculation itself. The atheistic mood has been prevailing over the present secular institution and culture, including most scholarship in university.

7) Ibid., 82-3.

One of the main reasons of the theological failure is its ill-oriented theodicy in which God takes the role of justice in law, rather than of justice in faith. In the modern theology, God is described as the law-maker who created the world with omnipotence. Therefore, all happenings in the world would be understood as those willed by God. Perhaps, such an idea stems from the theological context in the mid second century in which Christian church was massively challenged by Marcionism.⁸⁾ A more recent root must be the reformers' idea of divine sovereignty that is explained with the doctrine of predestinarianism. Modern scientists, who cherished religious passion to know God in scrutinizing the law of the world, i.e. Isaac Newton, successfully translated the theological idea with scientific language and established a modern worldview, theistic mechanism that God made the world like a machine. The scientific mechanism is perfectly matched with the theological idea of deistic supernaturalism. Both of them understand God as the law-maker. The modern interpretations of God resulted in the loss of the biblical justice and distorted the logic of theodicy. Whereas the biblical idea of God of justice is toward the coming basileia with the radical transformation of this world, the modern understanding of the divine justice is to maintain status quo because it is sanctioned by God. The modern theodicy, which is based on deistic supernaturalism, removed creative elements from Christian theology and regressed to the lawful system as if Pharisees in the first century applied the Moses law. Its formal logic proceeds as following: (1) God created this world with omnipotence. (2) This world is exactly created by God's will and moved by God's law. Therefore, (3) the present authorities are God's beloved to be elected to keep status quo by God's law. Such a process of formal logic produced a theology for rulers, and then all resistant theories had to be opposite to it. At last, God of modern theology did not listen to 'the outcry of the afflicted' (Deut. 26:7).

Later Christian theology has a task to reformulate the idea of God of justice, as Paul attempted to rehabilitate the biblical justice against the Pharisee's legalism. The essential part of this task is to shape again the portrait of God so as to transmit the biblical heritage that God is of people of margin so that God's justice cannot be seen but only through faith. For example, Dhyanchand Carr portrays God as "Dissent Provoking God" and applies a strategy of biblical hermeneutics that starts with "dissenting from the traditional understanding of God which is the root cause of many misunderstanding about the Gospel."⁹⁾ Frederick W. Schmidt observes 'the changing face of God' from the omnipotent controller to the 'God of imaginative compassion' (Karen Armstrong), to the 'God who is spirit' (Marcus J. Borg), to 'the God of the color of suffering' (James H. Cone), and even to the God who needs our salvation (Andrew Sung Park). Schmidt speaks of these changes as

8) David Ray Griffin, *Two Great Truths: A New Synthesis of Scientific Naturalism and Christian Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004) [Korean Translation], 32.

9) Dhyanchand Carr, *Gospel Through Dissent* (Madurai: Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, 2010), 1, 3.

“the paradigm tester” that show the direction of the contemporary theologies.¹⁰⁾

Most of these theological enterprises aim at rediscovering the God of justice, ‘Jesus’ Abba,’ who cannot be portrayed by prevailing deistic supernaturalism.¹¹⁾ Among those theologies for rediscovery of God, a theology of panentheism looks strongest. Despite the variety of concerns and ideas, panentheism has a thoroughgoing project to reformulate the concept of God “in order that love and justice in the cosmos might be more fulfilled.” Also, its moral potential has a great “affinity with liberation theologies.”¹²⁾ One of the most brilliant definitions of panentheism is suggested by Elizabeth Johnson:

If theism weights the scales in the direction of divine transcendence and pantheism overmuch in the direction of immanence, panentheism attempts to hold onto both in full strength. Divine transcendence is a wholeness that includes all parts, embracing the world rather than excluding it, as the etymology of panentheism, ‘all-in-God,’ suggests, while divine immanence is given as the world’s inmost dynamism and goal. Transcendence and immanence are correlative rather than opposed. At root this notion is guided by an incarnational and sacramental imagination that eschews any fundamental competition between God and the world in favor of the power of mutually enhancing relation.¹³⁾

However, traditional theists often contend that panentheism is too philosophical to fit into a Christian belief system. Especially, Protestant theologians have such shaded bias. It may be because Protestant theology began to arise “in antipathy to the natural theology of medieval scholastic and speculative thought—and so to all mystical cosmology.”¹⁴⁾ According to Catherine Keller, however, various panentheistic ideas have filled the history of Christian theology whose classical form is found in Irenaeus’ works in the late 2nd century.¹⁵⁾

Above all, panentheistic discussions are highly required for Asian contextual theology, one of whose tasks is to decouple itself from dualistic western theologies and to place itself into the deep tradition of Asian non-dualism. A pioneer of minjung theology, Ahn Byung-mu, was sensible to the deep relation of the theological dualism to its ideological function as oppressive. He says,

10) Frederick W. Schmidt, ed., *The Changing Face of God* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 7.

11) John B. Cobb, Jr., *Jesus’ Abba: The God Who Has Not Failed* (Minneapolis, PA: Fortress Press, 2015), viii.

12) Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, eds., *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God’s Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 14-15.

13) Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 231.

14) Lorilai Biernacki and Philip Clayton, eds., *Panentheism Across the World’s Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 73.

15) *Ibid.*, 67.

This [individualistic/dualistic] theism is based on an outdated worldview that blesses winner and rich, which admits the ideological equation of power and truth. According to this theism, God is on the side of winner and rich. God is not working inside history but staying outside as a supernatural producer of the drama of human history. Such theism is directly opposed to our faith of incarnation that 'the Word became flesh and lived among us.'¹⁶⁾

Ahn developed an alternative idea of 'event' with "an honest examination to accept eastern thoughts."¹⁷⁾ His theology of event is a criticism of the traditional way of hermeneutic quest for the personhood (divine substance) of Jesus, which is totally separated from the life of minjung. Instead, he declares 'Jesus is an event' and 'God is also event' by which he develops minjung theology as a theology of relation or a theology of event, a theology that could relate Jesus events in the Bible with the present minjung events.¹⁸⁾ The theology of event is the outcome of "the hermeneutic revolution in the process of exodus from western theology."¹⁹⁾ The hermeneutic revolution contains five elements: (1) the reversed perspective from below in interpretation of historical event and God's revelation from sufferer's sight. (2) Emphasis on event-ness to make a proper response to Logos theology with an attention to historical dynamics. (3) Resolution of subject-object schematization that is a root cause of separating God from history and nature and thereby justifying any oppressive structure. (4) Elimination of dualism in theological speculations. (5) Affirmation of communality in investigation of the related nature of things and participation in praxis.

Ahn's theology of event is a kind of full-fledged panentheistic ideas that criticizes all kinds of deistic dualism and suggests a changed image of God. Instead of contemplating the divine individuality (substance), he seeks God's events in relation to the world, especially to the suffering of minjung. When a theology begins with a question of God's relatedness to the world, the answer would be much different from the conclusion of modern theology in which God is the law-maker and therefore the sanctioner of status quo. How can our theology respond to the quest of minjung and dalit for justice? Panentheism could be alternative or at least helpful to reveal the panentheistic world in which minjung and dalit are suffering and yet do not lose for justice in faith. While deistic supernaturalism fits to justice in law, panentheism can work for justice in faith.

Justice and Discernment for the Postmodern Subject

The problem of justice issue lies in the nature of philosophy itself whose primary task is to measure the measures. In terms of justice, who can make a criterion for

16) Byung-mu Ahn, *Jesus with Us* (Chun-an: Institute for Korean Theology, 1997), 229.

17) Byung-mu Ahn, *Minjung and Bible* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1993), 235.

18) Byung-mu Ahn, *Talks on Minjung Theology* (Chun-an: Institute for Korean Theology, 1990), 25-26.

19) Byung-mu Ahn, *Minjung and Bible*, 220-28.

determining what justice is, and how? Hans Kelsen, called the father of the Constitutional Court, contends that the conflict of interests is hardly resolved by a method of conscious rationality that would grade the value of each interest.²⁰⁾ It is not only the difficulty to make a standard for measuring but a question about the rational ground of our belief in that of which we think as just. With this basic problem, most of the postmodern theories inclined in relativism suffer from skeptical impulse, which springs from the awareness that our beliefs are not based on firm grounds which guarantee their success. Therefore, every search for justice needs discernment in order to endeavor truth-seeking in the philosophical air of relativization of all truths.

Discernment is necessary as the postmodern task of establishing the oppressed and the poor as the subject who carries its own destiny. Minjung theology has had a pristine belief that 'minjung is the subject of history.' But how could they be the subject? Indeed, poverty is inscribed on their body and therefore their physicality must be an undeniable stigma for justice. However, justice does not automatically appear because it cannot be 'owned' by a social group but must be only 'practiced.' After the Una atrocity in July, 11, 2016,²¹⁾ Martin Macwan, who founded the Navsarjan Trust in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in 1988 to fight against the social and economic exploitation of dalits, had a question in an interview as following, Mass grassroots protests seem best to demand change. What are the obstructions that prevent dalits from uniting in action? Martin replied that from my experience, I would say that in any social movement, especially that of dismantling caste, fear followed by internalisation of the oppressive ideology are the major obstructions; they demand very long-term work towards organizing the community. It is not that the people who are exploited do not know the law.²²⁾ Political idea cannot guarantee direct protest against the law, and social analysis itself comes often to be the reason for the oppressed to subjugate themselves into despair.

Minjung theology also had to suffer from the anxious fact that the subjectivity of minjung cannot be automated by poverty itself. Poverty in reality is no more than darkness in which history walks lame. Our concern is discernment with which the

20) Hans Kelsen, *Was ist Gerechtigkeit*, trans. by Seonbok Kim (Seoul: Book and People, 2010), 14.

21) "Gujarat has a history of atrocities against Dalits," *The Hindu*, July 21, 2016. According to this article, there was a public flogging of a group of dalits who were skinning a dead cow in Mota Samadhiyala, a village near Una town in Saurashtra region on July 11, 2016. Four of them were brutally beaten with steel pipes and iron rods, stripped, tied to an SUV and paraded in the main market in Una, where the local police station is near, by members of local cow vigilante group (cow protection committee). The flogging was filmed, posted on Facebook as warning to other dalits. The video went viral, filling the community with anger and led to an eruption of protests across the State in which more than 20 attempted suicides, dozens of vehicles were torched or vandalized, highways blocked and one policeman died of injuries sustained during stone-pelting. What transpired at Una was only the latest atrocity on the Scheduled Castes, which form around 7.5 percent of the population in the State.

22) Vaishna Roy, "Dialogue: Stage has been set for negotiating," *The Hindu*, July 31, 2016.

subject can arise out of the darkness. Poverty does not refer only to economic destitution. It also stands for discrimination, oppression, contempt, wretchedness, misfortune, and all agonies from which minjung and dalit are suffering. The subject is the one who reflects and resists the poverty. The reflection and resistance are possible through the active affirmation of her/his being in any state and therefore could establish her/him as the subject.

Poverty was interpreted as a mark for exploitation of the poor as the object. However, it must be reinterpreted as the subjective deconstruction of the death as 'the poor in the spirit' (Mt 5:3) is the person who defeats the horror instilled by the unjust world. One of the great fallacies in Christian philosophy is its interpretation of poverty as the object of charity.²³⁾ Because of such interpretation, there cannot be a way of interpreting the poor as the subject for justice. We need to rediscover the subjectivity of faith for the postmodern search for justice. The subjectivity does not mean individualist self-reliance. It is subjectivity of faith that puts up with the *tribulation* of this world in *perseverance* and establishes *character* to be able to *hope* toward *basileia* (Rom 5:3-4). Faith declares subjectivity towards justice and peace.

How can we witness and proclaim the subjectivity of faith? This question calls for the theological and spiritual discernment about the theistic logic and the function of faith. While the neo-liberalistic globalization plundered every corner of the world, Christian churches in Korea suffered from the inside temptation to utilize a religious strategy of 'cheap grace' with a vulgarized theology for the gospel of prosperity. Most churches are used to selling complacent prescriptions for blessing, and religious folks addicted to it seem in the slavery of the law. The function of their faith performs to de-subjectivize themselves and to repeat the old repertoire of the bad theistic logic, "Though your beginning was small, and yet your latter end would increase abundantly" (Job 8:7), by which Bildad criticizes the unbelief of his agonizing friend Job. Such faith totally loses a proper sense of justice. How can the subjectivity of faith be redeemed?

A postmodern subject needs a new logic of faith. The logic is buttressed by the panentheistic worldview that comprehends together at the same time both of the wretchedness of the world and the divine anguish at its predicament, and of the strife of faith and the divine empowerment.²⁴⁾ Also, the logic should nourish the newer subjectivity of faith by weaving religious mysticism with political self-consciousness. Christian faith is paradoxical in itself and therefore requires discernment in its nature. A subject in faith is a paradoxical being who makes him/herself a slave in order to be free, and who could attain freedom from any law by obeying the promise of faith (1Cor 9:19, Gal 5:13). The faith of the subject

23) Antonio Negri, *Time for Revolution*, trans. by Chung Nam-young (Seoul: galmuri, 2003), 161.

24) Hiheon Kim, "Political Panentheism for a Liberative Logic of Faith in the Postmodern Era," *Madang*, vol. 22 (Dec. 2014), 49-66.

is not an accomplishment by 'flesh and blood' (1Cor 15:50) but 'the gift of God' through the moment of *kairos* (Eph 2:8).

A postmodern subject in faith does not generate out of self-awareness but is born in/through messianic experiences. Messiah is a being who inscribes a kairotic moment of creation in/between the chasm of chronological successions. A messiah, the anointed, is the paradoxical being who receives the redemption of God (Hab 3:13) and at the same time redeems the world. The messiah is much closer to 'the just living by faith (emunah)' (Hab 2:4) than to a supernatural hero. With the help of the non-dualistic idea of minjung messiah, a doctrine of minjung theology that claims 'minjung is messiah,' the subject in faith can be acknowledged as the one who takes the messianic role in history. The subject endures all tribulations in hope and reveals the messianic in history by creating a new way of life, peace, and justice. This messianic structure needs a theological discernment, which cannot be attained with dualistic concepts of theological supernaturalism.

Concluding Remarks: Justice and Spirituality from Below

Christian faith is congenial to the spirituality of minjung/dalit that works from below. Another pioneer of minjung theology, Suh Nam-dong, spoke of the basic mission of minjung theology as following,

The distinctiveness at the starting point of Christianity is Jesus' mission for Galilean minjung. Which kind of place is Galilee? The peasants make all their efforts for farming, but their harvest is taken off by landowners in Jerusalem. Farming is distressing for all ages. Deprived of all labored products is farming. Christianity began from such a distressed place with the proclamation of the kingdom of God at hand. However, Christianity have erased or concealed the fact, which is reprehensible. Minjung theology is not a kind of theology that attempts to elaborate special things. It is simply honest to emphasize the Christian origin. That is, Jesus' minjung mission in Galilee is the essence of Christianity as well as its starting point!²⁵⁾

Minjung theology draws attention to the historical movement of the oppressed lest the voice of justice degenerates into stagnated demands. It contends that the ultimate rationality of any justice claim depends upon the capacity of proposal meaningful to the suffering of the oppressed. For minjung theology, justice is not the law-keeping management in status quo but a movement to participate in the coming Kingdom of God. Justice seems dangerous blasphemy to all idols of power because it mocks the hypocrisy of the established order. Justice knows the limit of existence and the tragic reality in life and nevertheless shakes off all doubts and skepticism to resist and to create.

Justice is not obviously self-evidential. How to see determines what to be seen.

25) Nam-dong Suh, *A Search for Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1983), 259.

This paper suggests that justice must be sought with spirituality from below in order to find a way that lamentations of the oppressed could revive into resistance, not resulting in obedience. Also, the spirituality from below encourages the duty of faith communities to refuse the neutralist immobility with silence before the reality of social injustice. The spirituality from below arouses discernment in listening to Jesus' invitation to the narrow road. One of the unaffected truths in Christian messages is to join the suffering for the gospel (2Tim 1:8). The spirituality from below makes possible the solidarity of suffering by which Christian faith community could testify its truth for justice.

Abstract

This paper discusses a possible way to speak of justice that illuminates painful experiences of the oppressed. Within the legacy of minjung theology, this paper adapts panentheism as a more refined theistic lens to develop the theological tradition. The panentheistic approach is needed to break up the ill marriage of Asian political theology with the traditional super-naturalistic theism, a transcendental deism that is now unbelievable and too bad to believe. In this paper, panentheism comes to be a way of radical 'dissenting' from 'the root cause' of numerous misunderstandings in biblical interpretations and doing contextual theologies. In this paper, panentheism and its non-dualistic ideas are not only used for interpreting social phenomena but also for establishing a theory of subject in faith. Especially, the issue of justice must be approached from the perspective of the oppressed and further to seek a way of establishing the oppressed as the subject of their own destiny. In that point, Christian faith takes its role. This paper first interprets the issue of justice from below and discusses biblical and theological schemes in which justice is related to faith. Then, the role of faith is explained as the establishment of the subject, a subject whose justice is based on discernment and spirituality.

Keywords: Korean Theology, Panentheism, Justice, Sewol Ferry Accident, Discernment.

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