

## The Origin, History and Future of Minjung Theology: An Outline

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The Minjung Theology in Korea has complex and multiple roots what are integrated in the “Socio-Zoography<sup>1</sup> of the Minjung” in the history on earth. The emergence of the Minjung theology in 1970’s in Korea was only a tiny moment in history. We shall trace its immediate background in this essay.

### I. Immediate Historical Roots

In 1960’s and 70’s the modernization and development took a central and accelerated process in the history of Asia and in

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1 Zoography is a neologism to represent the story of living subjects in the cosmic framework, not merely human social framework.

the south of the earth. The modern elites and development dictatorships<sup>2</sup> were ruling powers that governed the people, the Minjung. The Korean people were suffering under the military dictatorship, which assumed the “political messiahship” to save the people from the poverty and from the communism.<sup>3</sup>

An ecumenical community has risen in the context of the struggle of the Korean Minjung against the military dictatorship and for their socio-economic justice and political participation in 1970’s. The term, “Minjung” and “Minjung Theology”

In October, 1979 an ecumenical consultation on the Theology of the People of God was called jointly by Korean National Council of Churches and Christian Conference of Asia in Seoul, Korea. This led to a publication of “Minjung Theology” in English. This meant that the ecumenical community has worked for Minjung Theology in the midst of the struggle of the Korean Minjung.

### **Social Context**

Poor industrial workers, poor rural peasants, urban poor and the politically oppressed constituted the Minjung in Korea. Women Minjung represented the reality of the suffering at the bottom.<sup>4</sup> The Minjung theological reflection emerged in the Minjung Movement, struggling against the oppressive dictatorship. The fronts of the movement were the Industrial Mission, Rural Mission, Urban Mission, Student Christian

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2 Many identified the military as modernizing elite, who took an agent of economic development in the so-called third world countries such as Brazil, Nigeria, Indonesia and South Korea.

3 Park Jung-hee is a representative of the military dictators in the third world, who carried out military dictatorship with the sponsorship of the US.

4 Lee Mi-Kyung, Son Duk-Soo, and Lee Hyo Jae did research on the Women Minjung in 1970’s. These researches were done in association with the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development.

Movement and the ecumenical movement of Church Women.<sup>5</sup> These movements and actions against injustice, exploitation and oppression provided the actual context of the Minjung theological reflection. Here the Minjung is understood primarily in socio-economic terms. This remained so throughout the development of the Minjung theology.

### **Biblical Roots**

One of the first moments in the Minjung theology is the discovery of the biblical message in such a context. One of the examples is as follows: When the UIM ministers began to read the Bible with the workers, the traditional and dogmatic messages of the Bible such as the doctrines of God, Salvation, and the Pneumatology did not make sense to the suffering workers. But one day a worker found that Jesus was a worker like himself. "Jesus was the worker." This workers fresh discovery led to a Minjung theological statement that Jesus is Minjung. This is the foundational statement of the Minjung theology.

### **The program of reading the Bible with eyes of the Minjung is the major**

Development of the Minjung Biblical hermeneutics.<sup>6</sup> The discovery of Jesus the worker by the Korean workers may not be regarded as extraordinary; but it provided a tremendous spiritual power among the workers. The worker and martyr, Mr. Chun Tae Il, who protested against injustice to the fellow workers with his death, made an important presence in the hearts of the Korean

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5 Lee Hyung Sook, History of Church Women United In Korea, ??)

6 Ahn Byung Moo (Notion of Ochlos) and Kim Chan Guk(Notion of Habiru) are first Minjung Biblical Scholars among many.

workers and of the theologians. Jesus would be a worker, who resisted the power of oppression with his death.

The Exodus tradition, the Jubilee tradition, the prophetic traditions and the messianic traditions in the Bible provided rich references for the Minjung biblical Hermeneutics. I have reflected on Jesus the Messiah of the Minjung against the powers and principalities in this connection.

### **Historical Roots**

The Minjung theological perspective has begun to reread the Korean history as a history of the Minjung and the Minjung Movement, just as MJ theology is rooted in the movement of the people in the contemporary situation. The most clear historical reference, which the Minjung theology picked up, was the Tonghak Peasant Movement in the latter half of 19th century.<sup>7</sup> The second reference is the historic March First Independence Movement in 1919 against the Japanese Colonial Empire. In these historical reflections there emerged a clear thought that the Minjung is the subject (protagonist) of history. This is a contrasting view to the notion that the history is made by the kings and the powerful class.

In the interpretation of history the story of the Minjung (social biography) in contrast to the domination of the principalities and powers over the people is the main substance that gives the meaning of history. The social and political history is reinterpreted in the light of the suffering of the people. This view is history has been closely interacting with Korean historians such as Chung Chang Yol and Lee Ki Paik (New Theory of Korean History).

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<sup>7</sup> It is a similar movement to the T'ai ping Movement of the Heavenly Kingdom (1850-60) in China.

Naturally in this context of historical thinking, the history of Korean Christianity is interpreted as a part of the Minjung history. Lee Man Yol and Chu Jae Yong are representing this view. Korean Christian religion has participated in the Minjung movement; and it has departed from the established religion of the Empire and Western Colonial Powers. This is a central conviction of the Minjung theology.

### Religious Roots

The experience of the Minjung under the oppression of the powers and principalities has a dimension of religious depth at its center. Elimination of the ultimate or religious from the experience of the Minjung is an error of modern rationality, which also degrades the religious dimension of experience of life.

Korean Minjung theology discovers the dynamics of religions in the struggle and hope of the Minjung, which provides the vision and energy of historical and cosmic transformation.<sup>8</sup> The Tonghak movement is fundamentally a religious movement as well as social struggle. Tonghak incorporates the dimension of the Minjung Confucianism, the Minjung Buddhism, the Minjung Taoism, the Minjung Shamanism and other religious elements. This requires the Minjung theologians to investigate the religious wisdom of the Minjung, which dismantles or transforms the established religions into the Minjung religion.

In the experiences of the Minjung the religious experience is a central core of their story. There is a possibility of creative meeting of religious horizons at the center of the movement of

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8 The March First Independence Movement, 1919, is also fundamentally a religious movement, which has roots in the Minjung tradition of established religions as well as the Minjung religions themselves.

transformation, historical and comic, of life. The Minjung theology cannot be carried out without investigation and recovery of the Minjung religious wisdom.

### **Cultural Roots**

It is not difficult to take the culture of the Minjung as a key element of the Minjung theological resources. Korean Mask dance – Talchum- has been taken as an important theological resource. Prof. Hyun Young Hak, an original Minjung theologian, discovered a dynamics of critical transcendence, that is, a religious dynamics, in the Korean Talchum.<sup>9</sup>

The Minjung painting,<sup>10</sup> the Minjung music and the literary writings, which express the “HAN”<sup>11</sup> of the Minjung, suffering under the oppressive powers, is taken by Minjung Theologians. The late Prof. Suh Nam Dong has developed a theology of “HAN”, taking the theme from various literary writings of the Korean poems and novels. The religion is to resolve the “HAN” of the Minjung, which also become the source of the revolutionary energy for cosmic and historical transformation of life. The narrative, literary or oral, of the life, suffering, struggle and hope of the people has become basic resources for the Minjung therology. In a way the Bible is the narrative of the life of the Minjung, and, therefore, it is easily “fused” with the story of the Minjung.

### **Social History, Social Biography, and Social Analysis**

We have stated that the social biography of the Minjung has

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9 “Theological look at the Korean Mask Dance” in Minjung Theology, CCA-CTC, 1980.

10 Hong Sung Dam and Lee Chul Soo are representative Minjung artists.

11 A deep sense of resistance feeling against injustice done.

been accepted as a way to understand the reality of the Minjung. It is based upon the subjective grasp of the reality of suffering and hope. The Minjung is the subjective self (Juche) who tells their own story. Social biography is like a drama. The Minjung is the protagonist and the powers that be are the antagonist. The Minjung suffer and struggle against the powers that be to envision a new future and act out their vision in the stage of history on earth.

Social history is a history of social relations in a society. It is about the society as a whole. Social historian seeks to clarify the objective reality of social process among the social groups and classes. Social biography is a subjective grasp of the social history, while social history is an objective description of a society in time. Social biography is closely related to social history. Sociology is closely related to social history, and, in fact, it rises out of social historical study.

In the development of the Minjung theology there has been an intense debate in regard to the role of social analysis. Social analysis is sociological and objective method to understand the social structure and relations in the society, whereas social biography is the subjective and experience side of the reality of the Minjung. Social biography seeks to grasp a comprehensive and experiential depth of social reality of the Minjung. Social analysis can be said to be an abstraction of social reality in a framework of objectivity. Thus, social biography is prior to social analysis; it cannot be completely reduced to scientific objectivity. The social biography is a story of whole experience of the Minjung, which contains the religious, cultural, and perceptual dimensions and it cannot be reduced to an objective abstract, and it cannot be

dictated by the historical or social theories, laws and principles.

In the Minjung theology these three methodologies have been used in an interval way, although different Minjung theologians gave accents on different methods at different times. We would like to point out that these three ways of grasping of the reality of the Minjung are closely interrelated.

## II. Some Minjung Theological Themes

### **Minjung is the political sovereign.**

The Political Sovereignty of the Minjung derived from the Sovereignty of God. Jesus is the child of God, and therefore Jesus is a sovereign member of the divine political community. Jesus is the Messiah of the Minjung and the Minjung is (of) Jesus. The sovereign subjecthood of the Minjung has such a theological foundation. This is a basis upon which we say that the Minjung is the subject of history.

Here the politics should not be understood in a narrow sense. It is to do with the Sovereign of God, which has the cosmic reach from the beginning of the universe to its end.

### **Servanthood (DOULARCHY) of Jesus**

The other side of the Minjung politics is the Messiah as the Servant. This aspect of the Minjung political theology is very much misunderstood in regard to the understanding of the subjecthood of the Minjung and to the nature of the power.<sup>12</sup>

The Minjung is subjugated as servants by the dominant powers.

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<sup>12</sup> Full discussion of this is in the notion of DOULARCHY by Kim Yong-Bock



This is historical and sociological reality. However, theologically this has a paradoxical meaning. When Jesus said, "I have come to serve, not to be served, and to serve all even to death," he did not mean to justify his or any body's subjugation by the powers. Rather his accent is on debunking the nature of the dominating power. The power is service, not domination. It is to serve all so that all may become subjects (masters). It is to serve the slaves to become masters of their own life and history. Jesus is to serve all so that all may become sovereign subjects of their own life and history.

Jesus was to subvert the domination of the power so that the power may become service to all people. This is the radical transformation of the power. The Minjung is a revolutionary agent, but not a replica of the dominant power, simply replacing the old regime of the power. There is much debate about the empowering and the soft power. But for Jesus and for Minjung theology the power is a service to the subjecthood of the people.

There are many other related themes in the development of Minjung theology. We will not discuss them here, for we want to go to the question of the Minjung theology in the present and future tense.

### **The New Context: The Global Empire**

When the Minjung theological reflection was unfolding in the 1970's, the primary focus was the society of nation state. The Minjung was understood in the structure of the nation state in its modern and capitalist development. The Cold War situation has effected its thinking very much. In the 21st century, however, the context is radically changed in global terms. This may be

described and analyzed in terms of the globalization and the global empire.

The global capital has enforced the globalization process through the global market, technocratic process and global communication. Politically speaking the US is seeking to become an empire through its global military hegemony. These processes changed the context in which the Minjung finds themselves.

### **Redefinition of the Minjung**

Under the domination of the global empire, the Minjung suffers in the context of the global market, which is dictated by the global regime of WTO, IMF, World Bank and G-7. The nation state is no longer the primary point of oppression which causes the suffering of the Minjung. This does not mean that the nation state is less important in the understanding of the Minjung; rather, the power of the nation state must understood in the context of the global regime, of the globalization and of the global empire.

1. In the global market the iron logic of the capital accumulation and profit maximization through unlimited growth and through financial market dictates the life of the Minjung, causing the gap between the rich and the poor, intensifying the exploitation of the human and the nature, and impoverishing the people in every nation across the national boundaries.<sup>13</sup>

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13 In our broad analysis we use the word “capital” not identical with the word “money”. Capital is characterized by having to grow, by investment in order to be re-invested to be re-invested ad infinitum. The word “mammon” has the connotation of “where you put your trust”.

As the highest returns can be secured in speculative financial transactions most of the money goes there and not into the production and distribution of necessary goods and services. In addition the return in the financial markets of at least 15% puts pressure on industry and agriculture to rationalize and to neglect ecological criteria. The result is unemployment and the destruction of the earth instead of using the increase in productivity to reduce work hours and deal carefully with nature.

The globalization of the world economy is so rapidly moving that it is very difficult to grasp its nature and consequences. It is controlled by the economic power centers. However, our beginning point of economic analyses will be the household of the Minjung. The household as a basic unit of life economy is regarded as a good starting point to resist the so-called pure economic logic that is abstract and often reductionist to exclude all other factors of life in the household. This also separates the economics from the life of the household, academically fragmenting disciplines of science.

The household is also biblically the basic economic unit, and God's work is often referred to the OIKONOMIA (ECONOMY = household management) for the people of God. We find that this OIKOS of God is the "Garden of Life," and it is the real nature of the community of the people of God on all levels.

### <The Minjung Household as the Basic Subject of Economy of Life>

The basic household economy for the life of the Minjung is our central concern for consideration, for it is the focus of the biblical concern in the political economy of God. The life sustaining and life enhancing economy is concretely realized in the household of the people, and the Minjung household economy is the final criteria by which the well-being of the community can truly be measured. The health of economy, local, national and global, may be measured by the state of the Minjung household economy.

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Finally all elements of life are being commodified, privatized and subjected to the accumulation of capital: the seeds, the animals, and even the genes of human beings. The result is wealth for the few on the one side, hunger, exclusion, mass misery, despair, violence, death and ecological destruction on the other.

Here the Minjung is the people, who are poor and hungry because of the lack of means of livelihood and because of their weakness in socioeconomic power to sustain their life. The hungry who are starving, the poor who are suffering, and homeless children, the poor women who are selling their bodies, the migrant workers who go to other countries, leaving their homes, the economic refugees, the guest workers, the elderly and the disabled, the workers who are losing their jobs, the peasants who are losing their lands, the marginalized and the excluded by the economic powerful—all the Minjung do not have household that can sustain and enhance their life in the global market. Their households are in ruins and are being destroyed.

The Minjung households are situated in a local community in a given geography. It is sometimes located in the rural village community or in urban city. The local community is integrated into the larger society, into the national political economy and even into the global economy.

The basic socioeconomic security of the Minjung household is threatened in many ways in the global market. The hunger and poverty of the Minjung is intensified due to widening gap between the rich and the poor. This gap is growing wide in every national political economy as well as in the global political economy. This is so due to uncontrolled and unlimited competition among the economic powers in a global scale. Here the global corporate entities, transnational corporations and international banks, including the financial institutions such as the World Bank and I. M. F. play the dominant roles in the global market. The economic and technological powers are concentrated in such institutions.

In the global market, that is dominated by such powers, the socioeconomic insecurity is not merely for the Minjung households, but also for the middle class consumer households. The small and medium size industries as well as small farmers are losers in the economic games in the mill and vortex of fierce competition of economic powers for maximization of the profit in the global market, which opens every corner of protected economic sector of every nation, including socialist nations. No human household is protected securely from dynamics of the global market. Every human household is condemned to the market.

The globalized market is turning everything into commodities, subjecting them to the dictates of the market. From the natural gifts and the land to the religious and cultural heritage and services, all things are exchanged in the market at a price. No household is free from this commoditization in the market.

Values of all things are determined in the market. Nothing has its value of its own right, for every value is determined in the market. No household is free from this valuation (devaluating, revaluating, and inflating) in the market. No household can decide values about things that it has or it needs except through the market.

Every household is subject to snare of consumerism under the heavy pressure of commercial advertisement. It is subject to the credit system of the market, which is swayed by the financial powers of the financial institutions in the market. The financial market can create values and credits out of “nothing,” and it can destroy the credit of the household. Indeed the market becomes “almighty.” Such economic power victimizes ordinary households

and it is beyond control by any household. Such power may be regarded as the “mammon.” The international debts of the poor nations such as Brazil and the Philippines as well as the debts of the poor people in the third world countries are making the Minjung households really bankrupted victims of the global market. The Minjung household are caught in the snare of debts and they are financially destroyed.

Such market is dominated by the powers of giant corporate entities such as transnational corporations and international banks. They control finance market as well as all other aspects of the market. They form the technocracy, in which the science and technology are formed into a “techno-structure” and to control the market. They are indirectly influential in global regime of the World Trade Organization. WTO may be an instrument for the global control of the market, just as the IMF and the World Bank are. If this is true, then we are in a very serious situation.

In the globalizing market, the Minjung household is especially a weak victim in the weaker sectors of every society, especially in the third world countries. Perhaps every human household may be under the same predicament except those who dominate the market and those who are allied with them.

There can be several tragic and stark realities to be highlighted.

1) The Minjung household economy is not able to sustain their life at a minimum in the global market. The situation is getting worse, not better. The fundamental needs of the Minjung household cannot be met because the global market does not

allow. Meeting of the basic human needs is dictated by the global market, that is dominated by giant transnational economic corporate power entities.

2) The socioeconomic security of the low and middle class household is being eroded drastically due to the neo-liberal policies and due to the breakdown of social security system in industrialized social democratic and socialist and former socialist countries. The NIC's in Asia will not be able to deal with the socioeconomic security of the Minjung and the middle class household.

3) Every household is being subjected to the credit and financial system, dictated by the financial sector of the global market. The financial victimization is a new form of sacrifice that is imposed by the global market. The credit means debts for economically weak households. There emerges of the unbreakable cycle of debt in a mammonish dimension of sacrifice. The speculation and "manipulation of the financial market by the economic powerful makes the ordinary participants perpetually losers and victims.

4) Every household will be subjected to intensive pressure of the global market for its consumption patterns. Economic subjecthood of the household as the consumers is undermined. The market power to dictate the style of household economic life grows stronger than ever.

5) The global market promotes economic injustices between the poor and the rich nations, between economically strong and weak. The structural elements that aggravate economic injustice are strengthened in the ideology of free market (en-liberalism = privatization, deregulation, opening to global market and etc.); and the powers of giant transnational corporate entities

are strengthened and the rule of competition is not fair, making weak economic entities losers in the competition. The Minjung economic entities as well as the Minjung household economy is far from viable. They become sacrificial victims; or they are destroyed.

Thus, the Minjung household is not even that for survival, but it becomes the household of death. This reality is regarded as inevitably caused by the autonomous mechanism of the global market, which is regarded as operating without any control by human agency. This is a dangerous situation.

#### <Politics of the Minjung Household in Global Market>

Now the market globalization and the global empire seem to demand a certain change in the role of the state, in the relation between the state and the corporate entity in a broad context. It seems that the transnational corporate entities are taking dominant and ubiquitous role in the market and therefore in the global economy. The corporate entity becomes the dominant subject in the political economy of the global market.

As we have indicated already, the household economy does not have any chance to be an economic subject. The individual person as a private economic entity is victimized in the capitalist society. The proletariat as a collective economic subject also is victimized in the socialist command economy. The socialist states ran the so-called command economy, giving only nominally the economic subjecthood to the proletariat. Now the transnational



corporate economic entity is dominant in the global market. Here the question is how the household, especially household become the subjective unit of economic life. It has to participate in the local community, national economy and even in the global market. Democratic participation in the political economy is very much jeopardized in the currently emerging global market.

The <Minjung> household, it is our affirmation based on biblical teachings, should be the subject of the economic life, which directly participate in the local economy to enhance the life. How for the household to make a direct intervention in the global market is a truly important political question. In this political question, the nation state may have a different role than one that has been current thus far. The local democracy where every household can participate directly may have a greater importance than the nation state.

Loss of participatory pathos and political fragmentation in the global market may be the most important aspect of political victimization. The question of economic democracy to overcome such apathy has two aspects: 1) Every household should become subject of the economy of life, and 2) Such household must have a secure web of interconnections or solidarity network of socioeconomic security beyond the boundaries that fragment the life of the people. The market must not victimize the household economy by preventing its direct participation and solidarity web of security of life from being enhanced in the global market.

The transnational corporate entities are seeking to be absolutely free and beyond any control, ethical, social and political control and they are becoming entities beyond any control. They and only they are “absolutely free” agency to impose their wills upon

the people in the marketplace. This is a very dangerous situation. The Minjung under the global empire has to be understood as an entity more than national citizenry. The Minjung must be understood as the global political subject.

### <Raging Competition and Deepening Complexity of Contradictions and Conflicts: Loss of Shalom and Security>

The every human household, especially the Minjung household, will be caught in the vortex of fierce competition among the economic powers in the global market. The economic injuries will be imposed upon the poor and weak households, upon local communities and national economies due to the competition of the economic powers in the global market. The traditional social relations such as class, cast, ethnicity and nationality and religiosity are affected by the competitive exchanges among the economic powers in the global market.

The farm households, workers' household and even middle class households will be losers in the market. They suffer from the spiraling inflation. They suffer from the snare of increasing debts. The productive and exchange activities of the rural household will suffer a great deal and they are no longer economically feasible. The workers' household will loose employment, and their instruments to realize economic justice and socioeconomic security will be weakened. The urban poor household will be threatened in terms of their survival of life.

The competition among the economic powers will make the logic such as the survival of the fittest and the strong eating up

of the weak. The big corporate powers will be winners in the competition. In reality the most of the weak economic entities, including small and medium-seized companies will be losers in the market and they become victims in the global market process.

The war and violence become economically caused. The market economy utilize the war for the profit. The economic links to the war and violence of life destruction are manifest in the social and political of the global market.

The unlimited competition generated in the global market mechanism is cannot be restricted and its will destroy relentlessly the life of the weak and the poor. The survival of the strongest become the supreme rule in the market driven society. The few powerful are winners and the most are losers in the competition of the market. This situation is dangerous.

### <Erosion of Identity and Creative Subjectivity in the Cultural Life>

The global market will corrode the cultural identity of the people by integrating religious, cultural, ethnic and national communities. Their life style will be transformed into that of market and materialism oriented. The cultural objects and services will be commoditized into marketable goods and services, destroying any sacred values of religious cultural communities.

The hi-tech media and its commercial features will invade every household and inner chambers of human consciousness, causing consumerist addictive appetite for materialist and hedonistic goods and service regardless of their real needs or values.

Arbitrary and false needs are created in the household by such commercial features and advertisements as well as by value-added network of multimedia, controlled by the market.

Any religious and cultural systems and mores that are not amenable to the global market orientation, will be under attack, leading to “civilization clash.” This will bring about religious and cultural reactions from traditional religious cultural communities as well as about accelerated corrosive encroachment into the religious, cultural and ethic communities that are defensive. The global market will impose cultural values, style of life and even new identity upon the household and community of the people.

The artistic sensibility of the people will be subjugated to the market. The sense of beauty and vitality will be oriented towards the marketing. The appreciation of beauty and enjoyment of life will be domesticated by the market process. It is going to be turned into means for commercial and economic exchanges.

The life is not life without its subjectivity in cultural and religious level. The market mechanism does not allow for it to exist. The global market assumes the culture of the West as more conducive and exclusive to the non-Western cultures. Thus, the global market is to cause clashes between the Western culture and the non-Western cultures on religious, ethic and civilizational levels. The non-Western cultures and religions are to adjust to the market mechanism. Otherwise, they will be destroyed or “converted” to the global market. This is culturally and spiritually a very dangerous situation.

<Acceleration of Ecological Destruction to Sacrifice Life on

## Earth>

The life on earth has its own vitality and sustainability, as created by God. Traditionally ecological disruptions are regarded as the natural disasters that destroy life. In recent years, the civilization factors, socioeconomic as well as political and cultural, are closely connected with the causation of the so-called natural disasters.

Particular attention has been drawn to the relationship between the modern industrial economy and the ecological disruptions, which victimize the human and natural life on earth.

1) Unlimited exploitation of natural resources in the industrial production is one obvious cause of the life-destruction.

2) Conquering and domineering model of relationship with the nature in modern science and technology without caring for the life is another cause that disrupts the mystery of life and even manipulates it.

3) Commoditization of the natural beauty by the market through tourism and other market activities creates excessive and arbitrary management of the nature for economic gains and affects directly the natural environment.

4) The political economy of the war and violence is another closely related cause to destroy life. In the war industry the destruction of life, human and natural, is promoted by inventing, producing and marketing the weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear, chemical and biochemical weapons.

5) The accelerating drive of the market process “orchestrates” the pressure against the life on earth, involving the above

processes.

6) The victimization of the life on earth is very much to do with the industrial civilization, driven by the market mechanism. It is organically related to the whole civilization. It is not merely a question of human intent and action, which can be corrected by ethical education.

The human household is situated in such arbitrarily caused natural desert, together with the natural life on earth. Thus, the garden of life is turned into the desert of killing and death in the global market. If the global market mechanisms is allowed to be the ultimate death machine, this is very serious.

Can the Minjung households foster and garden life in the global market? The market, it can be said, is necessary, and perhaps the households are condemned to the market. Can the global market be different from one that victimize life on earth and become the "HOUSEHOLD OF LIFE?" Are there any alternatives or policies that can change the global market to foster life?

The Minjung theology draws many insights from the Messianic politics of Peace. It has vision of the cosmic peace for all living beings, the peace under the new haven and new earth. Today in the context of globalization the struggle for peace has a new special meaning for all the living beings on earth. All living beings are under threats of death and destruction in unprecedented ways. This condition of the world is not merely because of the geopolitical situation. It is a multidimensional threat, which rises in the context of accelerating globalization, driven by the global market forces.

It is our common belief that peace is a fundamental condition

for community of life, human and natural and that the true peace for life is based upon justice. However, the times have changed radically from the previous age and the issue of war and peace became most serious for the future of the life in the world. We need to discern signs of times in search for peace for the whole life.

### **Minjung's Vision on Peace for Life**

There has been a vision of peace among the Asian Minjungs. Peace is not mere negation of destruction of life or absence of war. In the past history the Asian people yearned for a utopian vision of peace and life, which was expressed in the midst of their suffering under the invading powers of colonialism and under the global cold war. These stories of peace and life are partly mythical, and partly historical visions of peace and blissful life of peoples in Asia. These visions have become constant sources of visionary projection of peace and life.

These historical/ mythical visions of the people are enriched and at the same time transformed through religious visions of the East and the West as well as through secular social philosophies of an integral life, including free participation and social justice.

However, the "powers that be" have often used the vision of peace for the political aggrandizement, thus betraying the true visions of the people. Therefore, we must distinguish the true visions of the people from the ideological use of these visions for their regime or regimentation as kingdoms, and nation states and empires.

It is very clear that it is not enough to leave the peace issue to the geo-political dynamics of the imperial and national powers. The people must take charge of the peacemaking. Increasingly

the people's participation in peacemaking is a decisive factor for the peace in the world. The People's Forum on Peace for Life will begin with this conviction.

We want to affirm therefore that any thinking and visioning for peace should begin with the people's stories of struggle for peace and justice. The people's vision for peace is a decisive factor. Peace is not true peace, when it is not for the people. The people's vision for peace is a final criterion for any peace. Although the shape of people's vision for peace may be various and different from each other, it is fundamental that the people are the subject of the peace, not the power.

Another important factor for peace in the 21st century is that it should be vision for the all living beings (whole creation) as well as the peoples everywhere, for all living beings are one whole convivial reality in all the spheres of life, human, biological, ecological and cosmic. Thus, the people's vision is inclusive and universal.

### **Minjung's Forum for Peace on Life in Action**

Under the current geo-political situation the strong participation of the democratic people such as citizens' movements, NGOs', interfaith ecumenical movements and people's movements have a decisive significance. These movements must challenge these governments and their leaders as well global power regimes on this issue of peace. It is our experience of Asian ecumenical movement to break the taboo to discuss publicly the issue of peace in the recent past. The ecumenical movement in the Philippines stated their position on the peace and justice in their country and it struggling for peace in their nation. Korean Christians stated



their vision of the Korean people for reunification and peace.<sup>14</sup>

\*\*\*The vision of the peoples in Asia must be clearly stated as a “Minjung’ Charter of Peace in Asia.” It should be the peoples’ charter, not any political parties or governments. Minjung’s Charter must influence the policies of state governments and political parties through participatory movements in Asia and in the whole world.

\*\*\*The Minjung’s Charter for Peace should be in the paradigm of the life as a whole. The question of peace is not merely a geopolitical issue. It is to deal with questions of economic justice and well-being, people’s participation, security and shalom for life, cultural identity, values, and creativity, ecological sustainability, and religious pluralism and tolerance as well as spiritual deepening. Peace is fundamental condition for the convivial life of all living beings on earth. Peace is not a mere absence of wars and violence. The political economy of peace be established, overcoming the dominant process of globalization.

Various movements on the local, national, regional and global levels has expressed and articulated their visions of life, containing free participation, justice and sustainability. These visions must be integrated as a People’s Charter for Life, taking the people’s perspective as its axial principle. The people’s charter must address the United Nations charters, platforms of international power institutions such as WTO and other financial and property regimes.

\*\*\*Participatory movements must oppose the geo-political hegemony of any power, especially any big powers. In our case,

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14 Declaration of Korean Churches for Peace on Korean Peninsula and Reunification of the Korean People, 1988. We declared the vision of the Korean jubilee for 1995, which is 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Korean people.

most of all the U.S. mono-polar geopolitical hegemony, as it is being intensified in the process of the WOT.

\*\*\*Participatory movements must work for the sovereignty of the peoples and international solidarity of the sovereign peoples. What this means is that we must work for global democracy in terms of participation and solidarity for peace and life.

\*\*\*Participatory Movements must work to stop the military missile race and to promote demilitarization of space. The military missile race makes all the parties vulnerable in terms of their security.

\*\*\*Participatory movements must work for universal disarming of nuclear weapons and bio-chemical and other high-tech weapons, especially in North East Asia.

\*\*\*Participatory movements should work for reduction of arms and for disarmament in the Asia and. This presupposes that at least the big powers and the United Nations recognize and guarantee the popular sovereignty on peace making.

\*\*\*People's rights in peacemaking are a fundamental right of life. Participation movements must promote human rights of the peoples and the rights of all living beings. This is the very foundation of the genuine peace.

\*\*\*In order to build a peaceful order in the Asia there must be justice among the peoples. Participatory movements must promote peaceful way on the basis of justice to resolve conflicts among the people, groups and nations.

\*\*\*It is our proposal that there should be formed a permanent Minjung's Forum for Peace and Life in Asia as a whole. It is critically monitor the geo-political situation for the peacemaking. It will articulate the vision of the peoples' peace as the People's

Charter for Peace and Life in North East Asia or in Asia. It will promote people's participation and solidarity for peace in this area. It will actively engage with national governments and international organizations to influence policies and actions for peace. The forum could be organized through a joint effort of existing ecumenical organizations operating in Asia.

### **New Politics of Peace and Life**

Political activities to democratize national political institutions as well as international institutions must be promoted through constitutional changes and direct participation. Direct participation and cross boundary solidarity must be key directions of politics. Creative political wisdom must be cultivated and mobilized for enhance new politics of participation and solidarity for peace and life on earth.

### **Semantics Spirituality for Peace and Life**

Creative cultural and spiritual movement must be promoted on all levels of personal and community of faiths, cultures and philosophies. The spiritual foundation is the vital ground for peace and life on earth. Semantics of spirituality for peace and life must be created and fostered in all forms and in all variety.

## **III. A Concluding Word**

The Minjung faces the reality of the global empire, just as Jesus faced the reality of the Pax Romana. Here the framework of the Minjung's existence is not merely national or social, but it is

cosmic and universal. The Minjung exists and struggles together with all living beings against the cosmic power of the global empire. This is the reason why the Minjung and all living beings together yearns for the peace under the new heaven and on the new earth.