

Mission and Ecumenism from the Margins: Vestiges of Transformative Spirituality in the Korean Ecumenical Movement

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Abstract

This essay is to talk about the Christian mission and ecumenism from the perspective of Korean minjung theology that hopes to galvanize church and society into transforming communities. Minjung theology acknowledges the ontological importance of the marginalized people and finds ecclesial and spiritual objectives that churches do meet with and witness to the agony of suffering creations. This paper focuses on ecumenical endeavors of churches in the Korean society to live with biblical dynamism: First, it states basic ideas of minjung theology to read the Bible and the heritage of the Christian mission. Then, applying the ideas, this paper examines the vestiges of transformative spirituality in the ecumenism of Korean churches and propose mission from the mar-

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gins in which Asian contextual theologies could share common stories and move together.

Keywords

Minjung Theology, Mission from the Margins, Transformative Ecumenism, Asian Experiences

I. Witness of Minjung Theology to Transformative Voices from the Bible and Churches

Minjung Theologian Suh Nam-dong speaks of the task of minjung theology as to figure out “the origin of faith” in order to live “forward to a new community.”¹ The task for him is “to witness to the confluence of Christian minjung tradition and Korean minjung tradition in the acts of *missio Dei* in the Korean history.”² His colleague Ahn Byung-mu also stresses ‘the origin’ that can point out the identity of the Christian faith community. Ahn finds in his search for historical Jesus the starting point of the church at the encounter of Jesus and the multitude (*ochlos*), the marginalized Galilean people. By revealing this encounter, he wanted to galvanize the church into the transforming community where ‘the ethos of Jesus’ is constantly motivated toward the coming Kingdom (*basileia*). For Ahn, the church is for ‘Jesus movement’ that recovers ‘Jesus event’ by witness to “God’s coming into the margins, namely, God’s becoming the bottom.”³ That is, the church should seek its origin not by returning the past but with vigorous strides toward the Kingdom, which is the basic tenet of minjung theology that can be generally shared with Asian contextual theologies.

The historical background of the Christian Bible was deeply related to and shaped by theological struggles against dominating ideologies of

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

2 Ibid., 78.

3 Byung-Mu Ahn, *Stories of Minjung Theology*, trans. by Hanna In (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 26, 84, 115-16.

empires. First, the Exodus from the Egyptian empire gave birth to the fundamental spirit of liberation for the 'law' and later 'prophecy'. Then, the captivity in the Babylonian empire shaped the biblical worldview into an radical monotheism that broke previous tribalistic parochialism and became inclusive of all creation. Finally, the colonial experience of the Roman empire established a vision of peace in terms of the 'kingdom of God', yearning for a peace different from the Roman peace. Along this line of biblical heritage, the hermeneutics of minjung theology is to quest how to secure the 'imagination' to dream of a new Kingdom of peace and how to motivate the 'disruptive force(*schock*)' to break the oppressive order.

The bible calls people to see and to get into the Kingdom with many stories. The book tells the stories for 'widows and orphans' who ask for justice (*mishpat*) and righteousness (*tsadaq*) and leads us to discern how to reach to God's *shalom*. We know the person who struggled faithfully to respond to his time of Roman colonization. He wept over the capital city Jerusalem because a way of peace was hidden since the violence of Roman empire so prevailing over the country that the terrible silence seemed to be understood as peace (Luke 19:42). That kind of peace seemed to be a peaceful order to the ruling class; however, it was an extremity of disorder to the marginalized people. Therefore, the church in history has been surviving in making a choice between two kinds of gospel (*euangélion*) 'either of God or of Caesar' (Mark 12:17) and then pushing her way through the creation of alternative forms of life and community.

Christian faith community emphasizes a conscious religious mind that its mission is life-affirmation especially of the suffering people with

justice and peace, and its ecumenism as grassroots solidarity for a new community. Such an understanding is based on the acknowledgement of the closest relationship between God and suffering creations. However, Christian theology often absurdly attempted to make a bridge between them. In the middle age, the bridge was the institutional church itself only through which people could access to God; in the modern age, it was dogmas by confessing which people would be saved. However, such attempts are simply a theological idolatry because there is no need of bridge in closer relations, and any bridge cannot be built between the closest relation. Mission and ecumenism from the margins can be well operating when we clearly understand that God's closest relation is to suffering creations.

In this sense, Christian community acknowledges the ontological importance of the margins. Such an acknowledgement is crucial for the spiritual survival and revival. Without it, the church falls down to many failures, a *spiritual* failure to empathize the agony of the suffering creation, a *theological* failure to witness to God's presence with sufferers in predicament, and an *ecclesial* failure to stand on the side of the people of outcry. In the long-term history, any religion cannot survive when it despises and deserts the wretchedness of the suffering because the Bible witnesses to the fact that God is always and primarily with them. Therefore, church must be a faithful communion with the sufferers. Without this communion, church cannot make its way through rough waves of history.

One of the recent documents of World Council of Churches(WCC), which calls for the transformative mission and ecumenism, is *Together*

towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes(TTL) adopted by the central committee of WCC in 2012. The document declares Christian mission as for ‘the fullness of life’ with transformative spirituality that can be possible by relocating the key agent of Christian mission to “the people at the margins.”⁴ The margin can carry out today’s mission such as struggle and resistance, inclusive justice, and wholeness of healing. As a way of realization of TTL, the conference of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism(CWME) of WCC, held in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2019 with more than one thousand participants from different Christian communities, focused on ‘transforming discipleship’.⁵ The discipleship seeks formative agents for prophetic evangelism in order to overcome disastrous religious consumerism and various failures of churches.

Unfortunately, religious consumerism and spiritual triumphalism have been long prevailing in the history of Christian church at the cost of the marginalization of the minorities and the weak. The ideas promote social hierarchism and unsparingly offers blessings to the haves while tossing a charity to the have-nots just for taking off the burden of conscience. It may be a tragedy that the primary Christian ethic, love (αγάπη), was often translated into charity. When the Greek αγάπη was translated into *caritas* in Latin, the implication of the term became narrower and weaker in and through the ecclesiasticism in the middle age and the capitalistic settlement in the modern age. Losing the profound meaning of love and

4 Jooseup Keum, ed., *Together Toward Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes with a Practical Guide* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 5.

5 Risto Jukko, ed., *Call to Discipleship* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), 12-14.

compassion, the Latin term was easily misunderstood as private generosity when the ethic of the rich can be embellished by a theological idea that thinks of authority and wealth as divinely-willed. Now, we need to reinterpret the traditional Christian ethic of love in order to correct the triumphalistic gospel of prosperity in the contemporary mission and ecumenism.

While the secular society applauds the triumphalistic culture of competition and consumerist economism, Christian faith to be 'a grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies' (John 12:14) is understood as foolish. However, with the help of many contextual theologies in Asia, churches realized that such triumphalism betrays the fundamental message of the Gospel. The biblical monotheism disapproves before God any dominion of one group/person over the others. The Christian conception of the radical equality aims to create new communities. Therefore, we come to believe again in the transformative spirituality so that mission could be understood as life-affirming through justice and peace, and ecumenism as grassroots solidarity. The transformative spirituality is penetrating wisdom and power of the wounded soul: its wisdom comes from becoming aware of the victimized experiences of self and others, and its power from the experience of resistance to victimizing realities.

Asian theologies hope to rehabilitate pathos-driven spirituality and radical living of faith. A pathos-driven theology affirms the decision of passionate faith so that it dares to find essential clues in thinking and acting from below, which means 'from the suffering and hope' of the marginalized. We can borrow the wisdom from Asian theologies including minjung theology. The theology seeks its ideas from listening to the

outcry of suffering creations and looks in the locus of God's salvific works there. The listening and looking in may be a spiritual art of decisive faith that is willing to trace vestiges of God's salvation in the deepest valley of history, the outcry of the suffering people. Such a theological act is based on discernment of faith's knowledge in mission and ecumenism from below, knowledge of the biblical predilection for the marginalized, which is confessed by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are"(1 Corinthians 1:27b~28).

This biblical confession naturally promotes the radical living of faith in search for 'the origin' of Christian belief. Christian faith is guided by the central belief in God's incarnation in the world for liberating all lives from the bondage of death. Jesus' Nazarene manifesto (Luke 4:16-19) is a concrete version of the belief. Jesus' life and teaching are oriented to the advent of God's kingdom as the ultimate transformation of this world. Therefore, faith's life needs a bold resilience that our faith should be embodied in sincere life towards the kingdom of God. Suh Nam-dong speaks of it with the concept of 'the unity of God and revolution'.⁶ It requests a purposive art of living to dwell in God's life with devotional faith for liberation and transformation.

Minjung theology believes in the dynamism of the Gospel and promotes comprehensive experiments of the radical love in social spheres. When the philosophy of power becomes the ruling social logic, it asks

6 Nam-Dong Suh, *A Search for Minjung Theology*, 63.

for love of God. For the life of church is not based on sovereignty of the organization but goes through clarity to deliver God's compassion to the people of wretchedness. To evangelize the Gospel in minjung theology does not mean to explain religious dogmas but to diffuse a spirit able to construct a new lifestyle and social structure. The vision has ever been in the Bible as Paul declares, "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Minjung theology understands Christian mission with the belief to create a space where love and justice predominate because our being before God can be composed of love. The church with 'faith working through love' can be a radical agent of the movement toward the Kingdom of God.

II. Church and Society in Korea, Challenges and Tasks

Religious life is deeply related to social changes. Generally, Korean churches had fair influences on the society in its early phases. When Korean Protestantism was introduced to the society in the late nineteenth century, the old feudal order was in crisis and the church quickly established itself as an emerging religion that promoted transformative spirituality in various social areas. Especially during the Japanese forcible occupation of Korea in the early 20th century, the church played a positive role in the people's lives, comforting their suffering and resisting Japanese colonialism. After the national division with the in-

dependence in 1945, however, most Korean churches remained theologically fundamentalist and politically alienated from the lives of the common people who suffered from the US military regime and the subsequent pro-US regimes. The conservative propensity of many churches made themselves keep silence in the time of dictatorship and caused few meaningful impacts on the society. However, some self-examined Christians began to turn their eyes to social mission and contributed to the movements for democracy and reunification in the 1970s and 1980s. They participated in social mission and ecumenism, devoting themselves to the social changes. Minjung theology arose out of this social atmosphere.

The rapid social changes since the 1980s influenced the missional landscape of the church. Some participatory churches were actively engaged in social concerns whereas most churches moved away from transformational spirituality and gradually became a hotbed of social conservatism. Let me explain the three remarkable social upheavals that caused a fundamental change of the social structure and therefore gave the church opportunities to consider its way of mission and ecumenism. First, Kwang-ju Uprising in May 1980 was 'a social gospel' that created the community of solidarity based on courage to respond to others' suffering at the risk of one's life. Although the movement made a liberated space just for ten days and was suppressed at last by armed forces, the physical defeat was recognized not as a spiritual failure, but as a pioneering foundation for later democracy movement and church's social engagement. For many Christians influenced from the movement began to participate in the social mission and to open a new ecumenism in

‘minjung church movement’.

Second, June Democracy Movement in 1987 was the nation-wide uprising against the military government and finally drew so-called ‘the 87 Regime,’ a socio-political structure of procedural democracy. Ostensible political oppressions were much reduced; however, the neo-liberalistic economic system generated soon and charged much more disastrous influences on the lives of people at the social margins. The church had to choose either conforming to this social tide or resisting it. Unfortunately, in the frenzy of the neo-liberalistic globalization, most churches have quickly fallen into the temptation of prosperity gospel, and the aspiration of minjung mission has been gradually dismantled.

Finally, the candlelight revolution occurred in the winter of 2016/7 after the illusory thirty years during which handful neo-liberalistic haves were allowed to plunder the ‘social commons’ under the deceitful name of globalization. The revolution was peculiar and distinctive in the history of democracy movement in Korea. For it was very peaceful without any violence and different from previous social movements because of its way of impact on the society. During the era of neo-liberalism, progressive mission and ecumenism used to go around idle cycles without meaningful advances. Ideals of social revolution haunted like a ghost over the ocean of despair and often self-castrated into a symbol of desire by being absorbed into a pre-established social order. However, people in the candlelight movement gathered together with their own despair, began to realize their present status as an exile in their own land while communicating each other’s pain and agony, and suddenly promoted revolutionary steps by jumping into sovereign citizens to determine

their own destiny by changing the old government.

Now, the candlelight revolution remains a reminiscent social dream. On the one hand, it can be remembered as a symbolic movement that caused the people of despair to jump beyond the self, which was a compassionate response to the calling from each other's painful experiences. Its revolutionary potentiality made widened the prospect of justice and peace, and the acme of the movement brought an aspiration for the future of the society. On the other hand, it revealed various limitations to bring about fundamental social changes so that the society is suffering from the complex crises: extreme inequalities in the neoliberal globalization, the fandom politics with hate commercialism, disintegration of communities and the disappearance of localities, the epidemic of fake news in the post-truth atmosphere, and the climate/environmental crisis as a total catastrophe. These are all sufficient to breed social nihilism. We experience predicament not because we don't know a way but because it is so obvious. Yes, we see people's vanity and revenge as well as anger and hatred, and the society is frequently driven by "the lure of *ressentiment*" and sometimes commits "nihilistic rebellion" in "unplumbed depths of misery and despair."⁷

There is deep darkness and chaos in the church as well as in the society. If the crises are overall problems, its solution must be a matter of life and death for all, not of the confrontation between conservative and progressive parties. To be sure, those who are ahead of the curve

⁷ Pankaj Mishra, "Politics in the Age of Resentment: the Dark Legacy of the Enlightenment" in *The Great Regression*, ed. by Heinrich Geiselberger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 110, 115.

are already engaged in multifaceted experiments that will shape the future. So the 'mission of God' is unfolding in many forms: activities to build ecological societies, political movements to implement direct democracy, neighborhood design and revitalization programs to build communities, a reorientation of education, and new expectations of spirituality and religion. The social mission and ecumenism of the church demand a fresh imagination and activity beyond functionalist integrity. At the crossroads of despair and hope, our mission and ecumenism call for radical reflections.

Where will the church go in the future? It is now widely accepted that the global ecological crisis, increasingly recognized as the most urgent problem, is deeply linked to socio-economic inequality. It is a wake-up call to humanity that modern civilization is designed to benefit the privileged at the expense of the poor and the environment. Capital's myth of 'unlimited progress' has been exposed at the limits of the planet, and the planet itself signalizes the end of modern civilization before humanity's slower efforts. The issue of 'ecological civilization' is emerging at a time when deep reflection is needed on the nature and role of the church. If not a fad of the moment, it must be an inevitable option for the future. Ecological civilization is more fundamental than the UN's 2015 Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs), because its implications ask us to look "beyond what we can do" and also calls us "to consider who we can become."⁸

Christian mission has been carried out in various ways, and its ecu-

8 Philip Clayton and WM. Andrew Schwartz, *What is Ecological Civilization?: Crisis, Hope, and the Future of the Planet* (Anoka, MN: Process Century Press, 2019), 141.

menism has consisted of two levels: denominational-level cooperation for the unity of churches and grassroots-level solidarity for social mission. These two sectors must be interactive to each other for the dynamism of the Gospel to be embodied in *missio Dei*. Such interactions are the art of belief and life with objectives of justice and peace, care and nurture, and resistance and transformation. However, Church politics are used to distort these objectives, and the two levels of ecumenism are often separated. As a result, denominational ecumenism became politicized and operated by power and money, and the ecumenism for social mission becomes fragmented and withering.

At this point, we could remember two important contributions of minjung theology for the mission and ecumenism of the Korean church: a theological formation of the church's social engagement and the aspirations of minjung mission; and an articulation of the theological principle that mission and ecumenism should be directed towards the suffering. It is true that many churches have fallen into prosperity gospel and moved away from minjung mission, and also that most churches seem to lose a way forward under the shadow of 'the great regression'. Nonetheless, as far as Christian ecumenism has been necessarily related to social changes, we need to keep the historical legacy that the Korean ecumenical movement strived for and to transmit the wisdom of minjung theology for the present and future ecumenism.

III. Experiences of Korean Churches, Ecumenical Crises and New Objectives

The history of Christian churches has shaped a tradition of liberation, bearing witness to the transformative voice of the Bible. However, there have been times in its long history when the church became the voice of oppressors in society, bound by chains of ecclesiasticism and dogmatism and distanced from the transformative discipleship it calls for. The Korean church is no exception. Still, in the midst of failure after failure, we may find future truths in errors of the past.

In the early 1950s, a Presbyterian theologian Kim Jae-Joon was excommunicated from the denomination because he criticized the church to be caught of exclusive religiosity with biblical literalism. He understood the tragic phenomenon of Korean Protestantism as because of losing the great vision, an ideal for the 'pan-cosmic community of love'.⁹ His excommunication caused the denominational division and yet set free a new imagination that the church takes away from the religion of desire for domination and demands adventures to the religion of *agape* and *diakonia*. In the late 1980s, a Methodist theologian Byeon Seon-Hwan was also excommunicated because of the reason of his advocating religious pluralism. While his persistent search for the biblical truth of liberation and religiosity in the Korean culture founded a new way of religious liberation theology in Korea¹⁰, his excommunication cast a shad-

9 Jae-Joon Kim, "Human Limitations and the Gospel" (1948) in *Jang-Gong Collections*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Hanshin University Press, 1992), 318.

10 Seon-Hwan Byeon, "Christianity in the Korean Culture" (1983) in Byeon Seon-Hwan

ow over the church and signalized a rise of megachurch-centered clericalism, which marks a failure of ecumenism.

These two cases tell the tragedy and failure as weakening of social mission and ecumenism in the Korean church. Moreover, with the advent of neoliberalism since the 1990s, most Korean churches have rapidly stagnated with narrow religiosity and began to lose prophetic voices. This situation came to be serious challenges to the church itself. The crisis has deepened for two reasons. First, there was drastic *social* change with the neo-liberalistic globalization for the last three decades. We don't have to enumerate the list of devastation in social spheres which was caused by the globalized market system. Only what we can notice is the irony that the deepened tragedy made more difficult mission from the margin and the grassroots ecumenism. The market system dominates the mentality of people as well as the economic structure. In this change, challenges to the church are not merely from the social structure but in the internalized ideology as ill-oriented religiosity. Now, we reach at the point where we need to review our belief system, not only faith's ethical orientation but the confession of faith itself.

Next, we experienced the unfortunate change of ecclesiastical environment for mission and ecumenism. Conservative churches succeeded to expand their territory along with the process of globalization. Neo-cons needed a religious ally and sponsored conservative groups that could pay in return by domesticating the victims of the social order with the theology of prosperity. Mega-churches symbolize this grotes-

que phenomenon. Now, the traditional ecumenical movement in Korean churches is easily misdirected by the politics of size and money, and the area for the grassroots ecumenism becomes much narrower. In these surroundings, we see mission and ecumenism from the margin as possible again not by the technique of relationship but with *metanoia* in faith's confession.

Korean churches are faced with a deep crisis, a crisis from inside corruption rather than outside challenges. The ostensible prosperity of Korean churches created the ironic disaster of the Christian social mission. Historically, unlike other countries, the Korean Protestant mission at the outset was very successful because the Korean church did not represent colonial voices of western Christianity. The protestant church continually gained a leadership in the society even after the Japanese colonial period. The church obtained power and wealth; however, the rich church almost lost its *raison d'être* especially to the society. Now, we can see the dilemma that Christian mission fell into the irreducible bankruptcy as far as conservative groups gained religious and political leadership in the Korean society. For the gospel to which they adhere becomes blind to their religious origin and rude to social and religious neighbors. It is sad that the coming of the civil awareness caused the crisis of the Korean church.

Korean churches have been domesticated with the appetite of vested rights and fell into religious illiteracy. Urgently needed are the honest spirituality of poverty and compassion, the rigorous mind of justice and peace, and the works on reconciliation and transformation. The Korean Christianity is craving for the emergence of new hermeneutic commun-

ities, a community that is capable of reinterpreting the gospel in the light of compassion and peace, and discovering wisdom and power to overcome the present crisis. Mission and ecumenism must be reinterpreted and then reconstructed by every means, such as denominational organizations, inter-denominational action groups, socio-religious NGOs, inter-religious dialogue groups, congregational study groups, missionary institutions, colloquia of local pastors, scholars' common researches, and etc. Important is not only the variety of forms but also the vitality of the task to compose 'ontological loci' where the gospel is newly instantiated and finally embodied.

With this calling, churches need to find potentialities to reorganize their resources for mission and ecumenism. Indeed, churches would be a faithful community when they experienced themselves as an active agent for ecclesiastic reformation and social transformation. Here we need to recall the experience of 'minjung church' movement¹¹, which was active in the decade following the mid-1980s. Although the movement was a minority in terms of number and size, its experiment of mission and ecumenism has great lessons for us today. Minjung churches ran on adventures: adventure of *knowing* the incarnational world whose depth is far beyond dogmatic knowledge, adventure of *living* in the fellowship of suffering with crucified Christ, and adventure of *hoping* to realize prophetic visions in history. Thereby, in spite of minority in the

11 Historically, minjung churches procreated numerous people who dedicated themselves to social missions. Some groups built up a church in ghettoized area to live and work with labors and the urban poor, and others went to rural areas for the peasant mission. These are all called 'minjung mission,' which is a typical name of mission from the margins in Korea.

Korean Christianity, their theological openness, social responsibility, and spiritual inclusiveness became an everlasting legacy for mission and ecumenism. This type of mission has been much enervated during the time of neo-liberalism. However, the tradition is still transmitted in Korean churches as the legacy of social missions.

National Council of Churches in Korea(NCCK), one of the most important ecumenical bodies in Korea, adopted a “social declaration” for celebrating its centenary in November 18, 2024. In this document, it states its history of participation in the ‘*missio Dei*’ with the understanding of the journey as “a mission from the margins.” It also confesses its shameful history: overlooking unjust realities with an other-worldly faith, reinforcing hostilities by participating in state violence, indulging in material growth and ignoring social justice, misrepresenting abundance as a blessing rather than cautioning the un-repairable reality of ecological crisis, and tolerating sexism and authoritarian hierarchies. The document ends with an affirmation of “the core of the Christian legacy” in the belief in God of Justice, Peace, and Life in which “Jesus Christ demonstrates God’s mission, which begins in the lowest places of the world, and leads us along the way.” We understand these confession and vision as the vestiges of transformative spirituality of the Korean church which was highlighted in minjung mission.

IV. Proposal: Speaking of Common Experiences and Moving Together

Today's mission and ecumenism requires reflections not only on the bright traditions of the past but also on the painful failures. For this purpose, we need to share our common stories, and to practice a fresh ecumenism together. Asian theologies have a common heritage in this regard. For Asian people commonly underwent colonization, war, dictatorship, massacre, poverty, oppression, and many discriminations. These experiences were very severe, and yet we could build up solidarity through our culture of coexistence, sensitivity of relatedness, and spirituality for communal living. Collaborations of Asian theologies have been ongoing for a long time. For instance, there were more than twenty years of dialogues between Korean minjung theologians and Indian Dalit theologians,¹² and various meetings of Asian theological groups including "the Consultation on Asian Minjung Experiences and Event in the 21st Century" in 2023.¹³

As far as social problems of our time are far beyond the solution of one nation, we should rebuild strong ecumenical partnership against the greed of a hegemonic nation. The partnership is based on the faith's

12 The dialogues produced many books including *On Being A New Community and Ecclesia of Justice and Peace* (2010), eds. by James Massey and Jong-Sun Noh and *Mission in the Context of Margins* (2015) edited by Jin-Kwan Kwon and P. Mohan Larbeer.

13 This consultation was held on October 12-13, 2004 in which theologians from seven Asian countries came to discuss various issues crucial today. Refer to the report of the consultation in "the Consultation on Asian Minjung Experiences and Event in the 21st Century" in *Madang: Journal Contextual Theology*, vol. 40, 149-155.

activism against the disastrous order of the empires. Empires utilize the capital and arms as the means of domination and constructs a regional security alliance for controlling. By contrast, our ecumenical partnership embodies prophetic calling and weaves the network of peace. The ecumenism is faith's struggle primarily 'to cause breath to dry bones' as well as to criticize the present order of domination. Here, the role of church can be more radical, and our ecumenism must seek a higher dimension of peace network, which means the grass-root solidarity for the transformative fellowship. We are searching for a fresh way of ecumenical fellowship to be able to enhance deep connections among partner churches at all levels. The way of ecumenism is to create a common platform of solidarity.

Mission from the margin and ecumenism in long-term solidarity can let our life open to a creative way of living. The solid proof of it is the ecumenical experience of the reunification movement in Korea. The Korean church has been maintaining good experiences in solidarity with sister churches over the world. The movement shows well the importance of the global solidarity. When the church began to work on peace and reunification, the Korean society was under the brutal military regime. So, the Korean church attempted to make a breakthrough in solidarity with foreign churches in the leadership of World Council of Churches(WCC). The 'Commission of the Churches on International Affairs(CCIA)' of WCC arranged a consultation on 'Peace and Justice in North East Asia' in October 1984 at Tozanso international Center, near Tokyo, Japan. The meeting reached an important consensus, so-called 'Tozanso process,' so that the member churches of WCC would work to-

gether on peace and reunification of Korea. The ecumenical work had great influences on the Korean society, and the national and international cooperation produced meaningful sub-sequences that have been supported with the official documentation: for instance, “Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula” at the 10th general assembly of WCC in 2013 and also in the 11th GA in 2022.

According to a suggestion of minjung theology, to find a way in the declining darkness of the modern civilization is to conceive of the church’s mission and ecumenism from the perspective of the suffering creations. The bleaker the realities of the world, the more urgent this principle becomes. The ominous enthusiasm, shown by Korean conservative churches in a city square of Seoul on the Sunday for celebrating the Reformation Day on October 27, 2024, would be a cautionary tale for the Christian ecumenism. Hundreds of thousands of people mobilized in religious enthusiasm for expressing their hates to sexual minorities showed the crisis of the church. To overcome the ‘hate commercialism’ and to participate in the communion of God of creation, the church will need to focus on being a space of creative transformation. The object of transformation is church itself if churches in the modern world had lived in essentially violent way in which one can watch the heyday of colonialism, slavery, and racism at the peak of the modern mind. We need to repent and find out a different way of relationship from long-lasting conflicts and to promote a way of moving together.

In the aftermath of the World War I and the corresponding outburst of the independence war of Ireland against England in 1919, the Irish poet William B. Yeats says in *The Second Coming*, “Things fall apart; the cen-

ter cannot hold. The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity”; however, continues he, “Surely some revelation is at hand; surely the second coming is at hand. The Second Coming!” In the same year, the March 1st independence movement occurred in the forcibly occupied Korea by Japan with the vision of the advent of a new era, “the time of power passes, and the time of truth and justice comes.”¹⁴ These are the old dreams a century ago that arose from the historical darkness. Their yearning for transformative spirituality will also reiterate today as we do share our experiences of Anthropocene despairs and encourage a robust mission and ecumenism from the margins.

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¹⁴ Quotation from “the Declaration of Independence” in 1919.

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