

Convergence of Liberation discourses for conviviality of All Living Beings

Yong Bok Kim*

Korean Minjung theology is a process of the convergence of the liberation discourses in Korean history. The first religious convergence was that of the Donghak Revolutionary Peasant Movement. This does not mean it was the only one. There were many historical precedents throughout the history of the Korean people. It means that the Donghak discourse is the most prominent revolutionary convergence of liberation traditions in the modern history of the Korean people.

Let me tell the story of the convergence of the liberation traditions in Korea that is connected to our theological task. It goes back to the history of the early church, that is, the Nestorian church. There is real and circumstantial evidence of the presence of Nestorian Christianity in China and in East Asia.¹⁾ Then there is East Asian Catholicism in China, Korea and Japan.²⁾ Nestorian Christianity had converged with the Buddhist Maitreya discourse; and East Asian Catholicism had converged with the Confucian discourse. Out of these convergences there emerged fresh liberation discourses that had revolutionary impact. This experience does not represent any political success; but it created a remarkable "mutation" in the liberation discourses in East Asia.

Korean History of the Convergent Movements

There are three outstanding cases in the convergence of liberation discourses in the modern history of Korea, which are closely related to Minjung theology.

The Donghak Convergence

The Korean religious movement, the Donghak Movement, arose in the 1860s. The revolutionary dynamics and the process of social transformation had been triggered by a religious convergence of Minjung confucianism (The heart of the people is the heart of heaven), Minjung Buddhism (All embracing compassion), Minjung Taoism (the Tao), Minjung Christianity (Equality of all before the heavenly lord) and Minjung Shamanism (Resolving the han among the oppressed and exploited). The

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He is the Chancellor of Advanced Institute for Integral Study of Life & Asia Pacific Graduate School for Integral Study of Life. He received Ph.D. degree from Princeton Seminary. He is the chief editor of Madang journal. E0mail: oikozoe@gmail.com

1) Kim Yong-Bock, *Christianity and Buddhism* in East Asia.

2) Kim Yong-Bock, *Historical Transformation, People's Movement and Christian Koinonia*, (1976).

vision of society, like the T'aiping Kingdom of Heaven, emerged out of this convergence of religious wisdom and vision. The Donghak vision surpassed all divergent visions, enhancing them to a new plane and to a new horizon. Its vision was that "All living beings are one body(同歸一體)."

This convergence was a *ra-ya-chi* alternative to the ruling ideology of patriarchal Confucianism. In the first place it was an emergence of a radical social vision that there should be no discrimination between the Yangban and the commoners (Sangnom) in terms of social status, between the genders, between the ages, and the political, social and economic classes. All humans have the divine within their being. Any harm to a human being is precisely a harm to the divine (God). There should be a wholeness and unity among all living beings without any discrimination between human beings and natural beings. This divine contained very concrete ethics and was designed to be practiced and constructed. This was an alternative order of all living beings, and was named as the second creation (Hucheon Gaebyeok=後天開闢).

Convergent vision of National Liberation

The March First Independence Movement brought another Kairotic moment of such convergence. Buddhism, Donghak religion, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism and Shamanism, including the national religions emergent among the Korean people as the Minjung faiths, together brought a new historic vision of freedom, justice and peace—a convergent vision. It was a convergent political vision out of the divergent religious faiths of resistance against Japanese imperial domination. These faiths brought their messianic visions to converge in the struggle and resistance against colonial domination.

This vision was concretized into political declarations such as the March First Independence Declaration of 1919, which became later the basis of the constitution of the Korean people for their government in exile and in the Republic of Korea. The political self-determination and independence of the Korean people, freedom from feudalistic social relations, economic and social equality, the sovereign participation of the people, and above all, liberation from the colonial powers of the outside had of the socialist philosophy and of the liberal philosophy in this vision. In this sense there was a process of conversion of the East and West. This vision was under-girded by the divergent faiths of our people and yet it reached a new plateau of imagination reaching into the future.

The people's Movement for Justice, Freedom and Peace in the 1970s and 80s

The Minjung movement in the last quarter of the 20th century brought about a convergent vision of democracy and human rights, justice and reconciliation and peace and national re-unification for the Korean people. In the Minjung movement the various religious faiths and social philosophies reached a pivotal point of a

Kairotic convergence. This dynamic inherited the dynamics of convergence in the history of the Korean people. In the making of such dynamics there arose activities for visiting the Minjung Buddhist traditions (Metraiya at the Pure Land), the Minjung Confucianism (the heart of the people is the heart of heaven=民心天心), the Christian politics of the messianic movement, the Donghak revolutionary heritages, and the popular religions such as shamanism.

In this stream there were the Minjung arts and songs and Minjung literature and poetry. The revolutionary socialist vision was deeply undercurrent in the dynamics of convergence.

One can detect the creative and emergent convergence dynamisc against the powers of dictatorship, the global capital and the geo-political hegemony that oppressed, exploited, discriminated against and divided our people, causing their suffering in multiple dimensions. The Minjung theology arose in the midst of this convergent movement of the people for a whole new vision of anew future.

Why the convergence?

1) The universe contains one whole order of conviviality of all living beings on earth under heaven. This convergence is the essential dynamic of all things. Every moment in time, in every point in space, meets at the point of every event of life of all living beings. All diverse and divergent dimensions and factors meet at every point of act of life. This is an Omega point which is an end point of the Alpha of life. Between the Omega and the Alpha there is an infinite and permanent change. Convergence takes place as a Kairotic time and space.

Unless this convergence in a perpetual flux and in a decisive moment is understood, it is not possible to understand life and the universe. This is true of Western physics and of the Eastern *I-Ching*. In a way there is a convergence between the laws of quantum physics and the Li of I-Ching (the Book of Changes). Yet these two are fundamentally different in that the one is objective and the other is ethical.

2) There is already an emergence of a convergent movement among the peoples on earth and among all living beings against the powers that destroy life on earth under heaven. At the same time the convergent vision for the convergence of movements of liberation is aspired for by all living beings in the universe, just as "the cosmos is groaning for liberation from all principalities and powers of this world" (Romans 8).

3) There is a convergence of the dynamics of domination in the matrix of the global market and the global empire in various forms, especially in the form of technological convergence at the core of this matrix. This demands a fresh discerning of the signs of times and a fresh vision for the new world.

Definition of Convergence

In general, convergence is a coming together of two or more distinct entities or phenomena.³⁾ Convergence is increasingly prevalent in the technocratic world.⁴⁾

Braman(1998) notes that economic convergence occurs when an industry becomes dominated by oligopoly. This is when the individuality of an organization yields to a more collective form 연 새 networking relationships. There is also a blurring of industrial lines. For instance telecom companies are converging through series of mergers and acquisition deals and are moving into new telecom markets in addition to their traditional ones. This is a new industrial technocracy.

Geo-political convergence

The end of the Cold War marked the closure of a distinct era in geopolitics and international relations. It changed not only the relations between states and rival blocs of states, but the very boundaries and definitions of states and thus the component parts of the international system. The consequences of this rapid and dramatic transformation constitute the premises upon which international politics are now conducted and the foundations on which a new global order is being built or from which a pattern of controlled disorder emerges. This is the political convergence of the global empire.

New military technocracy is being forged, enabled by integrating developments in nanotechnology, information and cognitive technologies (such as an integrated helmet with tunable hearing, night vision, communications, physical and auditory protection providing tactical awareness and cognition of "in-field" activity). **The**

3) There are five forms of convergence, these forms are not totalities; however, they cover, to a large extent, the noticeable forms of convergence:

- Functional convergence
- Technological convergence
- Economic convergence
- Political convergence
- Geographical convergence

Technological convergence points to the way technologies are increasingly converging into one. The availability of carrier technology with high bandwidth means that, transmission is not limited to voice only, now data, picture and other multimedia and interactive media can be transported in one single carrier technology like the fiber optic cable and satellite technology. One other noticeable technology that perhaps is the epitome of convergence technology is the Computer technology. This technology provides the most striking convergent service: Internet. The Internet combines all know communication media into one single service on a computer screen.

4) In this context the term refers to the combination of two or more different technologies in a single device. Taking pictures with a cell phone and surfing the Web on a television are two of the most common examples of this trend. Webster's Dictionary defines the act of converging as moving toward union or uniformity; especially the coordinated movement of the two eyes so that the image of a single point is formed on corresponding retinal areas. Convergence is the combination of all these different media into one operating platform. It is the merger of telecom, data processing and imaging technologies. This convergence is ushering in a new epoch of multimedia, in which voice, data and images are combined to render services to the users.

global military order is a Matrix of Convergence. A matrix is a complex idea which is used in various fields from biology to electronics including mathematics and logic. Altogether it suggests a "supporting structure" and an "enclosing structure," a structure that encompasses diversity by interconnecting many structures.

The convergence of Technologies⁵⁾

Information technology and communication technology have already converged leading to Information and Communication Technology (ICT).⁶⁾ Information Technology combined with bio-technology has led to bio-informatics. Now, nanotechnology is knocking at our doors. It is the field of the future that will replace microelectronics and many fields with tremendous application potential in the areas of medicine, electronics and material science. When nanotechnology and ICT meet, integrated silicon electronics and photonics are born and it can be said that material

5) The Vision and Power of Convergence

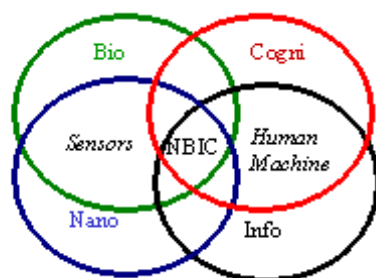
Rapidly advancing technologies with potentially disruptive implications include:

- Nanotechnology;
- Biotechnology and Biomedicine;
- Advanced Computing and Information Technologies; and
- Cognitive Neuroscience.

New developments in each of these technologies will have a significant impact on society, but the most disruptive innovations will likely occur at their intersections. The convergence or synergy arising from their combination is expected to lead to such capabilities as:

- Expanded human cognition and communication enabled by brain implants, new drugs, rapid learning and direct brain-to-machine interfaces;
- Improved human health and physical capabilities enabled by nano-biosensors to monitor and repair bodily functions, and systems that enhance human sensors; and

Nano-Bio-Info-Cognitive (NBIC) Technologies



- Responsive and collaborating autonomous intelligent systems to support decision-making, and nano robots for surveillance and medical applications.

The National Science Foundation and the US Department of Commerce envisage Nano-Bio-Info-Cognitive convergence as a means toward improving work efficiency, learning, enhanced sensory-cognitive capabilities, brain-brain interactions, human-machine interfaces, and ameliorating physical or cognitive decline in humans.

- 6) Convergence of OCT, aerospace and nanotechnologies will emerge and revolutionize the aerospace industry and electronics leading to nano computing systems. This technological convergence will enable building of cost effective low weight, high payload, and highly reliable aerospace systems, which can be used for inter-planetary transportation.

convergence will happen. With material convergence and biotechnology linked, a new science called Intelligent bioscience will be born which would lead to a disease-free, happy and more intelligent human habitat with longevity and high human capabilities. Convergence of bio-nano-info technologies can lead to the development of nano robots. Nano robots when they are injected into a patient, my expert friends say, will diagnose and deliver the treatment exclusively to the affected area and then the nano-robot will get digested as it is a DNA based product. This process leads to an industrial stage of creating trans-human beings and agencies.

Technology to Society-Global Societal Grid

The development of technologies and their convergence has a powerful influence on society in terms of knowledge, governance and economic development. To maximize the synergy between the various components of education, e-governance, rural development and health care, it is necessary to establish connectivities among them. These connectivities will certainly bring seamless access and information flow among the various domains leading to maximization of GDP and productivity; hence, there is a need for establishing the grids; namely the knowledge grid, e-governance grid, healthcare grid and so on. This interconnecting grid will be known as the societal grid. Knowledge sharing, knowledge utilization and knowledge re-use is very vital by all constituents of society for promoting non-linear growth. This will take place globally as well.

Based on this technological convergence there will emerge a symbiotic convergence of the power of the Global Empire and the Global Market Regime. This brings threats to the very order of life of all living beings.

The Context of the New Convergence of Liberation

symbiotic Convergence of Powers: Convergent Power of the Global Empire, the Global Market and the Global Technocracy

- 1) Geo-political situation: Global Empire
 - (1) Global political domination of the United States, the state above states
 - (2) Global military hegemony and permanent and ubiquitous war
- 2) Global economic situation: Global Market
 - (1) The industrial and financial capital: unlimited growth for unrestricted greed
 - (2) Global economic regime: WTO, IMF, World Bank and G-7 to forge absolute domination
- 3) global political situation: Global Governance
 - (1) The modern nation statehood: modern, industrial and liberal political order
 - (2) The suppression of the sovereignty of the people, the nation and the race

- 4) Global social situation: Global Convergence of Contradictions
 - (1) The vortex of contradiction and conflicts: class, gender, caste, race, ethnic people and so on.
 - (2) Convergence of contradictions and conflicts
- 5) Global cultural situation: Global Cultural Hegemony
 - (1) The erosion and suppression of identity and values
 - (2) The suppression and corruption of creativity
 - (3) The colonizing of sense-perception, feeling, consciousness and spirit
- 6) Global religious situation: Global Faithdom
 - (1) The erosion of faiths
 - (2) Fundamentalization
 - (3) World christendom
- 7) Ecological situation: Bio-Empire
 - (1) The destruction of nature
 - (2) The pollution of nature
- 8) Cosmic situation: Cosmic Empire
 - (1) Conquering of the earth and the cosmos
 - (2) The manipulation, control and destruction of the micro-cosmic world

Convergence of All Living Beings for their Conviviality: Contours of Convergence Movement in the 21st century

We affirm the Convergence of all Living beings for the Conviviality of Life. This calls for a convergence for liberation of all living beings. The vision should hold the convergence of Participation, Justice, Peace, Creativity and Conviviality for the life together of all living beings on earth under heaven. This would be a convergent vision of Asian peoples.

Often the order of life is determined by the powerful. Now the global market and the global empire and their convergent powers determine the disorder of life in Asia as well as on earth. This has had a great influence on the life of Asian peoples as well as their vision. Now is the time when Asian peoples together with all living beings on earth can forge a fresh and new vision in the context of the vision of history and the wisdom for life in response to the powers of the global empire and global market.

Recovery of the Pivotal Point of convergence

Jesus of Galilee standing against the Roman empire is our pivotal point. This triggered a convergent vision of the order of life, overcoming the domination of the Pax Romana, inheriting the prophetic visions of justice, peace and life, overcoming the socio-economic class contradiction, ethnic-national division, gender and cultural injustice, intellectual segregation, power domination and religious discrimination.

However, this vision has been obscured by the Romanization of christian faith and its subsequent development, the Western modernization of christian faith and the christian symbiosis with the Western colonial powers.

Asian Christian faith needs to recover Jesus the Asian who holds the wisdom and the vision of life for all living beings for their conviviality.

The Asian convergence of wisdom and vision of life means a convergence of all Asian wisdoms, religious and cultural, philosophical, intellectual, historical and ecological. this is a multi-faith convergence. It is a multi-cultural convergence. It is a multi-philosophical convergence. Jesus the Asian stands among these convergent movements and dynamics, for Jesus becomes the Alpha and Omega of the convergence of liberation of all living beings for their conviviality.

The ecumenical convergence of Christian faith has been too constrictive. The notion of unity rings the bell of 封建 imperial order. Agreement of doctrines and church order, which has been very much influenced by political regimes, is a too restrictive base for an ecumenical unity of the church as well as of humanity.

An Asian convergence of the people's liberation traditions should be all inclusive of all religious and philosophical wisdoms of life.

- 1) Liberation ecumenism has been fragmentary.
- 2) Liberation ecumenism has been condemned to the localized contexts.
- 3) Liberation ecumenism has failed to forge a universal solidarity.
- 4) Liberation ecumenism needs clearer discerning of the signs of the times.

The Minjung-Dalit Conversation toward a Global Convergence Movement for the Omega Point

Asian Convergence begins here with us.

Asian religious faiths, cultural traditions and philosophies have a long history of creative convergence for life. Asian liberation theologies must inherit this history and embrace all convergent dynamics. The theology of struggle in the Philippines, theologies of Maori and Aborigines and ethnic and tribal peoples, theology of home land, theology against emperor system, theologies of dialogue with Asian faiths, theologies of ecological sustainability, the Feminist theologies, and theologies of the peoples, including the Dalit theology and the Minjung theology, need to find convergent points for the liberation of life. They should not remain in a fragmented or localized state. This convergence will open new theological and ecumenical horizons for liberation.

Asian Liberation Ecumenism needs to embrace social wisdoms and philosophies of justice, peace and life that are indigenous in the Asian soil. Dialogues and cooperation, even solidarity relations are a way toward a macro-ecumenical convergence. Liberation traditions of Asian socialist philosophies, of Asian religious

faiths and of Asian cultures need to be embraced in our liberation ecumenism. Already Asian Christian faith has maintained this convergent mode from the beginning at the roots and has born many fruits in an abundant fashion. And yet this convergence had never been recognized 연 새 the theological reductionism of Western Christianity.

An African and Asian Ecumenical Space for Convergence should be boldly explored. There could be a significant convergent dynamic for global convergence and global ecumenism. The demographical, religious, cultural as well as geo-political, economic and political dynamics of African people and Asian people have a great and creative potential for a convergent movement of liberation not only in the African and Asian continents but also in the whole earth.

The Western liberation movements, including the Christian faith, are to be converged into the Asian convergent movement; this is not westernization, nor indigenization, nor contextualization. True Asian Convergence must account for the East-West convergence for liberation toward the global ecumenical convergence. This global convergence for conviviality of all living beings must be distinguished from the Western convergence under the power of the global empire, the global market and the global technocracy.

Cosmic Convergence for Conviviality of All Living Beings

Modern Western civilization, including Western Christianity, has failed to sustain the conviviality of all living beings in the cosmos. Asian and African peoples, native and aboriginal peoples, and ethnic and tribal peoples have abundant wisdom for the cosmic conviviality which is the foundation of cosmic ecumenism.

The convergence of life of all living beings for their conviviality is the OMEGA point of the universe. It is called Taeguk, which is the ALPHA AND OMEGA of the whole life and therefore of the whole universe. At this point the Dalit and the Minjung meet for the feast of life in the cosmic banquet.

We discern that caste structure and class structure are meeting at the convergence of original social sin and evil. All other dimensions of sin and evil are merging to converge at this point of original evil and sin. The liberation movement of the Dalit and the Minjung is converging as a revolutionary movement for the convivial life of all living beings. Our ecumenical discourse is that of the convergence of liberation. Let us liberate ourselves from the religious, cultural and ideological captivities so that we see a new fresh vision of the universe, full of justice, peace and life.

Abstract

The liberation discourses have been fragmented as they seek unique discourses in their particular contexts. In the face of the global economic regime and of the global empire, in which there is a technocratic convergence for power operates, the article argues that the liberation discourses must seek a convergent point with all and every divergent identity, struggle and situational characteristics for the

conviviality of all living beings. It has argued that the Minjung theology in Korea has been a convergent discourse of various Korean religious and philosophical liberation traditions. The article seeks to expose the technocratic convergence, which is an inner logic of the global power of the market and empire. It further argues that the conviviality of all living beings is indeed in a dynamic process of convergence towards the final fulfilment.

Key Words

liberation discourse, Minjung theology convergence, technological convergence, conviviality of all living beings.