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Aims and Scope

The Journal of Daeseon Thought and the Religions of East Asia (JDTREA) is the official English language journal of the Daeseon Academy of Sciences, and thus far, it is the only peer-reviewed, English language journal exclusively dedicated to research on Daeseon Thought and the contemporary relevance of East Asia Religions. Daeseon Thought refers to a grouping of native Korean religious concepts best characterized by the Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence (*Haewon Sangsaeng*) and the Grateful Reciprocation of Favors for Mutual Beneficence (*Boeun Sangsaeng*), and the chief purveyor of Daeseon Thought is Daeseon Jinrihoe, a representative Korean religion the ideological origins of which can be traced back to Kang Jeungsan. Although there is a reasonable level of worldwide familiarity with the major religious traditions of East Asia, Daeseon Thought remains under-researched outside of Korea. As a remedy to this, the Daeseon Academy of Science (DAOS), aims to publish *JDTREA* twice a year. The editorial board of *JDTREA* consists of active scholars from over a dozen countries including Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Australia, France, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Taiwan, the UK, and the USA. *JDTREA* is published to promote global studies on Daeseon Thought and East Asia religion by encouraging wide-ranging research on these topics. The scope of *JDTREA* includes the following:

- Interpretation and analysis of Daeseon Jinrihoe's religious phenomena in all fields of the humanities and social sciences
- Comparative research on the above in relation to another religion, philosophy, ideology, etc.
- Critical reviews of academic trends, mainly in the arts and humanities, that relate to Daeseon Thought and/or East Asian religions
- New interpretations of and approaches to Daeseon Thought

The types of publications featured in *JDTREA* will include original articles, research notes, and book reviews. Other types of contributions are negotiable but subject to the approval of the editorial board. All unsolicited articles will be subject to peer review, and commissioned articles are reviewed by the Editorial Board.

About the Journal

JDTREA debuted on September 30th, 2021 with volume 1, issue 1. The journal is set to be published twice annually and special editions may also be published in the future. The number of copies printed will be 500 per publication. The full texts will be freely available at www.jdre.org. No publishing costs will be incurred by authors who submit to the journal.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

Carole M. CUSACK

The University of Sydney, Australia

The publication of the first issue of *Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia (JDTREA)* in late 2021 was an important scholarly moment of pride for Daejin University and the Daesoon Academy of Sciences as academic institutions, and also for Daesoon Jinrihoe, South Korea's largest new religious movement. For me as Editor, it signalled the start of an enterprise that will contribute significantly to the emergent body of research in English on Korean, and more broadly East Asian, new religions.

The second issue of *the Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia* has come together very smoothly and contains six fascinating articles focusing on Daesoon Jinrihoe and the Vietnamese new religion of Caodaism. The comparative method is used to great effect in the opening article by George Chryssides (York St John University, UK), "Disseminating Daesoon Thought: A Comparative Analysis." This research compares three new religions in Korea; Daesoon Jinrihoe, the Unification Church, and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Chryssides analyses membership statistics, evangelisation techniques, and the ways the three organizations are financed. The second article is by Christopher Hartney (University of Sydney) and is titled "Vietnamese Syncretism and the Characteristics of Caodaism's Chief Deity: Problematizing Đứ́c Cao Đạ́i as a 'Monotheistic' God Within an East Asian Heavenly Milieu." This piece uses monotheism as a cross-cultural category that permits the analysis of Caodaism alongside Western Christianity and Western ideas about God, yet the focus is on how Vietnamese religious thinkers develop it in a unique fashion.

The third contribution is by Bernadette Rigal-Cellard (Université Bordeaux Montaigne [France]) and is titled "Incarnation and Divine Essence in Daesoon Thought: A Comparative Study between Daesoon Thought and Christianity." This study compares ideas about gods taking on human form, and the implications for the theological conception of the universe and the destiny of believers. Next is Rosita Šorytė's "Daesoon Thought as the Source of Daesoon Jinrihoe's Social Work" which shifts attention to the practical work of doing good and being a positive force in the world, which is an important goal of Daesoon Jinrihoe. This is followed by Tuan Em Nguyen's article "The Spreading of Caodaism to Taiwan: Man's Will versus Divine Will" which examines the doctrine, philosophy, and ideas about prophecy, of Caodaism. The final contribution is Brian Fehler's "Traditions of Western Rhetoric and Daesoon Jinrihoe: Prolegomena to Further Investigations", which emphasises the need for extensive and detailed research in the area of Asian new religions.

The journal issue is completed by reviews of three relevant books by current scholars. Again, to be editor of this varied and informative collection is an inspiring and encouraging thing, and I believe that *JDTREA* will win further subscribers and

readers with this second issue. As always, I am obliged to Bae Kyuhan, Lee Gyungwon, Jason Greenberger and Choi Wonhyuk from Daejin University, and to all the scholars who have contributed research to this issue. In a world that has survived two years of Covid-19 lockdowns and the upending of many of our expectations, achievements such as these should be celebrated.

Carole M. Cusack

Editor of *JDTREA*
University of Sydney, Australia

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Brian FEHLER (Texas Woman's University, USA)

Disseminating Daesoon Thought: A Comparative Analysis

George D. CHRYSSIDES

George D. Chryssides is an Honorary Research Fellow at York St John University (UK), and formerly Head of Religious Studies at the University of Wolverhampton. He has written extensively on new religions: recent publications include *Jehovah's Witnesses: Continuity and Change* (2016), *Historical Dictionary of Jehovah's Witnesses* (2nd ed 2019), *Minority Religions in Europe and the Middle East* (2019), *The Insider-Outsider Debate* (co-edited with Stephen E. Gregg, 2019), and *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Studying Christians* (co-edited with Stephen E. Gregg, 2020). He is currently president of the International Society for the Study of New Religions.



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Original Articles

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Abstract

The author examines three new religious movements in South Korea: Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unification Church, and the Daesoon Jinrihoe, and aims to identify the factors that are conducive to the growth of each. All three organisations believe in a coming paradise, and the article explores their respective attempts to interest the populace in their appeal. Discussion is given to membership statistics and the problems of measuring allegiance and moves on to consider methods of propagation. Most obviously, evangelisation strategy is important: Jehovah's Witnesses and Unificationists have tended to engage the interest of strangers, while followers of Daesoon Jinrihoe are more inclined to evangelise family and friends. Additionally, there are other factors that determine an organisation's progress: cultural appropriateness, engagement in social and educational work, and attitudes to conflict and peace, the latter being particularly important in a society that has experienced war and occupation. Reference is made to the ways in which these three organisations finance themselves, and it is argued that financial resources merit greater attention in the scholarly study of religion, since monetary assets are needed to secure a spiritual movement's existence. Of the three organisations under discussion, the Daesoon Jinrihoe has been the most successful, being South Korea's largest new religion, while Jehovah's Witnesses are in steady state, and the Unification movement is experiencing slight decline.

Keywords: Daesoon Jinrihoe; Jehovah's Witnesses; new religious movements; proselytisation, religion in Korea; Unification Church.

Korea abounds in new religious movements (NRMs), and these have met with different degrees of success in the course of their history. In what follows, I shall examine the three contrasting NRMs that have become established in Korea and suggest possible reasons for their respective progress. The three that will be discussed here are Jehovah's Witnesses, the Tongil-gyo (better known as the Unification Church or, more popularly, "the Moonies"),¹ the Daeseon Jinrihoe. All three religions have a significant presence in Korea, all have taken their rise in the country in the twentieth century, and all of them look forward to a coming paradise of everlasting peace and harmony. The first differs from the others, being not indigenously Korean, but having Christian origins in the United States, and basing its teachings uncompromisingly on the Christian Bible, regarding all other forms of religion as false. The second – the Unification Church – originated in Korea, but combines elements of Korean religion and culture with Christianity; while the third, the Daeseon Jinrihoe, is indigenously Korean, drawing on many of the classical ideas of Korean spirituality. The fortunes of each religious organisation are different: the Daeseon Jinrihoe appears to be most successful, being Korea's largest new religion; the Unification Church is in decline, while Jehovah's Witnesses are in steady state. Only two of the three – Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church – are worldwide organisations; Daeseon Jinrihoe is almost totally confined to Korea.

Jehovah's Witnesses

It may be helpful, first, to provide brief outlines of the history, basic tenets, and practices of these organisations. The oldest of the three groups are Jehovah's Witnesses: their official legally registered name is the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, and was founded by Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916) in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in the United States. Russell's movement took its rise within the Christian Protestant tradition, and was heavily influenced by nineteenth-century Adventism. Adventism was originally a movement, rather than a separate denomination, and it arose mainly within Baptist and Methodist circles; its principal beliefs included the inerrancy of the Christian scriptures, and in particular the promise of Jesus Christ's immanent return, for which they typically proposed a firm date – initially 1843. Adventists were made to feel increasingly unwelcome in mainstream Protestant circles, and hence set up their own denominations, the best-known of which is the Seventh-day Adventist Church, founded in 1863 by Ellen G. White (1827-1915). Although Jehovah's Witnesses tend to gain more public attention than Adventists, Seventh-day Adventism is over twice as strong numerically as Jehovah's Witnesses (Stewart and Martinich 2020).

The type of Adventism from which Jehovah's Witnesses originated was not in fact Seventh-day Adventism, which followed the Jewish practice of worshipping on Saturday

(the Jewish sabbath and seventh day); the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses meet on Sundays for worship, in common with most other mainstream Christians, including the Second Adventist tradition. Russell disagreed with mainstream Christianity on several key points of doctrine: he could not believe that a loving God would consign the wicked to everlasting torment in hell; and he could not accept the doctrine of predestination, held in certain Protestant circles, that God had elected in advance the "elect" who would aspire to the kingdom of heaven, and the "damned", who would be consigned eternally to hell. Russell wanted to see a return to the form of the Christian faith that was practiced by Jesus' original early disciples, who did not have a hierarchy of clergy and laity, and did not hold elaborate rituals or own opulent buildings with extravagant art and architecture.

In 1870, Russell formed a small group who met regularly to pray and study scripture. Coming from a fairly wealthy family, Russell was able to set up an organisation for printing and distributing Bibles and religious tracts, and he founded a journal titled *Zion's Watch Tower*, now known as *The Watchtower*, and which can be commonly seen in public places where two or more Jehovah's Witnesses stand beside one of their literature carts. Literature distribution began in 1881, and in 1884, Zion's Watch Tower Society (as it was originally named) became legally incorporated in Pennsylvania. Russell organised a number of colporteurs – people who went around with some of Russell's early writings, leaving them for interested members of the populace to read. Russell himself travelled widely, reaching as far as Japan and China, although not Korea (Zydek 2010, 317). A number of congregations, each of which was known as an *ecclesia*, met to study the Bible, together with Russell's writings. *Ecclesia* means "congregation," but etymologically it is derived from two Greek words – *ek*, meaning "out", and *kalein*, "to call". Originally, the allusion was to the Christian Church as a body whom God had called out of a sinful world, but Russell took a narrower view, and called upon his supporters not only to quit worldly allegiance, but to leave the mainstream churches, which he believed had become corrupt. Russell had defined various dates for Christ's return – initially 1874, and subsequently 1878 and 1914 (Chryssides 2018, 49). The last of these dates remains significant for Jehovah's Witnesses, which they reckon to be the time at which Jesus Christ entered his heavenly sanctuary and cast Satan down to earth. This belief was corroborated by the outbreak of World War I in that year, which involved tremendous atrocities, confirming that the present systems of world government are ruled by Satan.

After Russell died in 1916, Joseph Franklin Rutherford (1860-1942), a Missouri attorney, assumed the leadership. Rutherford organised the loose federation of *ecclesias* into a unified structured organisation. During Rutherford's leadership, house-to-house evangelism became an expectation, and in 1931 gave his followers the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" – the name by which they are most commonly recognised today. Russell had

expected the faithful to be translated into heaven, but this did not happen in the years he defined. The Bible mentions 144,000 “saints” who would reign with Christ in heaven (Revelation 7:4); however, the membership of the Watch Tower Society far exceeded that number by the time Rutherford assumed office. Accordingly, in 1935 Rutherford announced a distinction, also suggested in the book of Revelation, between the 144,000 and a “great crowd” of followers who would remain on a renewed earth to worship Christ. Most Jehovah’s Witnesses today regard themselves as belonging to the great crowd; and only those who belong to the 144,000 are permitted to partake of the bread and wine at the annual Memorial service, which commemorates Jesus’ last meal with his disciples.

By regarding themselves as being “in the truth,” Jehovah’s Witnesses are exclusivist, believing themselves to be the one true form of religion, and regarding other religious organisations as “false religion” or “pagan.” Hence, they are careful to avoid importing any practices that come from other forms of spirituality, such as the observance of festivals such as Christmas, Easter, and saints’ days, which they regard as not belonging to the original practices of the early Church, but celebrations that are imported from other faiths, such as Graeco-Roman religion and pagan fertility rites (Watch Tower 2014, 219-20).

Subsequent Watch Tower leaders introduced their own innovations. In 1971 a Governing Body was created, and which continues to be the ultimate human source of authority within the Society. Jehovah’s Witnesses have proved particularly controversial for the teachings about blood, regarding it as the life force, and hence something that should not be transmitted from one human to another, as in blood transfusion (Knox 2018, 149-201).

Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Movement

Turning to Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Movement, there are three main schisms at the time of writing, following the death of its founder leader Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012), and disputes about the leadership and the organisation’s assets. The largest strand, headed by his widow Hak Ja Han Moon and their eldest son Hyun Jin Moon, and which has been known since 1996 as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) (Chryssides 2009, 364), is the one that will be discussed here, and I shall henceforth refer to it by its better-known name as the Unification Church.

Christianity made inroads into Korea mainly after the country established relationships with the rest of the world in 1882. Protestantism was more successful than Roman Catholicism, and the late nineteenth century saw the arrival of Presbyterians and Methodists, followed closely by the Church of England. Seventh-day Adventists arrived in 1905. Some of the early missionary work was done by colporteurs, who moved on after

their literature had been distributed, leaving these new readers of Christian literature without more mature Christian teachers who could answer questions and explain the Christian faith more fully and accurately. As a consequence, idiosyncratic interpretations of the Christian message arose, often combining the faith with indigenous Korean religion, frequently folk shamanism, and thus a number of new religious movements arose. Although Moon's parents evidently belonged to a mainstream Presbyterian congregation, having converted when Sun Myung Moon was aged nine, strong elements of Korean folk shamanism can be perceived in the teachings of Moon's Unification Church (Chryssides 1991, 72-73).

Apparently Moon used to pray a great deal as a youth, going to remote spots on a Korean mountainside to deepen his spiritual life. His decisive experience was around Easter in 1935 when he claimed to have received a vision of Jesus, who commissioned him to complete his unfinished work. Jesus revealed that he had not come to be crucified for the world's sins: on the contrary, this was a mistake made by the religious leaders of that time. Instead, God had intended Jesus to marry, and for the couple to become the parents of sinless children, thus changing humanity's "blood lineage". Subsequent revelations purportedly brought Moon into contact with other members of the spirit world, including Satan himself, who revealed that Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden was being seduced into a sexual relationship with him. As a consequence, Adam and Eve's offspring forfeited their divine lineage, as God originally intended, causing their progeny to become tainted, and their lineage satanic rather than divine.

Humanity's salvation therefore requires the restoration of this blood lineage. According to Unificationist teaching, this can only be done through the sending of a messiah, and in this regard Unificationism is in accord with mainstream Christian teaching. However, the Messiah's coming requires the fulfilment of number of conditions, the most important of which is the arrival of a "central figure" who would attest to the Messiah's status and enable humanity to recognise him as such. Various successive figures in the Old Testament narrative were assigned this role – Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses – but each of them failed in some respect to obey God. Between each central figure, a designated passage of time must elapse; the calculation of these time periods is complex, but it is sufficient to say that the next central figure after Moses could not arrive until the coming of John the Baptist, who was intended to be Jesus Christ's herald. John at first was faithful to Jesus and testified in his favour, but subsequently came to have doubts and, as a consequence, Jesus was only partially able to fulfil his mission. What Jesus accomplished was the offering of "spiritual salvation": he opened up Paradise, as is evidenced by his words to one of the dying thieves who were crucified with him (Luke 23:43). According to Moon's worldview, there are various levels of existence: the "unprincipled realm" (the level at which the most undeveloped spirits dwell), and three further levels of "formation", "growth", and

“completion”. Those on earth were at the formation stage, awaiting Jesus’ opening of Paradise (the “growth” level), which should have been a prelude to the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven (the “completion” level). The necessary time period which must elapse after Jesus is calculated by noting sections of Christian history and perceiving parallels with those of the Old Testament period – again a complex calculation, but one which evidently suggests that the messiah of the “Completed Testament Era” will be born between 1917 and 1930. Moon was born in 1920, and further line of argument purports to show that the new messiah will be born in Korea (Kwak 1980, 306). Korea is important to Unificationists, not only because it is the movement’s country of origin, but because the division between the North and the South highlights the conflict between two ideologies of communism and democracy. The Unification Church regards communism as a great evil that will be defeated in a final conflict, after which humanity will be brought to acknowledge Moon as the Messiah, the “Lord of the Second Coming” (Kwak 1980, 289-291).

Moon’s public ministry began in 1945. We know that Moon was twice arrested, and spent some three years in a prison camp in Hungnam in the North, although the precise charges are unclear. He appears to have had contact with various Korean new Christian-derived religious groups during his imprisonment. The accounts given by the Unification Church probably relate more to their theological thinking and their favourable disposition towards their founder-leader than to verifiable facts. It seems certain, however, that he joined a small religious community known as the Israel Monastery (now known as the Cheongsugyo, which means “Pure Water Church”), where he had hopes of being acclaimed as the new messiah, with leader Kim Baek Moon as the “central figure” – the modern John the Baptist – who would testify to his status. Kim Baek Moon had written two theological treatises, *Theology of the Holy Ghost* (Sunghin Shinbak) and *The Basic Principle of Christianity* (Kidokkyo Keunbon Wollli). If Kim Baek Moon had complied, the Israel Monastery would have provided a ready-made platform for Sun Myung Moon’s preaching, but this did not happen, and Moon was forced to leave, seeking his own set of disciples (Chryssides 1991, 99-100). Moon constructed a small shack on the outskirts of Seoul in 1954, which served as the first physical location of the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC 1996), which was the original name of the organisation, and which remains its official name in law. This theology is explained in a somewhat complex theological work entitled *Exposition of Divine Principle* (HSA-UWC 1996). This latest version appeared in 1996, and is the culmination of ideas that Moon and his followers developed over the years.

Daeseon Jinrihoe

Readers will no doubt be familiar with the origins, teachings, and practices of the

Daeseon Jinrihoe, but I have given them exposition here for completeness. Its origins can be traced to the Donghak movement: the name means “Eastern learning”, in contrast to the Western learning that had been brought by Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century. Daeseon Jinrihoe believes in the supreme deity, Gucheon Sangje, who is the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, and the world’s creator. In the course of time, human civilisation had deteriorated, and the buddhas, bodhisattvas and great sages petitioned Sangje to intervene. In response, he began a “Great Itineration” through the universe, visiting the earthly, heavenly, and human realms to re-establish order and harmony. During the Great Itineration, Sangje journeyed to the East, and then to Korea, where he entered the golden statue of Maitreya Buddha in the Geumsansa Temple at the Moak Mountain, North Jeolla Province, and resided there for 30 years (Introvigne 2018, 35).

Sangje revealed his teachings to Choi Je-Wu (1824–1864), who was one of the best-known Korean visionaries, and who claimed to receive a vision in 1860, subsequently establishing the Donghak religion. Choi Je-Wu’s dominant influence was Confucian, but he had some leanings towards theism, which, together with his attempts at social reform, brought him into conflict with the authorities. He was executed in 1864, but his movement lived on, and was a major contributor to the famous Donghak Rebellion of 1894, in which the peasants engaged in armed revolt. In the meantime, Daeseon Jinrihoe followers believe that Sangje was born in Jeolla Province as a human belonging to the Kang family, and his incarnation became known as Sangje Kang Jeungsan (1871-1909). Kang supported the peasants’ cause and the fight against Western imperialism, but predicted the failure of the Donghak rebellion, advising his followers not to participate in the conflict. Kang is accredited with visions and remarkable miracles; he is held to have proclaimed unprecedented truth to the world, reordering heaven and earth, and opening a new world, after which he returned to heaven, reclaiming his throne as the Supreme God, and as the true object of worship. During his earthly life, he was concerned to improve society, teaching an end to social discrimination, the resolution of grievances, and the end of dominance of men over women. In 1894, he established a village school, and in 1908 founded the Donggok Clinic, before ascending back to heaven in 1909 (DIRC 2016, 199–216.).

Kang’s movement attracted considerable support, but eventually divided into a number of splinter groups. A subsequent leader, Jo Jeungsan (1895–1958), had never known Kang Jeungsan, but nonetheless claimed to be his successor, having purportedly received a revelation from Kang Jeungsan in 1917. In 1925 he founded the Mugeukdo spiritual group, but was forced to disband it in 1941, as a consequence of state opposition. After Japan was defeated in 1945, the group was re-established as the Taegukdo, and a new headquarters was built three years later. Following Jo Jeungsan’s death in 1958, Park Han-Gyeong, (subsequently known as Park Wudang, 1918–1996)

assumed the leadership. Park Wudang's succession was disputed, however, and he left Busan, departing for Seoul, where he founded the Daeseon Jinrihoe in 1969 (Introvigne 2018, 29-31).

Daeseon Jinrihoe teaches Four Tenets: the virtuous concordance of yin and yang (*eumyang-bapdeok*); harmonious union of divine and human beings (*sinin-jobwa*); resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence (*baewon-sangsaeng*); and the Perfected State of Unification with the Dao (*dotong-jingyeong*). There are Four Cardinal Mottos, or Precepts – quieting the mind (*anshim*); quieting the body (*anshin*); respect for Heaven (*gyeongcheon*), and observance of ritual practices (*sudo*) – and The Three Essential Attitudes: sincerity (*seong*), respectfulness (*gyeong*), and faithfulness (*shin*) (DIRC 2016, 199–216).

Some of the rituals practised at home, while others require attendance at one of the temples. Spiritual Training involves chanting the Tae-eul Mantra, and has no prescribed place and time. Prayer (*gido*) can be made either at home or in the context of the temple, where it is practised at prescribed times. Other practices, such as *gongbu* (holy works) involves the continuous recitation of incantations throughout the day and night, in relays, and occurs at the Yeosu Temple Complex: it is believed to hasten the coming of the Earthly Paradise. Special devotions are held to mark the birth and death of Kang Jeungsan, Jo Jeongsan, and Park Wudang, as well as key events in the movement's history. Solstices and equinoxes are also marked devotionally.

Numerical strength

Having given these basic expositions, I shall now examine their varying degrees of success in South Korea. Membership statistics are invariably problematic, for a variety of reasons. It is not always clear how membership should be defined, since there are varying degrees of allegiance within any organisation; and membership statistics can be gathered in different ways by different researchers. However, bearing in mind these caveats, it is possible to obtain a sufficiently adequate impression of the differences in uptake between the Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Daeseon Jinrihoe.

Membership statistics for the Unification Church are particularly problematic for a number of reasons. Transnational movements of members, which can happen on a substantial scale, have obvious effects on statistics. Members from abroad are often encouraged – possibly even required on occasions – to come to Korea to take part in seminars, to engage in ancestor liberation ceremonies, or to participate in the Blessing. There have also been various types of membership, including forms of associate membership, which merely involved no further commitment than signing a short statement committing oneself to family values and world peace. Members of the public, who were presented with such a document, could inadvertently become

counted as belonging to the Unification Movement. One source reported as many as 50,000 in South Korea in 1990 (Long 1994, 158), while a Unification leader in Korea reported a membership figure of approximately 17,000 in 2008. More recently, Eileen Barker reported worship attendance in Korea in 2014 as 27,690 (Barker 2018, 21). The seemingly large numbers of Blessing couples are no guide to membership. In 1999 it was reported that Moon conducted weddings of 360 million couples, and that 400 million couples were blessed in 2000, these events having taken place at Seoul Olympic Stadium (FFWPU 2018). Such claims would obviously be absurd if they referred to the number of people who were physically present, but it has been well known for some time that most of these “couples” are simply names collected in various ways by other members, and presented at the ceremonies. The capacity of the Seoul Olympic Stadium is less than 70,000, and 400 million couples would be equivalent to around 15 times South Korea’s entire population! Recent newspaper reports give publicity to a Blessing ceremony held at the Cheong Shim Peace World Center in Gapyeong, a small town around 55 kilometers north-east of Seoul, in which 6000 “new couples” were allegedly blessed in Unification-style marriage, with a total audience of 30,000, notwithstanding the threat of the coronavirus (FFWPU-USA 2020). Such reports, however, have been disputed by reliable informants known to the author: it has been known for some time that recent Blessing ceremonies have in fact been re-dedications of existing couples, and in any case participation in the Blessing is not conditional on membership. Even if such media reports were reliable, it would reflect a temporary international gathering, rather than a Korean following.

The more realistic statistic of less than 30,000 may seem surprising in view of the Unification Church’s high profile, but the organisation has attracted a much higher level of publicity and its numbers suggest: worldwide estimates have varied from one to three million. However, in recent years its focus has been on organising Blessing ceremonies rather than attracting new members, since the criterion for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven is the Blessing, not formal membership.

Determining Daeseon Jinrihoe’s numerical strength is also problematic, although to a lesser degree. According to John Jorgensen, the organisation estimated 100,000 followers in 1975, while other sources reported 219,176 in 1978, 3,615,437 in 1991, and an astonishing 8 million in 1997 (Jorgensen 2001, 1). The lower estimates may be due to members checking “Other” as an affiliation when the organisation was not specifically indicated, while the estimate of 8 million is no doubt due to excessive enthusiasm in self-reporting. The organisation’s current claim of 6 million seems reasonable.

Jehovah’s Witnesses’ allegiance can be much more readily ascertained. From its early years, it has encouraged its colporteurs to keep precise records, and it continues to publish statistical information by country, giving precise indications of Memorial attendees, numbers of “publishers” (their term for active members who evangelise),

and numbers of baptisms, based on information supplied by congregations and branch offices. In 2019, the Society reported 102,456 members reporting on their evangelism, 136,891 Memorial attendees, and 1800 baptisms (JW.org 2020).

The analysis of these membership statistics indicates that the Daeseon Jinrihoe appears to be the most successful, having a following of around one million adherents; some sources even regard this figure as modest, asserting that some six million members exist. This compares with 102,456 Jehovah's Witness "publishers" (their name for the active members that undertake evangelising work), and possibly just under 28,000 active Unification Church members (Barker 2018, .21).

Evangelisation strategies

The most obvious factor in determining the success of a religious organisation is its evangelisation strategy. The background of converts does not necessarily reflect the demographics spread of the country, but relates to a number of factors – whether particular sectors of society are targeted, whether evangelism is done systematically or by chance encounters, and whether potential converts are available to take up the responsibilities that are expected of them. Although we do not have precise demographic details of those who joined the organisation, accounts of Unificationist proselytizing strongly suggest that the typical convert was someone who was single, young, and not in full-time employment; often, in the 1970s and early 1980s, a prospective college student who was taking a gap year. In 1955 in Korea the Unification Church established the student organisation CARP (Collegiate Association for Research into Principle), which aimed to interest members of the student population to study its teachings; this organisation subsequently spread to other countries (Chryssides 2009, 359). Many members and ex-members will recount being introduced to the organisation by a stranger at a coach terminal, or being personally invited to come to one of their centres. Since, at least initially, the standard mode of belonging was community living, relatively few individuals were in a position to abandon their conventional lifestyle to live in communities, and their mode of existence in these environments was fairly basic. Members slept in dormitories and, if they lived in a centre with families, they would be likely to be assigned one single room for husband, wife, and children. As the movement grew older, new members were typically second-generation; older members were those who had joined many years previously, and, although it is not impossible for members of all ages to join, the movement was not designed to take aboard older converts.

By contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses have tended to attract a somewhat older generation than the youth culture. The house-to-house evangelism tends to ensure that the publisher talks initially to parents rather than their children; if a child opens a door, the typical response is to enquire whether parents are at home. It is adults or entire families

who are specifically invited to Kingdom Hall meetings, where no special provision is made for children; children do not come alone, and if they come with an adult they are expected to sit through the programme, just as adults do. Further, although becoming an active Jehovah's Witness is demanding, conversion does not require community living, and does not normally require the convert to abandon his or her employment, or to take up residence in some new location. It is true that there are some roles in the Watch Tower organisation then necessitate more radical changes in lifestyle: one might work in a Bethel, which is a regional headquarters in which members work full-time and live communally, or one might enlist as a pioneer – that is, a member who travels to some other geographical location to undertake publishing work. However, such roles are optional, and certainly not expectations of new converts.

The Jehovah's Witnesses' methods in Korea were typical of those employed elsewhere. Russell regarded Korea as a challenge, since Christian mission had only newly begun and hence the population were unfamiliar with the Christian Bible, on which Watch Tower teachings are based. However, in 1912 *The Watch Tower* magazine reported "that conditions in heathendom warranted the expenditure of some of the Society's funds in proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom there", and expressed the intention of printing literature in Japanese and Korean (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society 1912, 5144). As in numerous other countries, the Watch Tower evangelists when encouraged by small beginnings, continuing to persist relentlessly, and grow steadily, with the financial backing of the Society in the US. Robert R. Hollister was the Association's representative in the Orient, and he arranged for Russell's first volume *The Divine Plan of the Ages* to be translated into Korean. It was printed in Japan and released in 1914. Hollister and his wife went to Korea, and spent some time evangelising there. Meanwhile, another pioneer, Fanny L. Mackenzie, came from the UK in 1915, and placed 281 of Russell's books. In 1914 Russell received a letter from a Mr Kang, who had met Hollister, whom he credited with having saved him from "the dangerous currents of what I now see was Spiritism—Satanic teaching." Kang undertook some translation work, and was made responsible for a printery for which the second president Joseph Franklin Rutherford and sent US\$2000 for the printing of literature in Korean, Chinese and Japanese. However, to the Society's dismay, Kang used the printery to produce his own secular books, and he eventually sold the printery without authorisation. Notwithstanding this setback, Kang was replaced by Park Min-Joon, a colporteur, who travelled the country on foot, organising public meetings and placing literature. Park was also able to do some translation work, including Rutherford's books *Reconciliation* and *Government*, both of which were released in 1928 (Watch Tower 1988, 136–197; Rutherford 1928a, 1928b). The Society pressed on with its work, despite setbacks: it encountered opposition from mainstream Christian missionaries, and also from the government. In 1933 its offices in Tokyo and Seoul were raided and

literature burnt. From 1933 to 1939 members could only use the *Golden Age* magazine at their meetings, being the only publication that was not banned by the government; now published as *Awake!*, it focuses on social and human interest topics to a greater extent than religious ones, so its use was less than satisfactory. The first congregation was formally established in 1949, and the following year full-time pioneers (missionaries from abroad) were appointed to conduct Bible studies. These are face-to-face meetings with interested inquirers, following a house-to-house visit, and systematically explain the Society's favoured publication at the time: in 1950 this was *Let God Be True* (Watch Tower 1946). Despite disruptions due to the 1950–1953 Korean War, the Watch Tower organisation and *Watchtower* magazine were registered with the state authorities in 1952, and a Korean branch was established the following year. In 1954 the first District Convention was held: at that time congregations were organised into Districts, which were grouped into Circuits, and the first Circuit Assembly took place in 1955. The following year the third president Nathan H. Knorr visited Korea, a presidential visit being a sure sign that the organisation had gained a firm foothold (Watch Tower 1988, 136–197).

The story of the Unification Church's inception is not entirely clear. Before establishing his small church in Seoul, Moon had begun to assemble an early of his *Divine Principle* text. Exactly how it originated is uncertain; the Unification Church claims that Moon dictated the content to an early disciple, Hyo Won Eu, at such amazing speed that Eu had difficulty in keeping enough pencils sharp (Yoo, Kwang Wol 1974; Chryssides 1991, 22). Although this account seems unlikely, hagiographical tales like this serve a legitimating purpose and enhance the status of the text for Moon's followers. Whatever happened, the small shack in Seoul provided a base for Moon to expound his understanding of the Bible's teachings. Early attempts were made, both in Korea and abroad, to enlist the support of other Christian denominations; Moon hoped that they might endorse his teachings but, predictably, his attempts failed (Lofland 1966; Chryssides 2017, 87-100).

Of key importance in the dissemination of *Divine Principle* was one early convert, Young Oon Kim, who was a professor at Ewha University, and has often been hailed by members as the church's theologian. Kim was one of the early missionaries to the US, and she and an army colonel by the name of Bo Hi Pak set up small groups there. In his *Doomsday Cult*, sociologist John Lofland (1966), who undertook covert research on Young Oon Kim's group, recounts how she translated this early version into English, under the title *The Divine Principles*. Initially this group had little success, and interest in the Unification Movement only began substantially when Sun Myung Moon himself came to the states to deliver public lectures in 1972 (Lofland 1966) Moon had visited members in the US on two previous occasions, but these visits were low-key. (Chryssides 2009, 358).

With the leader now resident in the United States, it was not only easier to attract a small community led by the proclaimed new messiah, but Moon was now able to give directions concerning the organisation of his movement in the West. Three interrelated aims had to be realised: the message had to be proclaimed publicly and in a more personal way than the large public gatherings; a community of followers had to be established; and these two methods of growth required financing. In order to finance the young organisation, mobile fundraising teams (MFTs) were established: this commonly involved commissioning members to sell flowers and candles to the public, and often members were transported in vans in order to target fresh areas which were distant from the centres. Early members worked long hours, for which the organisation has frequently been criticised: a working day could be as long as 18 hours, with little time for food and sleep. Methods of propagating the message included street preaching, and striking up one-to-one conversations, often with young adults at public places such as bus stations. Those who expressed an interest were invited to one of the community's centres, where they could reside for the duration of the initial seminar. The first of these was a two-day seminar, in which the contents of *Divine Principle* were expounded by a lecturer – one of the early converts who had come to understand Moon's teachings. Those who wished to progress further could attend a seven-day seminar, and subsequently a 21-day seminar. Each of these events consisted of sequential exposition of *Divine Principle*, in progressively more detail. *Divine Principle* does not state explicitly that Sun Myung Moon is the Lord of the Second Advent, and this is not explicitly taught at these seminars. Attendees who asked directly whether Moon was the messiah were given slightly evasive answers, which at the same time provided strong hints that he was. The seeker might be asked to pray about whether Moon had this role; since it was unlikely that an attendee would return to say that God had answered in the negative, the positive conclusion not only confirmed Moon's status, but could be taken to indicate deep spiritual awareness of on the seeker's part, since he or she had demonstrated ability to recognise such an important divine truth (Barker 1984, 60–61).

In contrast to the Unification Church, Daeseon Jinrihoe does not rely on cold calling on doorsteps, or chance encounters with strangers. It teaches the importance of three basic "works": edification, cultivation, and propagation. The third of these relates to evangelisation. Daeseon Jinrihoe does not employ professional missionaries, but rather recommends that others are brought into the organisation by word of mouth. First, one should encourage one's family to experience the benefits of belonging; second, one should promote the virtues of Daeseon Jinrihoe among one's friends. Universities are places where the younger population are likely to be open to fresh ideas, but until recently that has been no systematic evangelism among students. Instead, various projects that are organised by the movement have brought in volunteers from outside. Less frequently, Daeseon Jinrihoe members have taken to the streets for evangelisation;

however, the public reaction to this tended to be unfavourable, and the organisation made the decision to forbid missionary work of this kind. Propagation is carried out at branch level, principally through the movement's various activities.²

The message

Missionary strategy in itself is insufficient to secure converts. To be persuasive, a religion must have something to offer its seekers. There has to be something that strikes a chord with the listener, usually some message that addresses a concern, or furthers some cause to which he or she is sympathetic. As Don Baker (2016, 2–58) suggests, three aspects are needed: it must identify a problem that concerns its inquirers; it must offer an explanation; and, most importantly, it must claim to provide a solution. In addition, for a religion to gain momentum it must offer some kind of guidance for life, enabling its followers to become better human beings, and offer them some object of worship which they can revere. Baker argues that Daesoon Jinrihoe adds new meaning to traditional concepts drawn from Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism (he itemises Dao, li, Qi, and dharma), allowing it to offer innovative explanations and solutions to traditional problems. Confucianism and Buddhism both reject what Baker calls anthropomorphic theism, focusing on the human rather than on interactions between the human and the divine, and hence can be described as anthropocentric, emphasising human betterment. Korean folk shamanism, by contrast, emphasises the supernatural, invoking gods and spirits to address human problems, endowing them with anthropomorphic characteristics; in doing so it lacks an explicit moral code. Daesoon Jinrihoe's originality lies, he believes, in combining anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, focusing simultaneously on the divine and human, acknowledging both human efforts to solve humanity's problems, while simultaneously invoking the aid of divine power.

Baker develops his argument by referring to the Three Essential Attitudes – sincerity, respect for less, and faithfulness — and the Four Fundamental Principles – “Quieting the heart-mind”, “Quieting the body”, “Reverence for Heaven”, and “Cultivation” (observing ritual practice). He notes that the Three Fundamental Attitudes are states of mind that would be acknowledged by any upright Korean person, and have inner and outer aspects: they are simultaneously internal states of mind, while involving external interactions with others. However, as Baker argues, Daesoon Jinrihoe's innovation regarding these three is that its philosophy also regards them as relating to an external Supreme God, and hence combines the anthropocentric with the spiritual. Again, the idea of quieting mind and body, and perceiving an intertwined relationship between the two is traditional; yet what is innovative in Daesoon philosophy is linking these first two Principles with the Supreme Being, Sangje. Similarly, the Four Goals have a clear

resonance with Korean thought: the harmonisation of yin (Korean *um* or *eum*) and yang (*Eumyang-bapdeok*) are of course distinctively Daoist; the interaction between humans and gods (*Sinin-jobwa*) reflects a typical Korean understanding that there is constant interaction between the two realms, rather than a distancing of God that is more typical of Western religious thought. Baker points out that resolution of grievances (*Haewon-sangsaeng*) is a novel form of expression, but one which reflects both the physical conflicts experienced by Koreans at personal and political levels, as well as the unrest among spirits, which folk shamanism addresses. Finally, the “realisation of the Do” (*Dotong-Jingyeong*) reinforces a typical Korean hope in the coming paradise.

The Unification Church makes little explicit mention of ethics. None of the versions of *Divine Principle* have a section on the topic, and it is not taught at the Principle seminars. A small number of the UC’s theological texts address the topic, but mainly in the form of critique of ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, Kantianism, and moral relativism, and, as one might expect, Marxism receives particularly unfavourable discussion (Unification Thought Institute 1981, 231–242; 1973, 225-243; Kim 1976, 171–196). The distinctively Unificationist ethic is bound up with its philosophical-religious teachings, principally the relationship between God and the human family, which is the ideal of creation. The belief that God’s purpose for Adam and Eve was to marry and form a sinless family in God’s lineage results in an ethic that combines Eastern and Western ideas: the relationship between God and humanity, and between husband and wife draws on Daoist complementary opposites of yin and yang, as well as the Confucian “right and harmonious relationships,” which include a proper relationship between husband and wife. The Unification Church, however, couches this relationship in the Christian ideal of “unconditional love” (Unification Thought Institute 1973, 226).

What emerges from the Unificationist analysis of divine-human relationships is a sexual morality, based on the sanctity of marriage. Sexual relationships, according to Unificationist teaching, should be confined to husband and wife within the context of a marriage union. This entails that premarital sex and adultery are sins – re-emphasised by the fact that Eve’s adulterous pre-marital sexual relationship with Satan, her unfaithfulness to Adam, and Adam and Eve’s sexual union before undergoing marriage, are inherently bound up with the entry of sin into the world. Further, sexual relationships should be between a man and a woman, and hence the Unification Church expresses strong disapproval to homosexual relationships of any kind.

For Jehovah’s Witnesses, guidance for life comes exclusively from the Christian Bible, as interpreted by the Watch Tower Society. Humanity’s predicament is a world ruled by Satan, and which is characterised by natural calamities – such as famine, war, earthquakes, disease – and human wickedness. Only Jesus Christ can save the world from Satan’s domination, and this will happen at the final spiritual battle of

Armageddon, in which Christ will prevail over Satan. There is nothing that humans can do either to speed up or slow down this final conflict, and they will not themselves be part of the battle, which will be spiritual rather than physical. However, Armageddon will have human casualties, and hence members have the task of ensuring that not only they survive, but that as many men and women as possible avoid destruction, to have a hope of entering the earthly Paradise that will ensue. In the meantime, they should follow Jehovah's standards, as set out in the Bible. These include standards of honesty and integrity that would be expected universally, and (although they would not particularly welcome the comparison) a conservative view of sexual morality almost akin to that of the Unificationists – avoidance of premarital and extramarital sex, and strong prohibitions on homosexual relationships (Watch Tower 2012: 3–9; 2019, 21-25).

Societal and Educational Work

In seeking to better the world, religions – old and new – typically seek ways of bettering society, often engaging in social, educational, and cultural activities. This is certainly true of the Unification Church, and the Daeseon Jinrihoe, although less so in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses. Daeseon Jinrihoe's contribution to the welfare of society includes the Bundang Jesaeng Hospital, which was opened in 1998, Daeseon Jinrihoe Welfare Foundation, established in 2007, and Daejin University, which opened in 1992 (AADDJ 2017, 65–77).

The Unification Movement attaches relatively little importance to social activity outside its own organisation. A brief glance at its website indicates that its main interests are in teaching Divine Principle through conferences and summer camps, the Blessing ceremonies, and the blessing of ancestors with a view to enabling them to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed, the organisation's mission statement is "to guide America back to God through the teachings and Marriage Blessing of True Parents" (FFWPU 2018). Humanitarian work tends to be relatively small-scale; for example, at the time of writing the New Yorker Hotel, which was owned by the Rev Moon, was opened up to 800 nurses who were working to combat the coronavirus epidemic. To make this point is not to disparage the organisation's work, but to place it in perspective.

Jehovah's Witnesses have been less inclined to engage in humanitarian work. Indeed, even from the inception they were criticised for not helping the poor, unlike other religious organisations who were operating schools, hostels, and soup kitchens. While claiming to offer help in times of disaster, such relief tends to further their own work, ensuring, for example, that damaged Kingdom Halls are brought back to serviceable condition in order to further their activities. Since Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the world is controlled by Satan, the remedy is not social or political activity, which are viewed merely as temporary attempts to patch up parts of society. The goal of a perfect

paradise on earth is achieved, not by such partial solutions, but rather by bringing men and women into “the truth”, which is the passport to everlasting life after Armageddon.

One method of enhancing one’s status as a new religion is to involve the academic community, as has been done by the Unification Movement and more recently by the Daeseon Jinrihoe. The New Ecumenical Research Association (New ERA) was set up at Moon’s instigation, and academics and clergy were invited. The programs took various forms: in the early 1980s a number of Introductory Seminars, held in various parts of the world, introduced the Principle to scholars, at which a number of their own young up-and-coming leaders, who were undertaking postgraduate work, gave presentations on various aspects of Unificationist doctrines. Their first “God Conference” was held in 1981, and a Youth Seminar on World Religions in 1982 (Chryssides 1991, 167). These seminars were not exclusively on Unificationist doctrines, although there were usually contributions that provided a Unificationist perspective on the selected theme. Their aims, which were never explicitly articulated, were no doubt various: no doubt the Confucian tradition of valuing scholarship was a driving force, but the satellite organisations helped to put Unificationism on the academic map as a religion worthy of serious scholarly consideration. Also, the fact that attendees came from different religious backgrounds had an ecumenical purpose, the unification of all religions being one of Moon’s prime goals. While some contributors felt constrained to make favourable comments about the founder-leader, the conferences tended to facilitate interesting exchanges of ideas, but did little to accomplish ecumenism either at a Christian or at an interfaith level.

At the time of writing, Daeseon Jinrihoe’s attempts to attract the interest of worldwide scholars is at an early stage. CESNUR (the Center for Studies on New Religions) held its annual conference at Daejin University in 2016, and the World SangSaeng Forum International Conferences began the following year. Both conferences have enabled presentations on new religions generally, but increasingly, and understandably, the World SangSaeng Forum favours contributions dealing with the Daeseon religion (DAOS 2020).

By contrast, Jehovah’s Witnesses have tended to discourage higher education, believing that universities have the ability to corrupt students spiritually and morally, and entice them away from the faith. Seeking career advancement through obtaining academic qualifications is perceived as materialistic, and in any case pointless if Armageddon is indeed near. Occupations such as doctors, dentists, and lawyers will not be needed in an imminent perfect paradise (Chryssides 2016, 176). However, a very small number of Jehovah’s Witnesses hold academic posts, and the study of foreign languages appears to be favoured, no doubt because this helps with evangelisation work. A few of them work as lawyers, although exclusively for the Society, since the organisation has been involved in considerable litigation. The Society’s work also

requires musicians and specialists in computing. In some cases, I am told, those who work in such areas for the organisation have obtained relevant qualifications before conversion, and Jehovah's Witnesses have no problems about using external expertise. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah predicted that Jehovah's followers would "drink the milk of nations" (*Isaiah* 60:16), by which he meant that they would enjoy what those outside the faith had worked to produce.

Brief mention should also be made of the arts and architecture. Of all three organisations under consideration, undoubtedly the artistic and architectural achievements of the Daeseon Jinrihoe temples are the most impressive. Unification premises tend to be functional rather than ornate, one notable exception being the Cheongpeyong Palace, which opened in 1999, and to which members come for spiritual workshops and ancestor liberation. It is now the place where Sun Myung Moon lies buried. Jehovah's Witnesses, having emerged from the Christian Protestant tradition, have simple buildings, the vast majority of which have no symbols or pictures. The second of the Jewish-Christian Ten Commandments states, "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth" (*Exodus* 20:4). The Jewish religion, from which Christianity is derived, has always been opposed to the use of "idols", regarding them as characteristic of the other neighbouring faiths, which they believe to be false. Jehovah's Witnesses are not opposed to using illustrations in their literature, and have an art department for this purpose, but images are considered inappropriate in worship.

Attitudes to Peace

Most, if not all, religions want peace; however, there are marked differences as to how they believe such a goal can be achieved. On this issue we can see a marked contrast between the three religious organisations under discussion. The Unification Church has always had a strong political message, and of the three religious organisations it is the one with the most aggressive attitude to military conflict. Moon was no pacifist: indeed he owned the *Divine Principle* views Korea as having a key role in the divine plan because of the division between North and South, which is reflected in the conflict between democracy and communism. Sun Myung Moon aligns these ideologies with a battle between God and Satan; not only did he offer a firm expectation that democracy, which he believed to be on God's side, would triumph, but sectors of his organisation continue to be specifically political, and at times have actively endeavoured to suppress communism. The organisation CAUSA, founded by Moon in 1980 in New York, has the objective of providing anti-communist education for academics, clergy, and politicians. It has operated in 21 countries, and aroused particular controversy for its work in

Nicaragua, where is supported the Contras (an abbreviation of *la contrarrevolución*) – right-wing rebels who actively opposed the Sandinista Junta of National Reconstruction Government in that country. News reports suggested that CAUSA went as far as to supply arms to the rebels. In 2003 the Unification Church established a political party in South Korea, known as “The Party for God, Peace, Unification, and Home.” Moon’s ultimate aim for Korea was to unite North and South Korea, creating a society of peace, harmony, and unity.

Jehovah’s Witnesses stand in marked contrast in their attitude to armed conflict. Because of their belief that the world is currently ruled by Satan, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not support national governments. Although they will obey the law of the land, they do not participate in acts of allegiance to the state, such as saluting national flags, and they do not take part in war, or accept conscription to the armed forces, since Jesus is regarded as the “Prince of Peace” (*Isaiah* 9:6). They do not take part in political affairs, stand for governmental office, or vote in elections. Regarding themselves as members of Jehovah’s kingdom rather than any earthly society, they adopt a stance of strict neutrality by not supporting any particular political party or any one country when armed conflict occurs. The solution to humankind’s problems, they believe, is not social or political action, but rather bringing everyone to “the truth”, accepting Jehovah as the world’s true ruler, and supporting Christ’s kingdom. As for Armageddon, this will not be a human war, but a spiritual battle between Christ and Satan, as described in the Book of Revelation, in which Christ will prevail. This will be followed by a thousand-year period of peace, in which the dead will be brought back to life, and the earth will be progressively restored to a perfect paradise.

Jehovah’s Witnesses’ attitude to military service has frequently brought them into conflict with national governments, who have viewed them as being unpatriotic, despite the fact that Jehovah’s Witnesses have contended that, in situations such as war, their members exist on both sides of the conflict, and hence are equally uncooperative with the enemy’s regime. Witnesses have been prepared to undergo punishment, even torture, for their stance, and since 1953 in South Korea, over 19,300 of their members have undergone prison sentences on account of their convictions. (In 2018, however, the Constitutional Court required the South Korean government to provide alternative service for conscientious objectors, and on 31 December 2019, 1879 Jehovah’s Witnesses conscientious objectors were given a special amnesty, lifting civil restrictions) (JW.org 2018)

Daeseon Jinrihoe presents a mean between taking part in military conflict and non-participation in war. Daeseon literature has little to say about war, preferring to emphasise the final outcome of a peaceful earthly paradise. However, the first of its Ethical Rules is, “You should obey national laws and observe moral standards for the benefit of your country and happiness of the citizenry” (AADDJ 2017, 39). While

desirous of peace, members of the Daeseon Jinrihoe, like Jehovah's Witnesses, would regard national law as having priority over non-violence, but, if required to do so, would participate in military service and accept conscription. In common with Jehovah's Witnesses, the coming paradise to which they look forward is one of peace, and will follow a resolution of grievances.

Finance and New Religions

Religions do not survive on spirituality and ethical principles, however: they need the financial resources to build premises, pay expenses, and finance any charitable work in which they engage. Because in the past scholars have focused on religious texts and the spiritual lives of religious adherents, such mundane topics have tended to be neglected. Yet they are crucial in a religious organisation's trajectory. Either the founder-leader must have the necessary monetary assets, or else he or she must have sufficient charismatic qualities to inspire followers to provide the financial resources that give momentum to the movement.

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society was initially funded out of Charles Taze Russell's personal fortune. There were some early benefactors, and some of the early pioneers sold possessions in order to finance their missions. In the early years it was customary for their evangelists to purchase literature for distribution from the Society, after which they were authorised to sell it with a mark-up and to retain the proceeds. The practice of selling Watch Tower publications was abandoned in 1990 on account of legal implications, and the Society's policy now is that "spiritual food" should not be sold. The Society's policy, right from Russell's time, was never to take any collection during meetings, and this practice continues. However, there are donation boxes placed prominently within Kingdom Halls and other venues, and facilities for online donations are clearly displayed on the JW.org web site. Despite their belief that they live in a world ruled by Satan, Jehovah's Witnesses nonetheless take the view that one should receive the maximum benefit to which one is legally entitled from the present systems of government. Accordingly, in the UK, members are encouraged to make use of Gift Aid, which is a scheme whereby tax can be recovered for donations to charitable organisations. Those who work full-time for the Society receive accommodation, meals, and a small stipend, and this applies at all levels, even to the Governing Body. Unlike large multinational business organisations, the Watch Tower Society does not believe in paying enormous salaries for high-ranking officials. Other sources of income come from investments, and the building and maintenance of Kingdom Halls is financed by volunteer labour and, when needed, loans from other congregations. In recent times, there has been rationalisation of premises, and individual Kingdom Halls are now owned by the central organisation. Proceeds from sales of superfluous premises, and

recent sales of the Society's former headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, have been used to assist the financing of their impressive new premises which have been built at Warwick and Patterson, New York.

The financing of the Unification Movement was originally due to Moon's business acumen. He appears to have been born into a fairly poor family, but went on to study in Japan and, at the end of the Korean War made a modest amount of income by painting the pictures of US service men and their families (Fish 2012). The small hut that Moon built for the original HSA-UWC may have been a very modest edifice, but it was not untypical of many of the buildings after the devastation of the war. In 1963 Moon set up the Tongil Group, which undertook construction work and soon expanded into armaments; in 2010 its assets were reckoned to amount to US \$1.5 billion. Subsequent business enterprises in the West included the purchase of the New Yorker Hotel in 1975, and acquiring control of various media outlets, including the founding of News World Communications the following year, subsidiaries of which were *The New York City Tribune*, and *The Washington Times* (founded in 1982, and subsequently sold in 2010). More controversially, the mobile fundraising teams (MFTs), mentioned above, provided most of the organisation's income in the year 1974 (Barker 1984, 60–61). Additionally, members are asked to pay fees for participation in religious rites. Around 1990 the fee for undergoing the Blessing was 120,000 Korean won, plus a recommended additional donation. Members are invited – some sources say required – to perform ancestor liberation ceremonies: these can cost up to US\$700. Furthermore, physical items must be bought for various spiritual ceremonies, some of which are only available from the organisation, for example wedding rings and holy robes. It should be noted, however, that after Moon's death, disputes about succession continue to involve bitter litigation, and of course whichever faction is judged to be entitled to the financial assets will inevitably have a superior chance of furthering its agenda (Family Federation, HJ Heaven and Earth Training Center 2020).

Turning finally to the Daeseon Jinrihoe, some funding was available from the group's inception. The organisation resulted from a split from the Taegeukdo, upon which Park Wudang departed for Seoul, where he was able to secure a substantial property in Junggok-dong (Introvigne 2017). In order to maintain the organisation's work, donations were solicited, and members are encouraged to make monthly monetary offerings appropriate to their income but no higher than 100,000 won (roughly \$80 USD) (Kim 2020, 291)

Conclusion

My discussion has covered a range of factors associated with the spread of these three new religions, and highlighted important points in common points of difference. Two

of the organisations under discussion are international, Jehovah’s Witnesses spreading from the United States worldwide, and the Unification Church spanning out from Korea, while at the time of writing Daeseon Jinrihoe remains a distinctively Korean religious organisation, currently with no obvious aspirations of reaching beyond the country’s borders. In terms of the culture in which these organisations are found, Daeseon Jinrihoe is the most quintessentially Korean, while Jehovah’s Witnesses, by relying on literature produced in the United States, are propagating ideas that are less of a cultural fit, although with the passage of time a substantial proportion of the Korean nation (around 20 percent) is amenable to studying the Christian Bible. The Unification Church’s teachings are a hybrid of Christianity and Korean folk shamanism, and particularly the lack of rapport with the latter is inevitably a major factor in its slow progress internationally. Making itself “culturally appropriate” is an important facet of evangelisation, which these organisations have achieved in different degrees. Regarding evangelisation methods, as I have shown, Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Unification Church have sought to increase the following by sheer persistence, being amenable to approaching strangers and drawing them in. By contrast, Daeseon Jinrihoe have preferred to multiply through known contacts. Their different ways of approaching those outside the organisation have, as I have shown, resulted in a different demographic structure. Finally, the study of religion would benefit from more research on its methods of finance, although this is no doubt a daunting task for scholars of religion, who lack expertise in financial management and accountancy. Suffice it to say, however, that none of the three religions discussed here can justifiably be classified as “religions of the dispossessed,” as some detractors have suggested. All three are thriving, in different ways, and will no doubt continue to do so as financial viability allows.

Conflict of Interest

George D. Chryssides has been the Editorial Board of *JDTREA* since July 2021, but has no role in the decision to publish this article. No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Notes

¹ Although the name “Unification Church” has now largely been abandoned, I continue to use it here, since it is the name under which it evangelised during most of the period under discussion.

² E-mail correspondence with David W. Kim and Taesoo Kim, 29-30 April 2020.

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Vietnamese Syncretism and the Characteristics of Caodaism's Chief Deity: Problematizing Đức Cao Đài as a 'Monotheistic' God Within an East Asian Heavenly Milieu

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Abstract

Caodaism is a new religion from Vietnam which began in late 1925 and spread rapidly across the French colony of Indochina. With a broad syncretic aim, the new faith sought to revivify Vietnamese religious traditions whilst also incorporating religious, literary, and spiritist influences from France. Like Catholicism, Caodaism kept a strong focus on its monotheistic nature and today Caodaists are eager to label their religion a monotheism. It will be argued here, however, that the syncretic nature of this new faith complicates this claim to a significant degree. To make this argument, we will consider here the nature of God in Caodaism through two central texts from two important stages in the life of the religion. The first is the canonized *Compilation of Divine Messages* which collects a range of spirit messages from God and some other divine voices. These were received in the early years of the faith. The second is a collection of sermons from 1948/9 that takes Caodaist believers on a tour of heaven, and which is entitled *The Divine Path to Eternal Life*. It will be shown that in the first text, God speaks in the mode of a fully omnipotent and omniscient supreme being. In the second text, however, we are given a view of paradise that is much more akin to the court of a Jade Emperor within an East Asian milieu. In these realms, the personalities of other beings and redemptive mechanisms claim much of our attention, and seem to be a competing center of power to that of God. Furthermore, God's consort, the *Divine Mother*, takes on a range of sacred creative prerogatives that do something similar. Additionally, cadres of celestial administrators; buddhas, immortals, and saints help with the operation of a cosmos which spins on with guidance from its own laws. These laws form sacred mechanisms, such as cycles of reincarnation and judgement. These operate not in the purview of God, but as part of the very nature of the cosmos itself. In this context, the dualistic, polytheistic, and even automatic nature of Caodaism's cosmos will be considered in terms of the way in which they complicate this religion's monotheistic claims. To conclude, this article seeks to demonstrate the precise relevance of the term 'monotheism' for this religion.

Keywords: Vietnam; Caodaism; Spiritism; Syncretism; Heaven; Monotheism; Nature of God; Indochina; New Religion; Divine Mother.

Members of the Vietnamese religion of Caodaism will report that their religion is a monotheism. This claim, whilst being genuinely made, can also be easily misinterpreted by Westerners who bring a Judeo-Christian understanding of monotheism to their comprehension of such a category. Caodaists are nevertheless happy to accommodate Westerners in this thinking, and as we will see, in direct séance communications the God of this religion (Đức Cao Đài) identifies also as the God of the Hebrew and Christian Testaments. Yet it is as “Jade Emperor” in a traditional East Asian concept of a supreme deity that the Caodaist God is best understood. As a result of this East-West complexity, the present article lays out for the first-time key aspects of the theological sophistication behind the names, personality, descriptions, and conceptualisations of ‘God’ that this faith system of millions deploys. I seek here to precisely denominate the nature of Caodaism’s God and its idea of monotheism - ‘conditional’ though this may be. Historical developments will enable us to understand a significant part of the picture. The following investigation will also chart the development of the Caodaist idea of God from the start of the religion in 1925 through to the year of this faith’s greatest cultural and political influence: 1955.¹ To achieve this, I will base my examination on two sets of texts, one of which has been recently translated by myself and my colleagues. The first, *The Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển*, is a collection of divine messages from the opening years of the faith (Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ 1968). In these messages, God speaks to the founders of the faith and, as he does so, he gives some hints as to his nature, personality, and his planned objectives. I will then compare themes in this text to a work from 1949 entitled *Con Đường Thiêng-Liêng Hằng-Sống or The Divine Path to Eternal Life* (Hartney 2022). This is a series of 35 highly visual sermons by Phạm Công Tắc, the religion’s most impactful leader. In this work, he shows his co-religionists the palaces, offices and functions of heaven to better help them in their quest for salvation. Through these descriptions we receive a fuller understanding of the Caodaist God, his role, and we even have his appearance described to us. Both these texts allow us to chart the names of God used over this period by the religion and what theological concerns they demarcate. This will permit an assessment of the tensions that link a Western assumption of monotheism and a dualistic or polytheistic “imperial model” of heaven. This research will conclude with a consideration of how these tensions are negotiated and maintained by the leaders and believers of this new faith.²

Category Confusions

In this article, I will be using the term “God” (with a capital) to refer to a supreme, male monotheistic deity. Although Caodaists use this word in translations into English and when speaking with anglophones, their own range of words for the supreme deity are far more subtle and extensive and we will discuss these below. The foundational

complexity of these interchangeable terms for the ultimate divine force derives, I suggest, from the bilingualism and biculturalism of the founders of the faith. Those who drove the religion in its early years were native Vietnamese speakers who had been trained across their school age years by the French to populate the colonial administration of Indochina as French-speaking bureaucrats. In the colonist's language, terms such as *Dieu* and *Jésus-Christ* (from Catholicism) would have become as familiar to the founders of Caodaism as non-Catholic, deist, republican/secular and possibly Masonic terms such as *l'Être Suprême*. French influences on the founders of Caodaism came potently through the curriculum they studied and by their consumption of French religious texts and literature. In this way their ideas of "God" were reinforced by their enjoyment of French novelists and poets such as Victor Hugo (Hartney 2004b) or the writings of spiritualists popular in France such as Flammarion (1874) and Kardec (2007). What connects each of these terms is a supreme deity whose existence precedes the cosmos and its making. He creates a universe *de novo*. He acts singularly without a consort, has no court of cosmic administrators, and is invested with the unqualified talents of omniscience and omnipotence. In the Christian instance, according to the *Gospel of John* and in the form of Jesus, he will come to end time itself and to judge the world. Creation *de novo* then remains the main theme whether it is the deity of Genesis, the Great Architect of the Masons, or the "prime mover" of those deists of the French Enlightenment such as Voltaire who had an ongoing influence on French culture (Hartney 2006). World judgement and the right to end time when he so choses are secondary prerogatives based on his Christian manifestation.

In competition with this Western ideal of God, we have an East Asian ideal that extends out from traditional ideas of Chinese kingship and the official declaration of the cult of the Jade Emperor (玉皇大帝/Yu Huang Da Di) made official by imperial edict during the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE) (Ching 1997). The heavenly court and its celestial ruler develop in Vietnam from what Woodside names "the Chinese model" – that is, heaven operates like a traditional imperial court; it has an emperor (God), his consort (a Divine Mother) and rank upon rank of divine bureaucrats (Woodside 1988). In Caodaism, these heavenly bureaucrats are drawn from the Ngũ chi Đại Đạo or five branches of the faith: 1. Buddhas; 2. Immortals; 3. Saints; 4. Local Geniis; and 5. Humanity. Each of these ranks relate to a particular religious tradition that helps constitute Caodaism's syncretic outlook. The heavenly bureaucracy stretches from those souls enlightened through Buddhism (1), Daoism (2), Christianity (3), Folk Religion (4) and on to those souls made sagely through humanist Confucianism (5). As these elevated souls assist in the administration of the cosmos, so then does this Eastern ideal of God-as-Emperor rest not on his singular power to do all things but on his command of the spiritual court. Whilst Caodaist texts do indeed stress God's omnipotence and omniscience, these qualities are occluded to some degree by the vast range of assistance he receives in operating the various offices, ministries, and courts of heaven.

It is this aspect of God that we will concentrate on in the following research. Here creation of the world *de novo* is a passing feature of God's actions but not a constant theme, a central quality or, as we will see, a purely original act. Instead, these are contested qualities for the cosmos and its mechanisms of reincarnation and salvation sometimes seem to precede him. We face here an idea of God that develops from influences drawn from Vietnamese folk-religion, as well as Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist ideals. God is referred to in Caodaism as a "great immortal" and as a "bodhisattva" (his most formal title being *Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát* – literally "High Tower, Ancient Immortal, Great Bodhisattva"). The inference of titles such as these is that he is the preeminent soul in the cosmos. This is backgrounded, however, with the assumption of an Indian/Buddhist concept of existence where the universe itself is a mechanism without end, uncreated and perpetuated by rising and falling ages, *karma*, and *samsara*. Which is to say in some descriptions of God it is assumed that the cosmos *precedes*, is contemporaneous, or functions independently alongside this supreme deity. In all this, Caodaist concepts of time seem to be only discretely linear. In their view, the universe is approaching a significant change of tone as we reach the dawn of a new age – an age marked by the appearance of Caodaism itself (the official name of the religion is: *Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ*, or "Great Religion for the Third Period of Salvation"). This new age, however, is one age out of four great time periods that constantly rotate. Caodaism's cosmic outlook may include a creation story, but it is predominantly based on a cyclical time scheme (Phạm Công Tắc 1949, Sermon Nine) not a linear one.

This theme of cosmic precedence can be found in some other examples. With reference to Vietnamese folk religion, we can turn to an early poetic text by Phạm Công Tắc, which is not a canonised Caodaist text, but illustrates this man's religious imaginarium during the years when the faith was being formed. In this influential work, *A Visit to Celestial Realms* (c.1927), the *Bát Quái Đài* (or central tower of heaven) is depicted being under the control of the (male) god of lightning (*Lôi Công*) and his (female) thunder consort (*Kim Quang Điện Mẫu*). In this poem cycle, much of what feeds into Caodaist concepts of heaven as the faith develops, God is not depicted as great creator but is connected instead to the frightening meteorological phenomenon of lightening in a folk-religion context. Similarly, to add to this a Daoist example. we see occasionally see reference in the religion to *Nguyên Thủy Thiên Tôn* (元始天尊) (Hartney 2022, Sermon Four). This figure is understood as a primordial high deity who predates the Jade Emperor – the god before God. In this example we touch again on a heaven where it is possible that the present God of heaven is not necessarily the primordial or originating god of the cosmos. What these examples demonstrate is that while being depicted as a monotheistic creator God, Caodaism's view of *Đức Cao Đài* still deploys a multi-vocality in its overall concept of the nature of God. It is both

Western and Eastern. It is a concept which borrows not only from Catholicism, Deism, and Masonry, but also Folk Religion concepts of God as the deity of thunder and works with Buddhist and Daoist ideas of a deity that exists not as preceding a created cosmos but as a supreme force that works within that creation. There are theological and soteriological ramifications that arise from this multi-vocality. This will be the focus of the rest of this article.

Methodology: Text Analysis – But Which Texts?

I have outlined elsewhere a four-stage model of text development in Caodaism (Hartney 2022). There is a formative stage of social poetry composition and drinking amongst friends in Saigon that we see evolve during 1925 towards spiritism and message reception.³ This group then begins to experiment with the Western tradition of *séance* as the year proceeds. By September, this group of friends are now receiving messages from local spirits and the voices of recently dead family members. This is mainly through table-tipping. Later, a “beaked basket” will be deployed – this is a woven basket held by several mediums that has an arm and a stylus extending from it for the transference of heavenly writing. In these message reception events, a pseudonymous voice called “A-Ă-Â” (the first three vowels of the Romanised system for Vietnamese speech) assists the group to establish a welcoming banquet for The Divine Mother as the nation celebrates the Autumn Moon festival (中秋節/Tết Trung Thu) of that year. As I will explain below, the appearance of the Divine Mother as the first deity manifestation in Caodaism is significant. She has a range of creative duties that can potentially limit the “supreme creator” status of Caodaism’s God and we will see how this is managed below.

On December 24, Christmas Eve, A-Ă-Â returns to declare that he is the God of Moses and, as Jesus, of the Christians (Hartney 2017). This event is taken as the official commencement of the religion of Caodaism. What follows is a series of group-*séance* messages as God, now using now other pseudonyms (such as Đức Cao Đài “Venerable High Tower”) or titles (Đức Chí Tôn “Venerable Supreme Being”), instructs his followers further in the establishment of the new religion. These messages are collated as the *Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển* (Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ 1968). Over the next decade, group *séance* is further deployed to convey or confirm a range of other canonical texts that confirm the governance structure and principals of the new faith. *Séance* at this time is also a dramatic performance that helps bring tens of thousands of converts into the new religion. From the poetry compositions of 1925 through to the limiting of group *séance* activity in 1934 we have the first period of text development in Caodaism. From this period, it is the *Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển* that gives us the clearest hints to the nature of God during this formative stage.

The second period of text development begins in 1934. As a result of a number of battles over authority during this year, Phạm Công Tắc (1890–1959) emerges as the pre-eminent authority in the religion and re-emphasises his claim to be Caodaism's chief medium. Group séance takes on a much less significant role and Phạm Công Tắc's ability to commune directly with heaven gives us a new tone in the religion's connection to the spirit world. This is the second stage of scriptural development. It lasts until the start of his period of exile in 1955. The scriptural focus is now on the inspired sermon. World War II is a major interrupter of this period, and it is not until the later 1940s, that sermon delivery becomes a significant part of the evolving dynamics of Caodaist theology. It is from this period that Phạm Công Tắc uses a series of sermons to visit and describe heaven. These have been collected in the book *Con Đường Thiêng-Liêng Hằng-Sống* (1948–1949) or *The Divine Path to Eternal Life* (Phạm Công Tắc 1949; Hartney 2022). A careful comparison of these two texts will form the methodological spine of this study.

The Divine Mother and How She “Constrains” The Creative Power of God

It is noteworthy that Đức Phật Mẫu or the Divine Mother is the first deity to manifest in the months leading up to the foundation of the religion. In part she develops from the personality of Tây Vương Mẫu (西王母) or Queen Mother of the West – a substantial divine ancestor figure-cum-supreme-deity that has been a part of the East Asian religious landscape for at least 3000 years (Hartney, n.d.). Her additional titles in the religion are Vô Sanh Lão Mẫu (無生老母) and Vô Sanh Phật-Mẫu (無生佛母), translatable as “not-born Elder/Buddha Mother.” These emphasise her primordial and uncreated nature. And we see her addressed in Caodaist funeral prayers as Cửu Thiên Huyền Nữ (九天玄女) as Sacred Woman of the Nine Heavens – suggesting she has sovereignty over the totality of the afterworld. It seems then, that she is a major creative force in her own right.

When she is addressed in Caodaism as Diêu Trì Kim Mẫu (瑤池金母) we have another insight into her creative powers. This idea of her develops in Caodaism from White Lotus movements that arose in China during the nineteenth century. In these belief systems (which located themselves into Vietnam as elsewhere in East Asia) the Divine Mother has two important manifestations. The first is by her connection to the “điều trì” or Nacre or Jade Lake. This connection to a body of water, sometimes also likened to a golden basin (*Kim Bân*), is the device she uses to create new souls. In this way, her characteristic as “mother of all” is stressed. Additionally, she is seen, often in connection with her son Maitreya Buddha as the one who has ushered in the next age of human salvation:

[I]n desperation [at the state of the world], the Mother emptied the heavens, ordering all the gods and saints to descend to communicate anew the moral and religious teachings that had been lost. This was a new dispensation, the last chance for human beings to change their ways and for society to reform (Jordan and Overmyer, 2016, 17).

It is then easy for Caodaists, as with folk-religious groups that preceded Caodaism in Vietnam, to see in this mother figure the following qualities: (1) that she exists before or for as long as the cosmos; (2) that she is the creator of souls and also human souls; and, (3) she is the reason the new age of salvation (and with it, Caodaism) has come to be through her emptying of the heavens and sending enlightened beings back down to earth through reincarnation to teach and elevate (those in the Caodaist hierarchy are considered elevated souls in this way). Suddenly Caodaism looks less like a monotheism and increasingly like a dualism.

What is interesting, however, is that the Divine Mother, quickly moves into obscurity in the first years of the religion once A-Ấ-Ấ reveals himself as Đức Cao Đài – the religion’s monotheistic God. The focus shifts quickly to communications with him. The few messages the Divine Mother sends through séance are patchy and have been mostly overlooked (Quách Minh Chương n.d.). It is only during 1930s and 1940s that her popularity as a worshipped being rises and a temporary space is found for her veneration. I have charted this slower rise in popularity of this deity in my explanation of the development of the Sydney Phật Mẫu temple which opened in 2019 (Hartney 2019).

It is only in the 1949 text that we examine here (*The Divine Path to Eternal Life*) where Phạm Công Tắc has the opportunity to most fully explain the relation of the Divine Mother to Đức Cao Đài. In his words, she retains all of her impressive creative abilities and central place in heaven but, as we will see from our examination of the following Caodaist creation story, it is Đức Cao Đài who precedes her during the religion’s creation event. He then bestows on her the mandate to exercise her immense creative powers. In this way, the tension between various folk traditions who held the Divine Mother as supreme (and which fed into Caodaism’s nascent syncretism) and the idea of God as both the Jade Emperor and the (partnerless) God of Western monotheisms is somewhat resolved.

God in The Divine Messages

Here is not the place to discuss at length the social phenomenon and literary operation of séance in Caodaism, but I am presently planning an exegesis on this process. Rather here it helps the argument of this research to examine a series of séances where, from 1925 through to 1928 the voice of Đức Cao Đài was made manifest.

The messages of this period were gathered and canonised in the sacred text entitled *The Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển*. They give us some insight into the nature of God through the presentation of his monotheistic voice. I have made a commentary on the major themes of these messages in other research (Hartney 2017). What I wish to do here is explain some of the subtle ways in which God delineates his own nature. In the first message of the collection, we read him saying:

Celebrate! This day, the 24th of December is the anniversary of my arrival in Europe to spread the Way. Your presence here brings me delight. Blessings will be upon this house. You must ready yourselves to receive my teachings. There will be more remarkable events to convince you (Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ 1968).

Here the alignment of Đức Cao Đài with the Western God is one of the first things he stresses along with the promise of the veracity of his message through the remarkable events that will follow. Thus we have the foreshadowing of a highly interventionist God sending remarkable events to validate his voice. We find this intervention powerful in the overwhelming detail it gives concerning the development of the new faith. He tells his listeners how to more efficiently conduct séance messages, he describes how altars and ritual spaces should be set up correctly for his worship, and appoints numerous listeners to positions in the hierarchy he creates. Through these early messages, he begins to form the institutions and rules of the new religion.

Throughout these texts he maintains that his motivation is the salvation of all souls and he encourages his listeners to act with the highest integrity to avoid bad karma themselves and set a significant example to the world. In messages such as that of the 24 April 1926 we get a more modern insight into this motivation:

Formerly, people lacked transportation and therefore did not know each other, I then founded at different epochs and in different areas, five branches of the Great Way: Confucianism, Shintoism, Christianity, Taoism and Buddhism, each based on the customs of the [local] races.

In present days, transportation has been improved, and people have come to know each other. But people do not always live in harmony because of the very multiplicity of those religions. That is why I have decided to unite all those religions into one to bring them to the primordial unity.

Modernity and globalism become a significant reason for why the new religion was founded and the God of these messages speaks through the modern technology of

divine communication (i.e., group séance). His voice is commanding yet becomes a familiar voice. He jokes with certain individuals, and directly admonishes others by name. Throughout the matter of the messages, he rarely focuses on explanations of his nature, but his voice remains certain and is always encouraging. We see this clearly in the message of 5 March 1927:

I always want you to get together to open the worthy path, to love and help each other, to share your joy and your sufferings, and do this while guiding humanity. If because of secular ambition, you become divided, hating and fighting each other, you would make poor examples to future generations, and the great way would therefore be pre-condemned. Paying attention to my words would be a significantly sincere and respectful gift to me. I bless you all. (Ascension.)

Although other heavenly voices appear in this collection, the tone of the messages from Đức Cao Đài remain fatherly, authoritative, and from this tone, we may say, his voice accords with a deity that is, if not *technically* monotheistic in a strict Western definition, then certainly it is the voice of one who is in command of all things.

Đức Cao Đài as Creator of the Universe

Having examined this early series of texts that *imply* characteristics about Đức Cao Đài from his own voice, we can now move to non-spiritist texts in the religion where the voice of religious leaders such as Phạm Công Tắc predominate. The most important early text about the nature of God is a dharma talk given in 1928. It seeks to explain Caodaist cosmogeny.

There had been nothing before the creation. Then the two masses of air called Hư Vô Chi Khí [which relate to the concept of Wu wei (無爲) or void] came from nowhere and smashed into each other. God's soul was formed from this, and his throne, which is called Thái Cực [太極 - or Supreme Ultimate] also came to exist. The fiery globe called Thái Cực, which is the mechanism of the material, divided itself under God's orders into the Lưỡng/Nghi [or yin/yang]... (Phạm Công Tắc 1928).

This passage seeks to demonstrate how Đức Cao Đài came into existence from the clashing winds of the void. It is not clear, however, if these winds are a part of him, or precede him, nor is it clear if the void or space of creation exists before God. What is interesting is that the creation story includes the creation, also, of God. The sermon

goes on to posit that Thái Cực's first duty is to separate out the male and the female. Only when this is done can life develop as a gendered yin/yang syzygy. Đức Cao Đài becomes the male aspect and his co-equal becomes Phật Mẫu or the Divine Mother. She represents the yin aspect of all creation. This is emphasised twenty-one years later in Sermon Twenty of the *Divine Path* where Phạm Công Tắc explains:

In the beginning, when the Supreme Being decided to divide his tánh (nature) using khí (qi; energy), he used his mystical dharma to create and develop the Divine Mother. The Divine Mother belongs to the yin, the Supreme Being belongs to the yang. When the yin and the yang are united together, they beget lives and grow the universe.

We might make a comparison between these origin concepts and the creation ideal we find in the *Dao De Jing*:

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。

The Dao (the Way) gave birth to the One, this One gave birth to the Two, the Two birthed the Three, the Three generated all things. All things leave behind them an obscurity, and go forward to embrace the brightness, while they are harmonised by the breath of emptiness.

The “dao” itself is Đức Cao Đài but his originating force is Thái Cực. When this divides he remains as the yang constituent. It is then from this position of almost co-equality that both male and female aspects of divinity precede. Although in Caodaism Thái Cực is considered primary (yet also analogous to Đức Cao Đài and not the Divine Mother) we might say that labelling this religion *both* monotheistic and dualistic is justified because of the implied co-equality of the originating couple. Nevertheless, claims of dualism are rarely made by Caodaists or commentators on the religion. Despite the very high primordial status of the Divine Mother, Caodaists claim their faith is a monotheism ruled by a male deity. And it is to this deity, they argue, that dispensations of salvation have been offered across human history. Although this idea of salvation can be more closely connected, via some of the religions that precede Caodaism, to the care, concern, and centrality of the mother goddess.

An Extraordinary ‘Monotheism’: God and The Divine Path to Eternal Life 1949

Now we come to our final consideration and that is the manner in which God is

described and understood in the collection of sermons known as *The Divine Path to Eternal Life*. This text takes on the atmosphere of a collective shamanic journey into the heavens as Phạm Công Tắc describes in affective poetic imagery to his audience the multiple palaces, offices of heaven, personalities, pathways and the mechanisms that allow the cosmos to be administered and which allow souls to be saved or damned. The role of these sermons is to make a visual summary of a wide range of Caodaist beliefs and how they operate together. As such, this text allows us to collate a number of features, the first being an overview of the names used to describe God.

The range of referents for God extend through this text. And we might rank them from the most formal through to the more familiar.

1. Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát – lit. High Tower, Ancient Immortal, Great Bodhisattva (most formal title). This name relies on two characters (高臺/Cao Đài) that are nothing more than a pseudonym for God. They can be translated as “high tower” and refer to a dwelling place of the supreme deity, but give little away. The additional appellations of “ancient immortal” and “great bodhisattva” suggest divinity, but not necessarily supreme divinity nor monotheistic divinity in a Western sense.
2. Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế (玉皇上帝) – Jade Emperor – a Chinese folk appellation given in Vietnamese form that Caodaists often use.
3. Đức Cao Đài (高臺) – Venerable High Tower – a *shortened* form of 1 “Đức” being here an honorific translatable as “venerable.”
4. Đức Chí Tôn (至尊) – Venerable Supreme Being, a term possibly transposed from the French *l'Être supreme* and its associations with moves to spiritualise the nascent French republic in 1794.
5. Đại Thiên Tôn (大天尊) (lit. Honourable Great Heaven) – used in *The Divine Path* only when Phạm Công Tắc draws close to God. He uses this name only in relation to the Huỳnh Kim Khuyết or Golden Gate that leads to the Council of Heaven (Sermons Twenty-Five and Twenty-Seven).
6. Cha & Thầy – Father and Master [most likely to be used informally in personal prayer by Caodaists].

As we can see from these terms, pseudonyms are often used to point towards God. Upwardness, highness, and supremacy are referred to, but God’s titles rather than any particular noun of character, personality or specific name are deployed. As this sermon series reaches its climax, we do get a tangible vision of God. In Sermon Thirty-Five, Phạm Công Tắc gives us the following view of the supreme deity as a man with a white beard, dressed in a simple white robe. He continues:

He looked directly at me, seeming to be asking me to just look. When I looked up to him, I saw the nimbus illuminate his head and he held a stick that was incredibly beautiful. A gourd was attached to the end of the stick and he carried a bag at the side of his body. He was wearing the Jade Emperor's robe. He held his stick, which became the balance beam. He pulled the gourd and it became the tray of a set of scales. Then he pulled at his bag and it became the weights of the scale. These three precious objects united and became the spiritual scale. . . . It no longer seems strange; the being before us is also our great and merciful father who is constantly transforming as he creates the universe.

This holding of scales may seem a very monotheistic act – God is presented here as judge – weighing up the spiritual accounts of believers. Yet this quality of God-as-judge (essential to monotheistic if not deist concerns in the West) is downplayed throughout the sermons. In fact, in Sermon Twenty-Six, we read that

The politics of the universe is different from that of the earthly world in only one point: individuals control themselves. The infinite mystery of the Supreme Being is his heavenly court, which determines the movements and events of the universe. It has no value when everyone takes the opportunity of governing themselves. The political system will become stable and strong because each soul has the right to govern themselves. Nothing can challenge this divine method. When we can see the system of government as stable, then the whole spirit of the universe is united so we can govern ourselves.

Phạm Công Tắc explains in one section that we may call on God for help in seeking to increase our karmic account, but throughout these sermons, God is presented not as a judger, punisher, or rewarder. In considering why some souls proceed into the depths of the heavenly bureaucracy or are elevated to the lotus thrones of enlightenment while others are ejected, we look in *The Divine Path* to a range of mechanisms by which each soul is able to pass judgement on itself. Perhaps it is these mechanisms of personal examination that reduces God in Caodaism from an all-powerful God of judgement (as we see him in the West) to the maintainer of certain laws and functions of karmic balance that are inherent in the nature of existence itself. As we read through *the Divine Path* we see that these mechanisms include:

1. Eight Bridges of Light that lead into the Bát Quái Đài (or central palace of heaven). Any one of these bridges could let a believer drop into the Sea of Suffering below if their karmic merit was not of a particular standard (Sermon Three).

2. The Minh Cảnh is a mirror, or reflective realm in which the believer can see the good and evil that he/she has done – enabling them to judge themselves through visual review (Sermon Four).
3. The Vô Tự Kinh – or the book of no words - a record of the good and bad that we have done and yet another device that can prompt self-judgement. (Sermon Twenty-four)
4. The Thiên Thư or the “Divine Record” or “Celestial Rules” which are used to record what we have done in previous lives (Sermon Twenty-three).
5. The Kim Câu. This is a Golden Staff held by the buddha, Phục Linh Tánh Phật. As this buddha waves his staff, the former lives of a soul are revealed and the soul is able to see their karmic account by this method (Sermon Twenty-Five).
6. Although not a specific device of judgement, in Sermon Nine we read of how Caodaism looks forward to a great meeting of souls from the last age. This is the Đại Hội Long Hoa or Dragon Flower Assembly. Here advanced souls will pass or fail in their attempts to achieve a spiritual position. This great meeting is instigated by the Divine Mother and overseen by her son Maitreya Buddha. (In Sermon Nine this meeting is explained in relation to Caodaist microhistory and in Sermon Thirty-Five, *The Divine Path* concludes with the narrator, Phạm Công Tắc, foreseeing how he will take his lotus throne at this meeting).

What we might say here is that the otherworld operates by mechanisms that leaves God’s mercy and intervention mostly out of the picture. When a great judgement event is depicted, it is connected to the millenarian qualities of Maitreya Buddha and his potential as the great Buddha of the coming age, not to God. Where personal judgement is depicted, it operates mainly as an automatic mechanism. In this way *The Divine Path* places God as a maintainer the cosmos, rather than the omnipotent intervener who we saw in the earlier *Compilation of Divine Messages*.

In this direction, when we are asked to consider the ultimate use of the heavenly apparatus described in *The Divine Path* we are shown a process by Phạm Công Tắc that leaves God’s monotheistic claims in much ambiguity. In Sermon twenty-one we read:

When we arrive, we are seeking that organisation which enables us to reach a heavenly position. We must explore the invisible part of our soul and attain the most noble and highest position—the position of a Buddha. We must attain the holy virtue of the Supreme Being who is Lord, by all possible means. He Himself is the Buddha who created the universe and begets all other Buddhas. Whatever we do, we must eventually reach the position that he already has.

This sentiment is backed up by conversations I have had with Caodaists who say that “when you attain the level of a master, the master will step aside for you.” Which is to say the goal of each soul in this system is to use Caodaism as a mechanism to reach one’s own liberation so as to develop godhood and to rule over one’s own cosmos. The process of achieving this is only ever discreetly mentioned in the religion. Moreover, the task of reaching such levels of enlightenment may be so difficult as to be almost impossible. But this possibility is left open, and it does raise some questions that may only be satisfied by ongoing research. Is the Caodaist God the creator of all reality or just *this reality*? As we read later in the same sermon:

Children always want to embody their father’s nature; they imitate whatever he does. This is entirely natural. It is a part of our virtuous nature and is not at all strange. As I’ve explained, every individual, however worldly they are, wants to be God. They will always say ‘I want to be God’ because their spirits look up hoping to attain this supreme universal position.

Does the possibility of godhood for each soul imply a potential situation where there are multiple universes with multiple Gods, each cosmos being a monotheistic system in itself, but not the *only* system in the widest consideration of reality?

Conclusion

As we can see, *The Divine Path* both describes God carefully, provides a view of him, and attributes to him most of the qualities of an all-powerful and all-knowing monotheistic God. But the automatic functions of karmic judgement we read of in *The Divine Path*, and the placing of millenarian functions in the purview of other deities – such as Maitreya seem to put conditions on the full extent of this deity’s omnipotence if not his omniscience. As we have seen, the process by which the Divine Mother is created, and her important role in the creation of souls, and her directives to Maitreya in his judgement of the present age make the divine consort of Caodaism a vital and potent supreme deity in her own right. Finally, the proposition in the latter parts of *The Divine Path* offer the possibility that we ourselves may attain the kind of monotheistic status that Đức Cao Đài himself has achieved. Can all of these conditions, fascinating as they are, still confirm for us that Caodaism can be spoken of as a monotheism in any Western conceptualization of this term? Certainly, with a close reading of *The Compilation of Divine Messages* we can say that a monotheistic atmosphere shines through in the voice of God here. Yet in seeking to meld together a vast range of religious influences into the construction of *The Divine Path*, Phạm Công Tắc fashions for us a view of his religion whose complexity suggests something more unique.

That the use of culturally-conditioned and often simplistic categorisations such as “monotheism” are barely adequate descriptors for a religion that seeks, in the way that it does here, to incorporate, balance, and synthesise such powerful religious ideas from both the East and West.

Conflict of Interest

Christopher Hartney has been the Editorial Board of *JDTREA* since July 2021, but has no role in the decision to publish this article. No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Notes

- ¹ 1955 was a golden year for Caodaism and also the year of its dramatic fall from national prestige. Early in the year, The Great Divine Temple, the jewel in the crown of the religion’s vast religious city in Tây Ninh province, was officially opened to much fanfare. From the early 1940s to 1955, the religion maintained its own army and the cooperative relationship that existed between the religion and the French-supported imperial regime of Emperor Bảo Đại permitted Caodaism extensive temporal control over large parts of Southern Vietnam. Later in the year (23 October), a rigged referendum saw the establishment of the Republic of South Vietnam, the nationalization of the Caodaist army, and the rise of Ngô Đình Diệm as president. Diệm was eager to persecute Caodaism’s leader Phạm Công Tắc. The later escaped into exile in Cambodia.
- ² Here I do not go extensively into an explanation of Caodaism itself. For more complete descriptions of this faith please consult Blagov (2001), Hartney (2004), Hartney (2007), Jammes (2014), and Hartney (2020).
- ³ This social milieu of bureaucrats drinking and composing poetry after work is a long Chinese trope deployed often also in Vietnam. See (Holzman 1956) for explanation of the archetypal drinking and poetry group: “Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove.” I have sought to use this model to examine the very earliest developments of Caodaism in a forthcoming book *The Poetic Origins of Caodaism*.

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Incarnation and Divine Essence in Daesoon Thought: A Comparative Study between Daesoon thought and Christianity

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Abstract

This article compares the concepts of divine incarnation as expounded in Daesoon Thought and in Christianity and questions the essence of the divinity in both traditions. In Daesoon Thought, The Supreme God, Sangje, saw major disorganization leading to extreme violence and doom and decided to incarnate on earth under the human form of Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909). Then the living God taught the solution to human suffering through the revelations he sent in 1917 to Jo Cheol-Je, or Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958) and the revelations were passed on to Dojeon Park Wudang who in 1969 founded Daesoon Thought. In Christianity, God incarnated in his son, Jesus Christ, who allowed for the radical transformation of the condition of man through his physical sacrifice. Daesoon differs in that Sangje did not offer himself as sacrifice when he came on earth but reorganized the world and taught how to apply benevolence to establish the Earthly Paradise. The affirmation that Daesoon Jinrihoe is both monotheistic and polytheistic is then analyzed. If the concept of monotheism seems to differ vastly between the two traditions, it appears that biblical monotheism is itself relatively young in the history of world religions so that Christianity has ancient roots germane to those of Daesoon Jinrihoe. The article concludes on the originality of this religion: though it is built on Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, it has transformed their vision of the deity and of its message in a most convincing manner.

Keywords: Daesoon Jinrihoe; Divine Incarnation;
Monotheism/Polytheism; Sangje; Kang Jeungsan

Introduction

My interest in “divine incarnation and essence in Daesoon Thought” was sparked by the 2016 promotional video for the religion that I first saw in May of 2017. It explains how in the early days of the world “there was a natural harmony from the beginning of time,” but it was destroyed in the three realms of Heaven, Earth and People, by wrong deeds and grievances; humanity ran the risk of annihilation because of greed. The deep voice over summarizes the situation in the late nineteenth century over a stormy sky torn by flashes of lightning: “people were lost and were wandering in political, religious and social chaos.” After images of perfect harmony, images of destruction and war-torn Korea fill the screen. Then, the tone changes radically. The message is the most effective two minutes into the video (which has a total runtime of 10:33 minutes): we see the terrestrial globe as viewed from outer space and with a thunderous sound a huge ball of light tears the sky to reach its target, Korea that it inflames. Thus “descended in human form on September 19, 1871” Kang Jeungsan, the incarnation of Gucheon Sangje, the Supreme Being of the Ninth Heaven.

The vivid image summoned up other examples of incarnations, first among them for a Westerner that of Jesus, but also many more in the vast field of religions. If all seem to share the goal of helping mankind through specific teachings revealed by the incarnate god, the identity of the savior and his/her methods can vary considerably. My purpose here is to try and understand the concepts of incarnation and of divine essence as expounded in Daesoon Thought. Can they be understood outside the scope of Daoism, Maitreyaism, Confucianism? How does Gucheon Sangje compare with the God of Christianity and Kang with Jesus? Is the monotheism that Daesoon Jinrihoe claims for itself the same as that of the other monotheistic movements? Is there a specific form of Korean divine incarnation? Finally, how original is Daesoon Thought when compared to other religions?

To conduct my research, I have used several sources: first, my own observation during two visits to the facilities of the religion in Korea in 2017 and 2018, in particular the headquarters temple in Yeosu and the cultivation center of Geumgangsan Toseong. Second, the documents published by the Fellowship in English, but they were still rare until *The Canonical Scripture* came out in English in November 2020; the numerous articles of the *Journal of Daesoon Academy of Sciences* available on line, but I could solely read their abstracts that are the only parts in English for my knowledge of *hangeul* is minimal. The other major source of information has been David Kim: not only has he answered many queries orally or via email exchanges, but he sent me the manuscript of his then forthcoming book without which I could not have accessed the complex theological treatises. Because of his unique position as both a Korean and an Australian scholar, he is able to understand the linguistic and theological subtleties of the holy

scriptures of Daesoon and to deliver their meaning into English. If many articles have now been published by English language scholars, none, to my knowledge, has been able to dissect the core contents of the theology as well as this book since it offers the first translations of some of the original scriptures and has incorporated practically all the findings of Korean language studies. I thank him deeply.

Part One: Incarnation

1. The terrestrial life of Kang Jeongsan

The narrative of the descent of Sangje on earth within the human body of Kang Jeongsan is repeated in the holy histories of the some one hundred groups of his spiritual lineage. All underline the miraculous circumstances of Kang's birth. His mother, of the Gwon family, had "married into the Kang family of Jeolla Province." Thirteen months before delivering the baby, she had a vision of heaven in which the Northern and Southern sky parted, "and an enormous ball of fire came to envelop her body while brightening the whole world. Then she felt as though she were pregnant. On September 19, 1871, at the time of His birth, two celestial maidens came down from heaven to nurture him." (AADDJ 2017, 17). His followers believe that at the age of thirty, in 1901 he fasted for 49 days in the Daewonsa temple in the Moak mountains, Jeonju, and opened the Great Daesoon Truth with his judgement on existing deities. This is when he started to transmit the content of the revelation he had been entrusted with.

In 1902 he declared that he himself was the 'Lord of the Nine Heavens' who had descended to earth to reorganize the chaos the world had fallen into. Several disciples followed him and his teachings. He was seen as a sorcerer which worried the Japanese authorities who had him arrested on December 25, 1907 and incarcerated for forty days. The minute details of the transmission of the revelation down to present day Daesoon Jinrihoe are extremely complicated and even controversial depending on the group defining them. Suffice it to say here that one line was started by Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958) who claimed to be Kang's spiritual heir after receiving in 1917 a "revelation of orthodox religious authority from Sangje." Daesoon Jinrihoe reports that before dying, in 1958, he in turn "bestowed the orthodox religious authority upon Dojeon Park Wudang" (1917-1996) who in April 1969 "made sweeping reorganization changes and reconstructed a religious order called 'Daesoon Jinrihoe.'" He directed it until his death (AADDJ 2017, 28–29).

2. A Typology of Divine Incarnations

In order to assess the specificity of the Sangje Kang incarnation, I will use a

theoretical definition of the concept and apply it to this particular case. One of the clearest synthetic works on incarnations (to my knowledge) was published in 1908 by Raoul De la Grasserie (1839–1914), a historian and a comparatist of religions. In the second part of his book (45–76, Translation mine of the quotations), he broaches the phenomenon of divine incarnation or anthroposis. He introduces it by explaining that either the divine remains unreachable by man, in order to be respected, or on the contrary, because of anthropomorphism, the gods can communicate with men, can take their form, can interact in all kinds of ways including sexually, but they then risk losing their divine status, thus they may go back to the highest levels of the heaven and remain abstract as is found in monotheism. Yet, since the links between the heavens and the earth are thereby severed, mankind feels desolate and wants to rise up to the divine, but it cannot (45). Would the divine oblige and come back down? If it created man, was it not to have a companion? If man aspires to ascend, the divine may aspire to descend, at least this is what man imagines and soon convinces himself that it is true (46). This turns into a religious phenomenon.

Ascending Incarnations

The ascending type of incarnation is that of self-divinization. We need to present it here to understand the richness of the possible transmutations offered by some Asian religions, notably by Daesoon Jinrihoe. “Ascending incarnation”, or incarnation into God, occurs when man divinizes himself, or gets absorbed into an existing deity. The author names this movement “apotheosis” (49) and he develops its multiple occurrences observed in Asia. Regarding ascending incarnations or self-divinizations in Daoism specifically, Vincent Goossaert summarized how gradually the process became more appealing for the elite than merely becoming an ancestor. The earliest Chinese documents show a distinction between those “dead humans [who] could become (under certain conditions) ancestors or else suffering, possibly malevolent, and ultimately forgotten ghosts.” But later, during late Warring States, appeared two other “postmortem destinations: one is direct access to transcendence via self-cultivation techniques, the other is promotion into the ranks of the otherworldly bureaucracy... the aspiration to become a god (divinization) has ever since played a key role in Chinese religious, intellectual, and cultural history.” (Goossaert 2016). Daoism offers a vast range of human/divine interactions since once divinized those entities can and do incarnate in human bodies in multiple ways. I wanted to understand whether in Daesoon the same process was possible, or whether the gods of its pantheon had been gods of all eternity. The answer is yes, through self-cultivation men can become gods, as we shall see in the second part.

Descending Incarnations

To define the exact mode of divine incarnation, De la Grasserie specifies that it does not involve a form of filiation that would result in hybrid creatures, half man half god (46). Incarnation “displays the essence of a superior being in an inferior being wherein it borrows the shape of the body normally engendered and finds there its home. No matter what kind of body it is: one sees that Vishnu often borrows that of animals and that of men in his quest to give an external and palpable form to the divine. One could say that this corresponds to sharing, from the part of the deity, of its spirit, and from the part of the inferior being, of its body. According to him, the term incarnation is specifically Christian, for in Hinduism avatar is the term and for the Greeks, it is metamorphosis (50). The proper term should be *apantroposis*, or anthroposis that expresses more accurately the transformation, real, integral or partial, of the deity within man. For some groups, the existence of man himself is seen as a non-human but divine incarnation, since he is considered as being but a fragment, a spark of God turned into flesh (55) (this is held by a number of gnostic groups to this day).

The historian continues: “The starting point of divine incarnations, on the one hand, is the continuation of human incarnations, on the other, the very principles of animism. But it has another root, a cosmic root. Spirits are all around in the air, they incarnate and disincarnate any moment in objects etc. To animism succeeded anthropomorphism.” (56) Incarnation is not what occurs when a god unites with a mortal and they give birth to a child who is both a deity and a human. This is what mythologies call demi-gods (57).

“Incarnation properly speaking consists for a god in taking a body form without generation, which is difficult if the human body is already formed: if it were the case, it would be an example of possession, rather than of generation. The best solution in order not to face a logical impossibility is to have recourse to a miracle. It consists in having the god conceived like a man but without sexual contact, the means of conception being solely spiritual. The divine seed is miraculously implanted in a virgin who furnishes the material element, whereas the divine breath imparts the soul and a paternal life to the new being.” (57–58) “Such reproduction without sexuality is called parthenogenesis; it is the essential condition for divine incarnation which is not at all exclusively restricted to Christianity, as we find it in many other religions.” (58)

Vincent Goossaert explained how the idea is used in Daoism to describe at least two distinct phenomena:

- 1: a deity manifests itself in the world (briefly) as a projection, or through the possession of a medium; it takes a human form through birth as an infant and conception is then held as magic.

In hagiographies, many future saints or gods are described as the incarnation of one god, or because they wanted to come and rescue men in time of eschatological crisis.

- 2: Or because this god, having faulted in heaven, is sentenced, as “an exiled immortal” to experience an ascetic human life in order to be purified. There are many cases of the latter example.” (Personal exchange 27 March 2020)

Without any possible doubt the incarnation of Sangje Kang belongs to the first noble category. To fit the definition, the purpose of his divine descent was precisely to rescue mankind on the brink of annihilation and prepare for the Earthly Paradise. His itinerary reproduces that of the major figure of Daoism, Laozi. In Chapter 10 “The Birth of the God” of *God of the Dao: Lord Lao in History and Myth* (1999), Livia Kohn narrates the incarnation of Lord Lao. The process set the path that Sangje Kang would later follow, even if, for Daesoon, Sangje is not considered as a self-divinized immortal (as David Kim told me). Lord Lao was the product of a miraculous conception, of the extra-long pregnancy of the earthly mother and of an eccentric delivery: “She carries him for eighty-one years, after which he splits open her left armpit and steps out, already able to walk.” Then he grew rapidly, underwent nine transformations... “Attaining this highest goal, he ascends back into heaven to be honored by emperors throughout history.” (Kohn 1995, 235)

3. Kang as the Human Incarnation of Sangje

The miraculous birth type described by the three scholars, De la Grasserie, Goossaert and Kohn, is shared by Christianity and Daesoon. According to Kang’s hagiography, his mother was impregnated magically by a ball of fire. De la Grasserie justifies the required miracle by the need to exhibit moral purity and modesty (the body being source of impurity), but also by the obligation for a superior man (as this god made man will prove to be) to claim supernatural origins: “it would not be worthy of a god to have been begotten by a man. This explains all the myths surrounding the birth of famous men, such as Alexander the Great and some of them even had to undergo a longer gestation to be more perfect.” (De la Grasserie 1908, 60) In the case of Kang Jeungsan, we recall how his mother was pregnant for thirteen months. As for the symbolical importance of the lineage of his nourishing or earthly father, it was underlined by Ko Nam-Sik: “As a primary family name, Sangje’s incarnation family name Gang plays a leading edge role of religious activity of Sangje because primary family name Gang represents the one and only Truth (眞法).” (Ko 2014, 1)

The similarities between the Christian incarnation and that of Sangje Kang prove most useful for our discussion on whether Daesoon resorts more to Daoism, Buddhism,

Confucianism and their variations of polytheism than to Christianity and its variation of monotheism, or resorts equally to all. It is an issue we must address here already even if we will develop it even more in the second part. Before pursuing my exploration, I must say that for lack of space I have not addressed the characteristics woven into the fabric of Daesoon Thought inherited from Confucianism and exhibited in a forceful manner in the identity of its Supreme God Sangje who already was the supernatural entity linked to Heaven in ancient Confucianism. Daesoon Thought gives his full name: *Gucheon Eungwon Nwehseong Bobwa Cheonjon Kangseong Sangje* (구천응원뇌성보화 천존강성상제, 九天應元雷聲普化天尊姜聖上帝), the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, Celestial Worthy of Universal Creation through His Thunderbolt, the Originator with Whom All Beings Resonate (AADDJ 2017,16).

In his long Chapter five that scrutinizes the philosophical thought of Daesoon Jinrihoe, David Kim confirms that: “The supreme being of Daesoon is functionally known as *Choi-Go Shin* (最高神 the Highest God), *Mugeuk Shin* (無極神 the Limitless God), *Taegeukji Cheonjon* (太極之天尊 the Celestial Worthy of the Ultimate), *Okchung-Jinwang* (玉清樞真王 the True King of the Jade Pivot), *Samcheong-Jinwang* (三清真王 the True King of the Three Pure Ones), *Gabyeok-Jang* (開闢長 the Lord of the Great Opening) and *Haewon-Shin* (解冤神 the God of the Resolution of Grievances). The symbolic names sustain the teachings of his incarnation. In particular, the terminology of *Shin-In* (신인, 神人, god and man in the context of ‘*Inshin-Kangse*, 인신강세, 人身降世, descending into the world in human form’) represents the form of his earthly presence without any human help.” (Kim D. 2020, 250) When as a human shell, Kang died in 1909, like lord Lao, Sangje returned to the Ninth Heaven where he remained as Supreme God (Kim D. 2020, 255).

4. Comparing Sangje Kang’s Incarnation with Jesus Christ’s

The most obvious parallel with Christianity is the message revealed through the voice of the human incarnation. Both Daesoon Thought and Christianity are millenarian and messianic for they see mankind as in a serious state of decadence and sin on the brink of damnation but also on the eve of salvation. Usually indeed, the Godhead will not want his creation to disappear but will send relief, under certain conditions of course. Exactly like in Christianity, in Daoism humanity is seen as “in a state of advanced decline and [needing] a new vehicle of salvation (the revelation) in order to redeem itself (or a selected group of elect) and avoid the impending apocalypse. Revelations have been occurring with little pause over more than two thousand years of Daoist history”. (Goossaert 2014, 220).

When Sangje and Christ incarnated, they both acted as Messiahs, the term originally meaning the anointed one who is going to rescue his people, either simply on earth

as a major political ruler as in ancient Judaism or with exceptional divine dimensions. Since, as we will see again in Part Two, Kang Jeungsan claimed that he was Maitreya, he exhibited a very Korean messianic identity. In his study of Maitreya in Korea, Lancaster noted that just as in Japan, in Korea many new “religions, whether related to folk practice, Christianity, or Buddhism, emphasize a messianic vision.” (Lancaster 1988, 146).

Apart from this identical mission, the two incarnations do exhibit major differences that, without going into the profound intricacies of both theological systems, we can summarize in three points.

First, the incarnation of Christ is held to be the unique one of the Abrahamic tradition for not only is it not accepted in Judaism or Islam, but it is the only acceptable one in traditional Christianity. There have been a certain number of characters who claimed to be not just prophets but messiahs and reincarnations of Jesus, but they have all been discarded, either burnt at the stake or excommunicated, or they have left the Church and founded their own groups and thence they are not recognized by the canonical institutions. Regarding Kang Jeungsan, the question is this: if he is held to be the only incarnation of Sangje, or at least his most recent and final one, then the thesis of the connection with Christianity will stand. On the other hand, if his incarnation belongs to the Daoist-Buddhist-Confucian tradition, it is but one of many such operations as we have seen previously. In this case, would the essence of Kang correspond to that of a mere temporary embodiment of the Godhead, that is to say from 1871 to 1909 only?

Though it seems that for Daesoon followers there has not been any new incarnation since 1909, we might understand Kang as a time limited embodiment because at least one author, Park Yong-cheol, calls him “a human avatar”, the Indian term implying one of many such incarnations. In his complex article, Park purports to show the originality of Daesoon vis-à-vis traditional Daoism: he asks whether one can differentiate between what we could call the two hypostases of the Supreme God since they are not given the same name *before* and *after* the embodiment:

There are two alternative names for this divinity in relation to his human avatar, Kang Jeungsan, the subject of faith in Daesoon Jinrihoe. One is ‘the Lord God of Great Creation in the Ninth Heaven’ meaning the divinity before assuming a human avatar, and the other is ‘the Celestial Worthy of Universal Transformation’ the same divinity after he discarded his human avatar and returned to his celestial post. To understand how the belief system of Daesoon Jinrihoe differs from that of Daoism, it is necessary to study the divinity’s name change. (Park Y. 2017, 49)

Second, Daesoon Thought holds that Sangje was able to comprehend the life and

nature of human beings only through having the same status, which is the reason for his incarnation (Kim D. 2020, 263). In Christianity, incarnation is not to allow God to understand human nature, since he created it, but to demonstrate to his creatures that he shares their sufferings and to teach through his own sacrifice and resurrection that every man could undergo the same transformation: redemption and resurrection. Furthermore, Sangje had to go on the Great Itineration to assess the state of the universe, whereas the God of monotheism does not have to spend years visiting the world: he intimately knows it and its shortcomings. Further, the Christian incarnation leads to the radical transformation of the condition of man through the sacrifice of God's son. Sangje did not offer a sacrifice but he taught the Dao that would harmonize man, culture and nature through the act of shared compassion and benevolence.

Third, another divergence surges up in the decision-making process leading to incarnation: David Kim states that in this act Sangje reenacted more the function of Jesus than that of Yahweh (Kim D. 2020, 249). Does it mean that Sangje could not really be held as competing equally with the Christian God the Father? Also, if this emphasis on the function of Jesus clarifies—by narrowing it—the function of Kang Jeungsan as divine son, this raises more questions, yet this may arise from a misinterpretation of Jesus and Yahweh who may be wrongly understood as being separate entities.

Indeed, in traditional and trinitarian Christianity, Jesus Christ is God—which would be the same as Kang Jeungsan being God—but he has been part of the Godhead of all eternity, whereas it does not seem that Kang is understood as having been in the Godhead of the Ninth Heaven of all eternity, all the more so if he is understood as an avatar as seen above.

Perhaps to temper the force of this major antithesis, we should recall that the concept of the Son Jesus having been within the Godhead of all eternity has not always been accepted by all branches of Christianity (and still is not to this day). It was only after much strife that at Nicaea, in 325, the major branch inscribed in its official creed the concept of Christ as “not created” but “engendered” or “begotten” and as having been in the Godhead of all eternity, consubstantial with the Father. This was to refute Arianism that claimed that Jesus, though truly the son of God, had been “begotten” at a certain point in time in the sense of “created”, and thus had not been with the Father of all eternity.

Some groups, notably the monophysite communities in the Near East to this day only admit the identity of the essence of Christ with that of God, and not with human nature, his human form being merely an appearance, almost a visual trick to pass on his message more convincingly. The Orthodox Church, for its part, while fully accepting his dual nature, emphasizes the spiritual dimension of Christ, over his human dimension, far more than the Western Churches (Catholic and most Protestant branches) which, on the contrary, while also fully accepting his dual nature, have built their theology on his

incarnation in an authentic human body.

5. The importance of Korea as Elect Birth Place: Korean Messianism

The destination of Sangje is very precise: “He descended to earth and stopped in the eastern land of Dongto (동토, 東土, eastern land)” (Kim D. 2020, 250). The parallel between the choice of Korea and that of Israel for the incarnation of Jesus is obvious. Yet again the paths diverge. If many Christian groups adopted the Jewish bible vision of Israel as the Promised Land and considered the birth of Jesus in this very land as another sign of its election as the Holy Land, over the years they extended the concept to their own people wherever they might reside (one of the strongest examples is the conviction of many Americans that the United States is the New Jerusalem). For most Christians, the Messiah is no longer inextricably tied to the geographic location of his incarnation. This is not so with Korean messiahs (the Church of Almighty God in China offers another example of geographically tied divine incarnation). This has been explained by the specific history of Korea and its subsequent strong nationalism (Flaherty 2016). Sangje Kang stands among those nationalist messiahs who can also preach a universalist message. Several of those characters emphasize their Christian allegiance but they always koreanize their own function.

Park Tae-seon (1915–1990), who claimed to hold a higher position than Jesus, founded the Olive Tree. Rev. Moon (1920–2012), ‘Lord of the Second Advent’, contended that Jesus had failed his mission since he did not marry, a mission he himself would fulfill (Moon 2001). His messianic power has now been transferred to his widow Hak Ja Han who remains in Korea (their rival sons in the USA claim to be his true heirs). Another one is Cho Hee-Seung (1931–2004), the Messiah of Victory Altar who denounced Jesus as an impostor and the son of Satan (Han 2017). These figures are unique in that their followers actually claim their Messiah is a man, or a woman, with a Korean passport. Kang Jeungsan ranks as a bona fide Korean messiah as is proved by his being incarnated specifically in Jeolla Province, but unlike those within the Christian range, he is not viewed as having outperformed Jesus. Since his messianic function ties him both to Buddhism, Christianity and Daoism but with several variations, how can he be defined within the spectrum of divinities?

Part Two: The Divine Essence of Sangje Kang Jeungsan: Polytheist and Monotheist

Daesoon Thought theologians affirm that the religion is both monotheistic and polytheistic, a paradox that must be addressed to better grasp the essence of Sangje Kang. It is not easy to define it minutely, which is an age-old quandary whenever

Westerners try to categorize Asian divine figures. In one of the first major French books on the history of Korea (1874), Charles Claude Dallet (1829–1878) underlines the difficulty missionaries had to receive precise answers when they asked their very educated Korean respondents about the exact sense of Siang-tiei (old spelling of Sangje):

some believe that the name is used to designate the Supreme Being, creator and protector of the world; others pretend that he is Heaven (*Sky, ciel* in French) to whom they recognize the providential power to produce, preserve and help the harvests to ripen, to keep diseases at bay, etc...; the majority confess that they ignore the meaning of the name and do not bother about it. When public sacrifices are offered to obtain rain or serenity, or to ward off various plagues, the prayer is addressed either to the Supreme Lord, or to the Heaven, depending on the text drawn by the mandarin in charge of the ceremony. (Dallet 1874, cxxxix, my translation)

Today, queries on the precise identity of gods are not met with more precisions, probably because if in the West identities, human as well as divine, are clearly listed, registered, practically invariable, in the Chinese world and in the cultures it has influenced, spiritual identities constantly are shifted, adapted, renewed...

1. Sangje, a Confucian God between Daoism and Maitreyaism

Before searching for evidence of a form of monotheistic identity, Sangje's Confucian cum Daoist and Buddhism identity, already strongly exhibited in the process of his incarnation as seen above, needs to be confirmed. I wondered whether he might be one embodiment of the Jade Emperor in the divine hierarchy since in many texts outside of Daesoon Thought's literature, Sangje is equated with the Jade Emperor (or Yu Huang, Yu Ti, Yu Di, Jade August One) with whom he shares several characteristics, and even in some texts on Daesoon the two figures seem collapsed into one. In Chinese mythology, the Emperor is considered to have been a human being who self-divinized. He is viewed as determining everything in Heaven and Earth and he commands other gods and spirits to carry out his orders. He also benefited from a miraculous birth: his mother dreamed that Laozi handed her a child and thus he, Yu Huang, was born. His father died when he was young, the very stuff of initiatory fairy tales since this loss forces the hero to fend for himself. When he became king, he preferred to study the Dao and lived in the mountains where he practiced self-cultivation to become an Immortal. "After one million years, he attained the highest calling as the Jade Emperor. Yu Huang's wife was said to be the Queen Mother of the West, Xi Wang Mu, who lived in the jade palace in Kunlun". (Roberts 2010, 147)

Within the realm of incarnations, it is worth noting that in complement of their viewing

the Emperor as the representative of Heaven, the Chinese regarded the Empress herself as the incarnation of the Earth. This title implied she possessed special powers over nature (Daryl 1885, 33).

The answer to my query on a possible identification of Sangje with the Jade Emperor came in chapter seven of David Kim's book, the one dedicated to "Sacred Sites and Their Functional Roles". In the subchapter depicting Youngdae, the inner sanctuary in the headquarter temple of Daesoon Jinrihoe in Yeosu. The Jade Emperor is there said to have been newly defined as second founder of the religion. Thus, he is not Sangje, but one of the gods next to him. Since, as David Kim asserted to me, Daesoon did not say that Sangje had first been a human who would have self-divinized, the two deities are not one single god but two entities with Sangje as supreme god. The description of the displays behind the glass, around the portrait of Sangje Kang, reads this way:

The pantheon demonstrated at the Youngdae is predominantly Chinese in character. Within identical pantheons, the respective main deities are shifted into the centre while the others are set up at the side in a comparatively subordinate position. . . . For example, two deities of the Chinese pantheon, the god of Thunder and the Jade Emperor have been newly defined as the first and second founders of Daesoon Jinrihoe and shifted into the centre, while Buddha has been shifted to third place and the very popular god of War even to eighth place. (Kim D. 2020, 443)

Next to the dominant Daoist corpus, the Buddhist elements crop up as well in Daesoon Jinrihoe as was just exemplified by the presence of Buddha in the sanctuary of Yeosu temple. The major evidence, though, is that Sangje/Kang announced that he was Mireuk, the Korean term for Maitreya the Buddha of the future, hence emphasizing his messianic role more forcefully (see Lee, Bong-Ho). Far from being a betrayal of Daoist lore, this declaration is on the contrary totally in line with it. When Buddhism penetrated China in the first century C.E, it was interpreted as an offspring of the Dao, and even as having been taught by Laozi in the West. As Livia Kohn writes in her book on Lord Lao, Laozi himself was "identified with the Buddha" (Kohn 1999, 3). In the beginning "the divinity of the Buddha was also described in terms of the deified Laozi, as a god who underwent transformations, reappeared in different periods of history, had multiple bodies, and was one with the cosmic power of the Dao." (Kohn 1999, 115) The Buddha is held as able to perform all varieties of shape shifting, ascents and descents.

Buttressing his Buddhist identity, it was in the Golden Maitreya Buddha statue of Geumsan temple (Moaksan Mountain, Jeolla province) that Sangje is believed to have spiritually resided in for thirty years before incarnating in 1871 in Kang. He is supposed to have observed the world by conducting a "Great Itineration", when he "closely examined the

Three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity”, to respond to the petitions and demands of all the divine sages, buddhas and bodhisattvas (AADDJ 2017, 17). Furthermore, at the age of thirty, before opening the Great Daesoon, it is said that he fasted for 49 days in Daewonsa Temple: now, 49 is an important number in Buddhism since in this tradition, mourning lasts 49 days during which the soul wanders before being reborn on the 49th day. More than this extremely complex Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist identity, Sangje is bound to display other characteristics since Daesoon defined its theology as also accepting Christianity. Though Christian elements are not immediately visible, its self-definition as monotheistic may be one major hint.

2. Sangje as a God of Monotheism

In his Chapter 5, David Kim states that Daesoon is a monotheist religion that also recognizes several deities: “Daesoon Jinrihoe is categorised as a monotheistic new religion with Sangje”, and in one note he adds: “The concept of god in Daesoon is not limited in its theory of god, but creatively embraces most divine notions of monotheism, polytheism and pantheism.” (Kim D. 2020, 257). He bases his conclusion “on the canonical texts and written traditions (historical and cultural heritage)” of the religion and on the literature of Korean scholars who have analyzed Daesoon from the inside (Kim D. 2020, 249). What this apparent paradox seems to imply is that Sangje reigns as supreme god (similar to that of monotheism) above a polytheist pantheon whose deities must assist him in his mission to order and help the universe.¹ Those deities do not overshadow whatsoever his grandeur that is majestically exhibited in Youngdae sanctuary, the holy of holies in the headquarter temple at Yeosu.

The hall strikes the visitor with its relative starkness, with the dancheong ceiling for sole decoration. The major element in the middle of the altar exhibit on the left wall as one enters is a portrait of Kang/ Gangseong Sangje with the traditional *kat* (high top hat). Other images of deities are displayed on the sides (they are listed by David Kim in the quotation above) but it is to Kang that worshippers display the greatest reverence. All must bow very deeply to express humility. At the very beginning of the tour, visitors are taught how to bow at the proper angle in this particular hall. No photograph can be taken, silence must reign. Specific physically demanding bowings (more difficult for women than for men: from standing up straight down to cross legged position without leaning or using hands to keep the balance, then touching the ground with the forehead, repeated several times) are performed by the disciples lining up in a very orderly fashion, lines for the men, lines for women.

The atmosphere is radically different from that of a Daoist temple or even a Buddhist temple where there would stand numerous gilded and colored statues of all sizes, huge basins for incense burning, tables for offerings and a constant movement of worshippers. The bareness and intensity of the hall seems closer to that of a Christian church that would have minimal decoration and a strong sense of sacrality. The fact that one has to climb many

steps to reach the sanctuary emphasizes its superiority and uniqueness within the large temple complex; furthermore, it is only found in this headquarter temple. The resulting feeling is that one is in the presence of one Supreme God who overshadows his aides to such an extent that polytheism is not what a visitor like myself feels there and remembers after departing. My impression corroborates what Yoon Yong-Bok stated: “the perception of gods in Daesoonjinrihoe is different from the perception of gods in other religions. To make a long story short, because of its polytheism the idea of god in Daesoonjinrihoe is different from monotheism such as Christianity, Islam. In addition, in spite of its polytheism it is different from other polytheism such as the religion in ancient India, especially rig-vedic religion.” (Yoon 2013, 1). What then, can possibly be the origins of the particular brand of monotheism exhibited in Daesoon’s scriptures and practices?

3. The Introduction of Monotheism in Korea

It seems that over the years, many Koreans have come to apply the term “monotheism” to their native religions, though these involve a great number of deities and stand well outside “canonical” monotheism (which in Korea will mostly be Christian even if there are Muslims and Jews there as well). However, this has been refuted in particular by Don Baker who, in several studies (Baker 2002; Baker 2007; Baker 2012; Baker 2016), has demonstrated that this conviction was ungrounded since monotheism as a concept was introduced by the first wave of evangelization by Korean Catholics in the eighteenth century. In “Christians Have No Right to Call Their God ‘Hananim’”, he argues that many Koreans are erroneously convinced that their ancestors did worship a trinitarian God before the arrival of the Westerners (Baker 2007). Later, he affirmed that “[t]he first easily identifiable contribution Catholicism made is monotheism” and that there were absolutely “no documentary or archeological evidence for even hints of monotheism before Christianity arrived in Korea”. (Baker 2016, 47–48)

Baker criticizes also Na Chol, the founder of Taejonggyo (1863–1916), who taught that “in order for Korea to regain its rightful position in the world, Koreans had to return to the worship of the same God their ancestors worshipped, the three persons (Hwanin; Hwanung, Tan’gun) in one God, that Taejonggyo calls Hanollim.” (Baker 2007, 464). Precisely to the point, his earlier analysis of the terms “Hananim, Hanūnim, Hanullim, and Hanöllim” demonstrated that the terms did not exist before the arrival of missionaries (Baker 2002). The linguistic argument is taken up by Yoon Yong-Bok who contends that it is extremely complex to characterize properly the god of Daesoon Jinrihoe because of inappropriate vocabulary since one of the paramount theological terms, Shin (神), comes from an English concept: “Nowadays Shin that has been used in Korea, China, Japan, is the word that was translated from English god. Therefore, we need to reappraise the meaning of the word Shin. Anyway Shin that is being used in general means Shinmyung (神明) in Daesoonjinrihoe.” (Yoon 2013, 1)

The quandary posed by this linguistic shortcoming (why should Koreans use a

concept translated from English to characterize their own cosmogony) has its source in the metamorphoses of the religious sphere in the recent centuries under the impact of the geopolitical mutations operated by the Western powers. Wherever it penetrated, Christian evangelization altered the manner in which local people thought about their own spiritual practices (until then, they probably did not “reflect” on them, but just performed them without any critical questioning). Because evangelization functioned hand in hand with colonization, local people were taught that their traditional rituals and various spiritual practices were inferior to those of the colonizers whose god was more powerful and whose rituals were the epitome of civilization.

Monotheism was held by the colonial elites to be the end result of the long maturing process of religions from primitive to more and more developed systems. Logically, whenever they encountered animism and polytheism they judged them so backward that they felt it their duty to educate their practitioners into the only civilized spirituality (as part of the White Man’s Burden, though Kipling’s plea does not mention religion). Korea is a most interesting case in point since it was never colonized by Westerners and since Catholicism was introduced by Koreans themselves (see Dallet 1874). Consequently, Koreans should not have suffered from any feeling of inferiority towards Christians. Furthermore, Baker explains how and why Confucian elites, dissatisfied with their own failed moral achievements, could be attracted to the authoritarian personal God of Catholicism and sought the model of social constraint he made possible (Baker 2012).

In their considering monotheism as their own religious tradition, Koreans were probably also influenced by what had been taking place in China, the century-old cultural model of their nation. Goossaert and Palmer (2011) have shown how the perception of religion evolved in early 20th century China because people constantly measured what they viewed as their own shortcomings against the superior ways of the Westerners. In Korea then, the desirability of monotheism may have justified the various studies explaining the unique success of Christianity in the country by the proximity between its tenets and those of traditional indigenous religions. According to them, it was Korean proto monotheism that paved the way for the success of Christianity. The proponents of this view are those derided by Baker (2007), for example Andrew Kim (2000) and David Chung (2001).

4. Probable impact of Christianity on Daeseon

Daeseon is technically a “new religion” registered in 1969, but its roots sprang during the cultural and political turmoil between the proponents of adopting Western teaching and those who adamantly cling to Eastern traditions and led to the famous Donghak (the Eastern Learning) movement founded in 1860 by Choe Je-u (1834–1864). Though Kang opted for indigenous mores and belief systems, he did find positive elements in

Christianity. Obviously, Daesoon Thought founders and directors were also anxious to incorporate those items in the new organization, as is exhibited in its hierarchical structure, its charity, social welfare and education network, and in its theological construction as well. One piece of evidence of the possible theological impact of Christianity on Daesoon's belief system is its recourse to distinctively monotheist god attributes: Sangje is "the omniscient and omnipotent Supreme God who presides over all things in the universe" (AADDJ 2017, 7). Another possible similarity resides in the concept of the "personal God". According to Park In-Gyu (2018) even if Daoism does offer the concept, the manner in which it is apprehended in Daesoon is closer to the concept in Christianity because the personal relation between the followers and God is through the incarnation of Jeungsan into a human body.

A certain number of other similarities can be interpreted as the result of happenstance or as imports due to Kang's personal interest in Christianity. For example, like Jesus, Kang Jeungsan is said to have spent the first thirty years of his life honing the future teaching of his revelation in relative normality. Also, he was quite admiring of the Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), the first Christian missionary to reach the court of the Chinese Emperor (in 1600). Ricci, like his successors, promoted what is now called "inculturation": in China he behaved like a Chinese, and he is said to have "introduced" the values of Confucianism in the West. Because of his supposed achievement as an interpreter between two worlds, Kang Jeungsan viewed him as having embarked on a mission to China in order to open there the earthly paradise and he attributed his failure to achieve it to the opposition of Chinese Confucianists. It is this balance between the two worlds that Daesoon Jinrihoe seeks as well. Park I. (2018, 95) underlines its fine line on the threshold of East and West: "Kang's soteriology was very different from Oriental tradition, although it maintained the Oriental emphasis on human work and performance, and somewhat similar to Christianity, as it emphasized the power and grace of an absolute personal god."

5. Differences between the Christian God and Sangje

In spite of parallels, Sangje Kang Jeungsan differs in several regards from the god of Abrahamic monotheism. Grant it, like Sangje, this god is omnipotent and omnipresent, but, as already noted in part one, he is held to have existed of all eternity (is it the case for Sangje? I have found no answer to this question) and to be the unique deity of the whole universe. He is a jealous god that demands exclusive worship. The other entities that surround him in Orthodoxy and in Roman Catholicism, saints, angels, the Virgin Mary..., have absolutely no intrinsic power, they are only intermediaries who can forward prayers to God but they must not be worshipped for themselves (even if they seem to be) and they were promptly disposed of by Protestantism. Sangje's "full

name implies the (Chinese or East Asian) character of an all mighty god like the Jehovah of Christianity,” David Kim writes (2000, 251), yet when we read that he embarked on his Great Itineration in order “to respond to the petitions and demands of all the divine sages, buddhas and bodhisattvas,” we immediately contrast this democratic, synodal interaction between Sangje and his petitioners with the god of *stricto sensu* monotheism. The latter will never be told what to do, and even less by “entities of all stripes” from outside his domain, although he constantly receives prayers begging him to act in a certain way.

Again, as opposed to the monotheist god’s aloofness, an intense cooperation between Sangje and men is expounded in the canonical text Essentials of Daesoon Jinrihoe (대순진리회요람) that “delivers the key teaching that if there are no men behind god, god has nobody to do his work and that if god is not ahead of men there is no one who can lead them. The universe is composed, as god and men are harmonious.... God waits for the help of men and men need god’s help” (Kim D. 2020, 284). What’s more, the dereliction of creation was caused not by humans so much as by the gods who were trying to facilitate progress but messed up the organization of the world because they did not agree among themselves, thus spawning grievances: “the divine beings who had operated under mutual contention often made mistakes and spread confusion.... This will result in the annihilation of all wicked beings including both divine beings and humans.” (Cha 2019, 257)

Regarding the fate of men, the two systems are again at variance, but not so radically opposed as may seem at first sight. For Daesoon, once people die they can become gods and thus extend indefinitely the pool of polytheism. “The ultimate level of cultivation would lead men to the stage where humans can be superior to gods. They believe that gods would help divine men.” (David Kim, personal exchange, April 4, 2020). In Western Christianity, the divinization of man is not a theological subject. It is only said that men who have followed God’s law will partake in the glory of God. In the West, Mormonism is an exception as it promises the divinization of man (God having been a man to begin with), but, before its vast revamping into an almost evangelical group, the movement was held to deviate considerably from mainline Christianity. Yet, in Oriental Christianity (Near and Middle East), the divinization of man is a recurrent doctrinal motif. It is termed *theosis*. Originating from the divine nature of man, the divinization process starts at the very beginning of man who must lead a moral and virtuous life in tune with the will of God. This will allow him to grow spiritually and rise more and more towards God and to resemble him more and more. (Larchet 2015, 185)

6. And If After All There Were More Connections than Meets the Eye?

After having compared the polymorphous and fluctuating identity of Daesoon divine entities with the monochromic and unchanging one of the Christian god, it is time to question the supposed everlasting attributes of the latter. In *L'invention de Dieu*, "The Invention of God", Thomas Römer has demonstrated the long gestation of monotheism in biblical history. The concept is the result of "progressive constructions resulting from sedimented traditions whose strata were reshuffled until they produced an unprecedented form... a sort of collective invention" (Römer 2014, 14). The future universal god began as a clannish god. Yhwh was the god of thunder and of war (64), he was also connected to the Sun god. It was thanks to the ideological construct of the biblical authors that he became the god of the kingdom of Israel which itself grew more powerful than its rivals in the ninth century BCE (25–28). In the eighth century Jerusalem became a capital city.

It was attacked by the Assyrians who, in 701, for unknown reasons, lifted their siege. In the collective memory of the inhabitants surged the conviction that their god protected their city against all enemies (31, 245). The authors gradually stressed the centrality and uniqueness of this god that was powerfully strengthened during Babylonian captivity. Later, the transformation of Yhwh in one unique God was achieved by the refusal of Judaism to call him by his name (names are needed to distinguish between people or gods; if there is only one, no need for a name [39, 216]). The final step occurred in Egypt with the intensification of the contacts between the Jews and the Greeks. Once the Torah was translated into Greek, the whole world could then invoke this unique god. Monotheism was thus finalized while absorbing all the polytheist roots that are still visible in its heritage. The radical differences we have pointed out between the god concept in Christianity and in Daesoon Thought are after all fairly recent within the long history of religions and it is somewhat pleasant to realize that the Christian god shares with Sangje strong connections to the Thunder and the Sun among a rich variety of other kinships.

Conclusion

This modest investigation into the theology of Daesoon Jinrihoe has allowed us to understand better its originality. While it borrows features from several major spiritual traditions, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism in its Maitreyan variation and from Christianity, it has reorganized them in such a clever way that it does stand as an original religious creation. Living at the time of major upheavals in the country, its ancestor founder Kang leveled the contents of his message at the misery and needs of the people around him, but with astute inspiration, he broadened the message to last and reach people beyond his life time. By declaring that he was the divine incarnation of the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, of Confucian origins, he masterfully aggrandized into divine revelation the scope of his teaching. If it had remained within the scope

of Daoist and Buddhist occurrences, his incarnation might have represented just one of many descents of the divine into the human realm. Yet, since his followers seem to believe his incarnation to have been the very last and not just the latter one, and since Christianity has been melded into the equation, this 1871 incarnation has acquired over the ensuing 150 years a powerful aura in the region, on a par with that of Christ in the vast world of Christianity.

The same conclusion can apply to the essence of Sangje. It is extremely difficult to define because it falls within the theological families of Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, but it is never a mere replica of their divine entities. He displays many of their attributes but also those of a Korean messiah on the path to universalism.

Most importantly, what could pass for irreconcilable differences between monotheism and polytheism ends up fused into Daeseon as one single religious system that embraces both of them in a continuous process of revitalization that we even tracked in the birth of monotheism. Finally, the spiritual essence of Sangje cannot be severed from the terrestrial organization his followers have built since 1969. What Daeseon Jinrihoe as an institution intensely involved in hospitals, charities, schools and colleges has proved is that the revelation of Sangje Kang Jeungsan was intended to save not just souls but also bodies and society at large, that he planned to reorganize cosmically and terrestrially. As an observer, from quite far, I can testify to the successful interactions of all these domains that of all evidence have provided followers with peace of mind and personal achievement.

Conflict of Interest

Bernadette Rigal-Cellard has been the Editorial Board of *JDTREA* since July 2021, but has no role in the decision to publish this article. No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Note

- ¹ For a closer analysis of Gangseong Sangje's Divinity: see Ko, Nam-Sik (2014). For a presentation of Sangje and the fifteen Godhip see Cha, Seon-Keun (2014). Another useful article on the divine Dao in Daeseon is Choi, Chi-Bong' (2017).

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Daesoon Thought as the Source of Daesoon Jinrihoe's Social Work

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Abstract

Both in Korea and internationally, many know and appreciate Daeseon Jinrihoe for its social work in the three main areas of education, social welfare and health care, and charity aid. The article surveys Daeseon Jinrihoe's activities in these three areas and proposes a comparison with the charitable and ecological work performed by the Taiwanese Buddhist charity (and new religious movement) Tzu Chi, the peace activities of Soka Gakkai, and the projects developed in Bhutan to implement the policy of Gross National Happiness. Tzu Chi is mostly known for its massive recycling activities, but in fact its view of charity and ecology is based on a specific Buddhist theology. Soka Gakkai's vision of peace relates to its interpretation of Nichiren Buddhism. Gross National Happiness in Bhutan is a project promoted by the government, but scholars who have studied it have concluded that it is deeply rooted in Drukpa Kagyu, the dominant school in Bhutanese Buddhism. Similarities are noted, as well as differences with the Western Christian and post-Christian approach to charity, which is largely based on an affirmation of the self. Daeseon Jinrihoe's social work shares with the Buddhist cases studied in the article the idea that the self may deceive (self-deception) but appears to be inspired by the unique principle of Sangsaeng, and by the idea that the root causes of social problems are grievances accumulated through thousands of years and in need of being resolved.

Keywords: Daeseon Jinrihoe; Kang Jeungsan; Haewon; Boeun Sangsaeng; Guarding Against Self-Deception; Buddhist Social Work.

Daesoon Jinrihoe's Three Areas of Social Work

During the last few years, I have visited repeatedly Daesoon Jinrihoe's temples and social work institutions in South Korea. While the temples, and the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex in particular, are the living heart of this large Korean new religion, many Koreans (and, increasingly, non-Koreans) now know Daesoon Jinrihoe mostly because of its impressive social work. This work is not intended as a form of assistance to Daesoon Jinrihoe devotees in need only; in fact, most of those who benefit from it are not members of the religion.

Daesoon Jinrihoe pledges to devote 70% of its financial resources to social work. Even critics believe that it does keep this pledge (Jorgensen 2018, 377), which explains the good reputation the religion has acquired among South Koreans in general, including those who are far away from its theology and worldview. By 2014, yearly expenses for Daesoon Jinrihoe's social work had reached the impressive figure of \$680 million (AADDJ 2017, 73).

This social activity includes what Daesoon Jinrihoe calls the "Three Major Works," education, social welfare, and charity aid.

Education

Daesoon Jinrihoe likes to quote the words of its third leader, Park Wudang (1917–1995). He stated that,

it is our goal to provide a well-rounded education characterized by the cultivation of morality and a law-abiding spirit, and additionally enable students to develop sound minds and bodies. Thus, we should put much effort into raising talented people who will meet the demands of this age and make contributions to the public and to national interests (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2020).

This goal was never foreign to Daesoon Jinrihoe and its predecessor organizations. One century ago, they were already fighting illiteracy, which at that time was widespread in Korea. More recently, Daesoon Jinrihoe has established an accredited university and six high schools (Daejin High School, Daejin Girl's High School, Bundang Daejin High School, Daejin Design High School, Ilsan Daejin High School, and Busan Daejin High School of Electronics and Telecommunications).

One unique institution is the Daejin Youth Training Center, opened in March 2013. It is both a physical place, i.e., a building capable of accommodating some 200 persons, and a set of programs that include youth camps and religious-cultural field trips. It also

offers two certified training courses for adolescents, “Empathy and Sharing,” training the youth to become volunteers in various fields, and “Daejin Futsal (Indoor Soccer) Class.” The “Empathy and Sharing” program cooperates with other Daesoon Jinrihoe institutions. For example, participants can learn how to take care of the elderly and help them with their wheelchairs.

Daejin University in Pocheon City has an atmosphere that is both Korean and international. It is becoming more cosmopolitan, as the number of students who are not members of Daesoon Jinrihoe or come from abroad continue to increase. It also maintains two campuses in Mainland China, in Harbin and Suzhou, where some Korean students also study, supported by Daejin University scholarships. On the other hand, it maintains its roots in Daesoon values, and members of the religion are especially proud of it. It is also a local university, which exists in conversation with the institutions of Gyeonggi Province and Pocheon City. One of its most ambitious projects is the Gyeonggi-Daejin Techno Park, established in 2003 in cooperation with the province and city governments and with the approval of the South Korean Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Energy, to boost the growth of local industry.

The history of Daejin University dates to 1984, when Park Wudang established the Daejin Hakwon educational foundation. Plans for the university were set in motion in 1989. Government approval was secured in 1991, and Daejin University was inaugurated in 1992. Since then, it has won numerous awards, including as a top-ranked university in South Korea (2006) from the point of view of a comprehensive academic assessment of its activities in 2005, and as one of the top ten South Korean universities in the field of intellectual property (2015, Korean Intellectual Property Office). It includes, after a reorganization in 2016, 5 graduate schools, 5 colleges, 9 divisions, and 26 departments. It has signed Memorandums of Understanding with several universities and institutions throughout the world.

As it is common in Eastern Asia, Daejin University defines its strategies through slogans. One is “Humanities education based on benevolence and righteousness,” which is strictly connected with the principles of Daesoon Thought. The second, which is self-explanatory, and alludes to the fact that today many college graduates remain unemployed, is “Practical education with focusing on employment.” The third is “Creating smart campus,” a commitment to state-of-the-art digital services, which however does not forget the importance of ecology in Daesoon Thought and calls for an eco-friendly environment. In fact, one of the most important international events co-organized by Daejin University was the Inaugural Yeosu Eco-Forum, held on October 3–5 2019 in Yeosu City. The fourth is “Strengthening the brand of global Daejin,” and alludes to the DUCC (Daejin University China Campus) project in Mainland China, and other projects abroad that may develop in the future.

Private higher education is expensive in South Korea, and in 1976 Daesoon Jinrihoe

launched the Daesoon Scholarship Foundation. This corresponds to an idea of Park Wudang himself, and includes several different scholarships for excellent students whose families have limited financial resources. As of 2015, \$43 million had been invested in such scholarships.

Social Welfare and Health Care

Daesoon Jinrihoe's social welfare work includes three sectors: community, welfare, and medical. Community works include cleaning the streets and natural areas, assisting poor farmers, helping in finding missing children, and promoting campaigns for traffic safety and for the respect of the elderly.

With deep roots in the Korean tradition, elderly welfare is a special priority of Daesoon Jinrihoe. Daesoon Jinrihoe operates a geriatric hospital (capacity: 140), elderly nursing facilities (170) and an elderly welfare center (30). The nursing facilities are based on the principle of the Unit Care System, defined as an elderly nursing unit with multiple rooms to accommodate patients individually, thereby providing them with increased privacy and protection. One unit includes eight to twelve single rooms, and a large living room with a homelike atmosphere (AADDJ 2017, 81).

In practice, this unique system works through seven programs: leisure and dementia prevention, medical treatment and rehabilitation, cultural services, counseling services, nutritional support, family support, and sanitation service. For leisure, the elderly are offered classes in appreciating and producing movies, singing, music, origami, and pottery, as well as games, outings, and birthday celebrations. Dementia prevention works through physical exercise, laughter therapy, block building, puzzles, and drawing. Feast days are celebrated through cultural events, special meals, picnics, and performances.

The principle of the "homelike atmosphere" is what mostly impressed me when I visited Daesoon Jinrihoe's social welfare facilities, and is deeply connected with Daesoon Thought. It is important that the sick and the elderly do not feel marginalized in an asylum-like atmosphere, but perceive themselves as active participants in the life of the community. Daesoon Jinrihoe has built hospitals that do not look like hospitals, and nursing homes that do not look like nursing homes. This is appreciated by those who benefit of their services, but also by the Korean National Health Insurance Corporation, which from 2013 has consistently awarded its highest score to Daejin Elderly Nursing Facilities. Specialists from China and Vietnam also came to South Korea to study how the Unit Care System is implemented by Daesoon Jinrihoe.

The Daejin Medical Foundation dates to 1991. Daesoon Jinrihoe's main hospital, Bundang Jesaeng Hospital, was built in 1998. It has currently 31 departments and 760 beds. The Daejin Welfare Foundation started its activities in 2007. In 2009, the Daejin

Medical Care Institute was established. The Korean National Health Insurance Service recognized it as an A-level institution in 2012.

The Bundang Jesaeng Hospital has been certified by Korean medical authorities as a reliable, leading institution, equipped with modern, cutting-edge medical diagnostic and treatment systems. The hospital uses volunteers to provide a better and wider range of services. While volunteers are mostly members of Daeseon Jinrihoe, medical care is offered to anybody who qualifies for admission, irrespective of religious affiliation. The hospital is based both on Western and Oriental medicine, and includes departments of surgery, orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery, chest surgery, plastic surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics and adolescent medicine, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, dermatology, as well as centers for oncology, cardiovascular medicine, gastroenterology, hepatology, rehabilitation, the treatment of thyroid disorders, dentistry, an Emergency Medical Center, a Health Promotion Center, and a 24-Hours Stroke Center. An International Healthcare Center, established in 2012, cater to patients who speak several languages different from Korean. Two other hospitals, Dongducheon Jesaeng Hospital (1,500 beds) and Goseong Jesaeng Hospital (500) are currently being constructed.

Just as other activities of Daeseon Jinrihoe, health care is going through a process of globalization. In August 2015, the International Medical Volunteer Corps was launched, to offer medical services to ethnic Koreans and others living in poor conditions in Kyrgyzstan.

Charity Aid

Park Wudang taught members of Daeseon Jinrihoe to “[...] do your best to give love and hope to people neglected from society, by helping them to rehabilitate and begin new lives on their own” (AADDJ 2017, 75). He founded the Daeseon Men’s Association and the Daeseon Women’s Association in 1981, both having within their respective mandates to assist the needy, the disabled, the orphans, and to offer relief to the victims of the floods, which are frequent and ruinous in Korea.

Not unlike education and health care, Daeseon Jinrihoe’s charity is being globalized as well. Humanitarian aid started being brought to Kenya and Ethiopia in 2009. Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA) was founded in 2013. Originally, it operated in Korea by delivering food and medicines to the elderly’s homes, and helping them with home repairs. Soon, DIVA started operating in Mongolia and Vietnam as well, to the benefit of both the elderly and disadvantaged children. DIVA’s activities in Vietnam include assistance to Vietnamese medical practitioners to improve their services, health care education classes, first aid education, cultural exchanges, scholarships offered to Vietnamese students from low-income families, and a Korean Language Center at Hanoi Nguyen Trai University. In 2019, Bundang Jesaeng Hospital established a sistership with

Vietnam's Hanoi Tumor Hospital, and in the same year the authorization allowing DIVA to operate in Vietnam was renewed for another three years.

The activities abroad do not mean that DIVA stopped taking care of the poor in its core area of the Gyeonggi Province. Free meals are provided to needy families in Yeosu and Pocheon City, together with clothing, coal and other supplies for heating, medicines, and school supplies for the children. DIVA volunteers, when visiting the poor and the elderly, also check on their health and fitness, and refer them to public health officials when needed. DIVA also supports festivals promoting the local culture.

Daesoon Jinrihoe is proud to report that DIVA was selected as one of the outstanding volunteering organizations of 2014 in Gyeonggi Province. It was also chosen as a Designated Donation Body by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance in 2015. Next year, it was registered as an NGO with the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (AADDJ 2017, 77).

“Buddhism in Action”: Tzu Chi, Soka Gakkai's Peace Programs, and “Gross National Happiness” in Bhutan

We often hear the argument that Asians converted to Christianity because they were impressed by the social and charitable work both Catholics and Protestants did in the region, and realized that social work was a field where followers of traditional Asian religions were not as active as Christians. Ironically, in Europe we often meet people who converted to Buddhism, or joined Asian religious movements, claiming that the Christian churches today look more like secular charities or large bureaucracies, and lack the deeper sense of self-cultivation one can find in Asian religions.

That only Christians cared for charitable work is largely missionary propaganda. For example, in Japan as early as in 593 CE, “a large Buddhist temple called Shitennoh-ji was completed [...] by Prince Shotoku [574–622] and had attached to it a hospital, dispensary, orphanage and almshouse” (Iwasa 1966, 241). It has been claimed that India had its first institutions similar to hospitals roughly at the same time as Europe (Agrawal and Goyal 2011). On the other hand, it is true that in Europe the Catholic Church, followed after the 16th century by its Protestant counterparts, was primarily responsible for a massive network of hospitals, orphanages, and institutions for the poor and the elderly, at a time when there was no public welfare system.

Some scholars believe that, in fact, the decline of organized religion in Western Europe happened because the states transferred to themselves the welfare activities once monopolized by the Christian churches:

As governments gradually assume many of these welfare functions, individuals with elastic preferences for spiritual goods will reduce their

level of participation since the desired welfare goods can be obtained from secular sources (Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004, 399)

In other words, “weak” believers joined, or remained in, the Christian churches mostly because of the welfare services they offered, and when welfare was largely transferred to the state simply walked away from Christian institutional religion. This theory is contested by others, who believe that the fact that secular states came to control a higher percentage of schools was more important than welfare for explaining the decline of religion in Western Europe (Franck and Iannaccone 2014). In fact, both schools and health care-charitable institutions were for centuries a church monopoly in Europe.

In the twenty-first century, the situation has changed in Asia too. Buddhist movements such as Soka Gakkai are very active in social and political issues. Daeseon Jinrihoe is in itself evidence that non-Christian movements have developed impressive networks in the fields of both education and welfare. Daeseon Jinrihoe is not unique, and I want to propose here a comparison with a new Buddhist movement from Taiwan, Tzu Chi, a large and globalized Buddhist movement born in Japan, Soka Gakkai, and the different institutions promoting in Bhutan what the local government calls “Gross National Happiness.” I selected these three examples because I have visited Tzu Chi’s facilities in Taiwan, Soka Gakkai’s main centers in Japan, and Bhutan.

Tzu Chi

Tzu Chi, founded by the female Buddhist master Cheng Yen, is currently one of the largest Buddhist charities in the world (Yao 2012). It is well-known in Taiwan and beyond for its recycling activities, which are both ecological (for example, Tzu Chi recycles millions of plastic bottles every year) and charitable, because the recycled products, everything from clothing to shoes to furniture, are either distributed to the poor or sold to benefit them. As of 2016, Tzu Chi operated 548 main recycling stations and 10,204 “recycling points” in 16 different nations (Tzu Chi 2017, 110). Tzu Chi also operates two hospitals and a university.

The story of how Tzu Chi was born is particularly interesting. Master Cheng Yen sees as its foundational event her meeting in the mid-1960s, when she had just been ordained as a Buddhist nun, with three Catholic nuns from an order called the Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres. Reportedly, the nuns tried to convert Master Cheng Yen to Catholicism. They eventually gave up, but the Buddhist nun was impressed by the usual missionary argument, that

Buddhist disciples only seek to prepare for life after death and do not perform actual deeds that deals with the problem of society. They [the

Catholic nuns] claimed that they rarely saw Buddhists doing what benefits society as a whole and that there were no Buddhists who built hospitals and schools the way the Christians did (Yao 2012, 65).

There was a reason why Master Cheng Yen was receptive to this argument. She was already a somewhat anomalous Buddhist nun, and had experienced some trouble being ordained, because she found traditional Taiwanese nuns were fixed in “traditional female roles,” while she wanted both to be a nun and to engage in an active life “to serve the needs of a wider population” (Yao 2012, 60). She “became convinced that Buddhists should perform charitable acts just like Catholics” (Yao 2012, 66), which eventually led to the foundation of Tzu Chi.

Master Cheng Yen proposes a radical approach to Buddhism, which is critical of Soka Gakkai (discussed in the next sub-paragraph) and other groups in the *Lotus Sutra* tradition, to which Tzu Chi is sometimes compared by scholars. They do engage in social activities, but also teach the importance of chanting and reciting sutras. Master Cheng Yen disagrees, and claims that,

There would be no cause and effects if we eliminated bad karma by chanting sutras. Being human, we will all die someday; you must get off the bus at the station that corresponds with the mileage you paid for when you bought your ticket. You should help others before it is too late (quoted in Yao 2012, 101).

For Tzu Chi, traditional Buddhist practices such as temple worship, prayer, and chanting are not important, while the key to Buddhism is altruism and good deeds:

The real function of morning prayer is to be watchful of one's behavior at the beginning of the day, and night prayer is for self-examination at the end of the day. As long as one does these two things each day, one does not necessarily need to practice other forms of religious prayer (quoted in Yao 2012, 93).

Master Cheng Yen teaches a way of salvation she calls *xing jing*, “acting according to Buddhist teachings,” which in Christian terms one could see as similar to the Catholic “salvation through works” as opposed to the Protestant *sola fides*, the salvation through faith only. Giving alms and serving as volunteers in hospitals and recycling activities is the basis of altruism, and altruism according to Tzu Chi is the core teaching of Buddhism.

This is not to say that self-cultivation is not important in Tzu Chi, but it is seen in moral rather than religious terms. The Ten Precepts of Tzu Chi indicate what one should not do and forbid

- (1) killing any sentient being;
- (2) stealing;
- (3) sexual misconduct;
- (4) false speech;
- (5) drinking alcohol;
- (6) smoking or chewing betel nut;
- (7) gambling, which also includes playing the lottery and involvement in the stock market;
- (8) acting against parents' wishes or being ungrateful to them;
- (9) breaking the traffic laws;
- (10) attending or participating in political demonstrations or anti-government activities (quote in Yao 2012, 92).

While the Ten Precepts include a conventional Taiwanese morality and express Tzu Chi's support for Taiwan government's campaigns, including those against chewing betel nut, dangerous driving, and compulsive gambling, they also try to prevent members from wasting money that can be better employed to support the movement's charitable activities.

Yet, Tzu Chi is by no means a purely secular organization. Some see Tzu Chi mostly as just a pro-ecology and charitable group, but Taiwanese scholar Yao Yu-Shuang has described it as a full-fledged new religious movement. While casual visitors may be mostly told about the social work, Tzu Chi defines its activity as "putting the Buddha's teaching into action," although adding that its charitable activities do not serve any proselytization purpose (Tzu Chi 2017, 124–125). Yao found that those who devote their lives to Tzu Chi regard Master Cheng Yen as "the embodiment of Guan Yin" (Yao 2012, 164) and regard her interpretation of Buddhism as normative.

Soka Gakkai

Soka Gakkai is believed to be the largest Buddhist movement in the world, with some twelve million members worldwide (McLaughlin 2019). It has been successful in several Western countries, particularly in Italy, where it had in 2019 more than 90,000 members (Introvigne 2019). Soka Gakkai was born in Japan in 1930, and its two founders, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944) and Josei Toda (1900–1958), experienced the tragedy of World War II. Because of their pacifist attitude and opposition to Japanese militarism, they were arrested, and Makiguchi died in jail. Like most Japanese, Toda went through the deep trauma of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When, from the teaching of the *Lotus Sutra* in the tradition of the Japanese monk Nichiren Daishonin (1222–1282), Soka Gakkai expanded its scope to social activism,

not surprisingly Toda's first campaign was for nuclear disarmament, a theme that has remained crucial for the movement to this day (ŠorytĚ 2019).

Based on personally lived tragic events and the deep Buddhist perception of the world, already since 1957, his second leader President Toda, who died in 1958, had started an active anti-nuclear campaign. The same year, he issued his first declaration calling for the total abolition of nuclear weapons, grounded in his convictions as a Buddhist. When, in 1958, Daisaku Ikeda succeeded Toda as President of Soka Gakkai, the fact that the fight against atomic weapons was not humanitarian or secular only, but was grounded on Buddhist values, became even more clear.

The same year 1958, Ikeda had published a text called "A Way Out of the Burning House," based on a Buddhist parable, and very interesting for understanding the basis of Soka Gakkai's social activism. The "burning house" was our world, threatened by "unprecedented dangers." Ikeda found the "way out" in the Buddhist text that is at the very center of Soka Gakkai's religious experience, the *Lotus Sutra*.

According to that parable, a wealthy man's house suddenly catches fire but, because the house is very spacious, his children who are inside remain unaware of the danger in which they are placed and show neither surprise nor fear. The father then finds ways to entice them to come out of their own accord, thus enabling all to exit the burning house unharmed (Ikeda 2019, 4).

Coming out of the burning house, here, involves something more than a mundane strategy. The children trapped into the burning house need a conversion of the heart, which goes beyond politics and is rooted in spirituality. Soka Gakkai Buddhists believe in the possibility of an inner transformation of individuals. We can change ourselves not only by ceasing hostile acts, but orienting our existence toward saving lives, thus transforming our societies at their core.

In 1996, Ikeda founded the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. Since 1983, on January 26, including in 2020, in commemoration of the creation of Soka Gakkai, Ikeda wrote every year a Peace Proposal to the United Nations. 2020 was a significant year, as Soka Gakkai celebrated the 90th anniversary of its founding and the 45th anniversary of the establishment of Soka Gakkai International, and of course the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. In his 2020 message, Ikeda discussed the situation of multilateral treaties for nuclear disarmament, noting both stalemates between United States and Russia, and signs of hope (Ikeda 2020).

Ikeda's Peace Proposals demonstrate a very good understanding of the political dynamics of the world and the United Nations as a universal organization *per se*. This was confirmed when, in 2006, Ikeda wrote a detailed proposal for a reform of the United Nations. He wrote it cautiously, trying not to challenge directly the members of the Security Council. However, the text makes it clear that without a deep reform of how the United Nations work, its noble humanitarian aims cannot be achieved.

The 2006 proposal for United Nations reform should be read together with what is perhaps the most important text by Ikeda on Soka Gakkai's core theme of nuclear disarmament, the 2009 five-point plan for nuclear abolition. In this text, Ikeda went back to the very roots of Soka Gakkai, remembering that,

Just over 100 years ago, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, proposed a new mode of competition, “humanitarian competition”—in which “by benefiting others, we benefit ourselves”—as a means of overcoming conflict among nations. He called on each state to engage in a positive rivalry to contribute to the world through humane action, in order to spread the spirit of peaceful coexistence and build a truly global society (Ikeda 2009, 33).

The world is of course not close to global nuclear disarmament and peace, although Soka Gakkai's efforts did result in some international documents and recognition. Yet, Ikeda's vision is based on a humanistic Buddhism, teaching devotees never to lose hope. In his 2019 and 2020 Peace Proposals, Ikeda places nuclear disarmament within a larger framework based on “people-centered multilateralism,” going beyond the concept of national security, a “global compact on refugees,” and efforts to fight climate change. There is a clear sense that the campaign for disarmament cannot be disassociated from a wider global effort for peace, solidarity, ecology, and justice. Ikeda invites to “cultivate a mutual recognition of this pathology [of ‘peacelessness’] and join in search of a cure. In other words, we must develop a common vision for a peaceful society” (Ikeda 2019, 6).

Ultimately, Soka Gakkai invites us not to lose hope:

The darker the night, the closer the dawn: now is the time to accelerate momentum toward disarmament by taking the present crises as an opportunity to create a new history. To this end, I would like to propose three key themes that could serve as a kind of scaffolding in the effort to make disarmament a cornerstone of the world in the twenty-first century: sharing a vision of a peaceful society, promoting a people-centered multilateralism and mainstreaming youth participation (Ikeda 2019, 2).

Once again, this effort is grounded on Buddhism.

Our sense that the sufferings of others bear no relation to us, the distaste we might even feel, was admonished by Shakyamuni as the arrogance of the young, the arrogance of the healthy, the arrogance of the living. If we reconsider that arrogance in terms of the connections of the human heart,

we can clearly see how the apathy and lack of concern arising from arrogance actually deepens and intensifies the suffering of others (Ikeda 2019, 9).

Conversely,

our efforts to empathize with and support those struggling with difficulties help weave networks of mutual encouragement, giving rise to an expanding sense of security and hope. The focus of Buddhism is not confined to the inevitable sufferings of life, but takes in the reality of people confronting various difficulties within society. Thus, we find within the canon of Mahayana Buddhism (The Sutra on Upāsaka Precepts) encouragement to build wells, plant fruit trees and build water channels, help the old, the young and the weak to cross rivers and console those who have lost their land. This urges us to recognize that we are likely at some point to experience the suffering that afflicts other people—that there is no happiness which is our sole possession, no suffering that remains entirely confined to others—and to strive for the welfare of both self and others. In this, the essential spirit of Buddhism is expressed. Taking as one's own the pains and sufferings of others is exactly the philosophical wellspring for the SGI's [Soka Gakkai International's] activities as a faith-based organization (FBO) as we work to address global challenges. . . (Ikeda 2019, 10).

In his 2020 message, Ikeda also discussed the U.N. role on global natural disasters, and urged member states to “take joint and constructive action rather than just communicating a shared sense of crisis.” These look like prophetic words in view of the global coronavirus crisis, that hit the world days after the 2020 message was published.

Even in this case, this project was based on Buddhism, and on the Buddha's teachings that what causes evil is arrogance. The way out of evil is to experience the suffering of others as our own. This is, Ikeda wrote, “the essential spirit of Buddhism.” Ikeda is of course aware that in the international situation one can find ample cause for pessimism. He, however, mentions the example of Nichiren Daishonin, the originator of the Buddhist tradition to which Soka Gakkai belongs, when confronted with a deep national crisis in Japan in 1260.

At the time, the Japanese people suffered from repeated disasters and armed conflicts, and many were sunk in apathy and resignation. Society as a whole was permeated by pessimistic philosophies that despaired of the possibility of resolving challenges through one's own efforts, and many people's sole focus was on maintaining a sense of inner tranquility. Such ways of thinking

and acting ran entirely contrary to the teachings animating the Lotus Sutra, which call on us to maintain unyielding faith in the potential existing within all people, to work for the full development and flowering of that potential and to build a society in which all people shine in the fullness of their dignity. Nichiren's treatise urges an earnest confrontation with the challenge of how to spark the light of hope in the hearts of people beaten down by repeated disaster, how to mobilize social change to prevent wars and internal conflicts. He thus stresses the need to root out the pathology of resignation that lies hidden in the deepest strata of our social being, infecting us all: "Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil." His treatise calls on us to reject resignation in the face of our deep social ills and instead to muster our inner human capacities so that we may together meet the severe challenges of our age as agents of proactive and contagious change (Ikeda 2019, 13).

Bhutan's "Gross National Happiness" Project

Tzu Chi and Soka Gakkai are private organization. Bhutan is a sovereign state, whose king Jigme Singye Wangchuck (born in 1955 and still alive, although he abdicated in 2006 in favor of his eldest son) coined in 1972 the expression "Gross National Happiness," stating that this was more important for his country than the Gross National Product.

He did more than launch a slogan, as he created a Gross National Happiness Commission that oversees several institutions throughout Bhutan. He also enlisted the help of the University of Oxford to promote the idea of Gross National Happiness internationally, particularly through the United Nations (Schroeder 2018).

Controversy followed. For some, Gross National Happiness is simply political propaganda. They point out in particular the problems Bhutan has had with its non-Buddhist minority of ethnic Nepalese in the South of the country, where the conflict of the 1990s generated more than 100,000 refugees, who either fled Bhutan or were forced out of it. Others believe that the policy has indeed achieved results, which by definition cannot be measured in economic terms, yet can sometimes be assessed objectively. For example, Bhutan has rapidly improved its education system and has been recognized as one of the eco-friendliest countries in the world. It also takes great care in controlling tourism, so that it can develop in a way respectful of both ecology and traditional cultural values.

The reason I mention here Gross National Happiness is that Bhutan is an officially Buddhist state and, as Canadian scholar Kent Schroeder emphasized in 2018 in one of the few Western books on the topic, the policy cannot be understood separately from Bhutanese Buddhism.

The values underlying the individual pillars of GNH [Gross National Happiness] are defined as distinctly Buddhist. [...] GNH constructs Buddhism as the core of the cultural values of the country. They provide the foundation upon which GNH rests (Schroeder 2018, 27).

How is this implemented in practice? On the one hand, Buddhism teaches to the Bhutanese a Middle Way path, where happiness lies in moderation and in being satisfied with a modest, yet harmonious life (Rinzin 2006). On the other hand, the institutions set up by the government are supposed to be continuously tested against Buddhist principles. They are not asked to create happiness, as Buddhism posits that only individuals can create happiness for themselves. In Schroeder's words,

GNH does not create happiness for individuals and society. Similar to the human development paradigm, the GNH framework creates enabling conditions that provide people with the ability to choose to live happy lives within their national context, where happiness is understood as fulfilling one's deepest human potential (Schroeder 2018, 27).

Ultimately, Bhutanese Buddhism teaches, nobody can really make another person happy. Happiness comes from inside, not from the outside. However, an appropriate context outside can create conditions where happiness can be cultivated inside.

Some Common Points

Tzu Chi, Soka Gakkai, and the Bhutanese project of Gross National Happiness all belong to the category of humanistic or activist Buddhism. Soka Gakkai and Bhutanese Buddhism (Kumagai 2014), different as they are, give more importance to rituals such as chanting, prayer, and worship, while Tzu Chi is more radical in prioritizing social work. However, Soka Gakkai and the Bhutanese project for happiness give great importance to the principle of "Buddhism in action" in their social activities, and Tzu Chi, when examined more closely, appears to be a Buddhist new religious movement and not simply a charitable institution.

Both Soka Gakkai and the authorities presiding over the Gross National Happiness project in Bhutan regard interaction with the United Nations as important, with Ikeda directly addressing the internal problems of the U.N. and Bhutan trying to promote its project as a model through U.N. events. Tzu Chi also sought and achieved, in 2010, special consultative status at the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (*Taiwan Today* 2010), a recognition Soka Gakkai International had obtained in 1983 (Soka Gakkai International 2010).

Soka Gakkai, whose leaders are at the origin of a political party, Komeito, currently part of the governing coalition in Japan, is more directly involved in politics than Tzu Chi, which however tend to support some governmental campaigns in Taiwan. Despite these differences, all these three projects have in common the core idea that Buddhism need to actively engage with the world's current problems and that to be a good Buddhist, meditation and chanting are not sufficient, but one needs to show compassion in practice, by working for the poor, ecology, and world peace.

The Source of Daesoon Jinrihoe's Social Work: Daesoon Thought

In Daesoon Jinrihoe, all three major works of education, social welfare and charity aid rest on the foundation of *Sangsaeng*. The basic idea is that the world suffers because of grievances accumulated in both the human and the spirits' realm for thousands of years.

In Daesoon Thought, the universe has been created by Gucheon Sangje, the Lord of the Ninth Heaven, or the Supreme God. All beings exist only thanks to their relations with Sangje. He originally created a world of perfect harmony. Sangje's power to create and maintain harmony is expressed through the notion of *Noeseong* (Lightning and Thunder). Lightning comes from the two vital forces, yin and yang, and manifests itself as thunder. During the course of the millennia, this harmony was broken by the evil behavior of the creatures, and the lesser deities were not capable of restoring it. The crisis that developed in the Former World (*Seoncheon*), accumulating grievances and disorders, also extended to the world of divine spirits. Thus, they reported to Sangje, who decided to intervene personally.

Accepting their petitions, he started a "Great Itineration" (*Daesoon*) through the three realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. Sangje descended to the West and arrived in Korea, where he dwelt in the great statue of the Maitreya Buddha in the Geumsansa Temple in North Jeolla Province. From there, he revealed himself to Choi Je-Wu (1824–1864), who founded an earlier Korean new religion, Donghak (Eastern Learning). Choe, however, was not able to overcome the corrupt system of state Confucianism, which led to his execution in 1864. Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that, after the failure of Choe's mission, Sangje incarnated as Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) (DIRC 2016).

Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that Sangje, incarnated as Kang Jeungsan, thus continued on earth his great Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth (*Cheonjigongsa*). Through this work, he rectified or adjusted the periodical order of the universe (*Dosu*). He reordered the world of divine beings, humanity, and the environment. He solved the grievances in the Former World and opened the way to the advent of a glorious Later World (*Hucheon*) (DIRC 2014, 12–13). The passage from the old to the new world is called *Gaebyeok* (Great Transformation), a traditional concept in Korean religion (Flaherty 2011). As we read in Daesoon Jinrihoe's main scripture, *The Canonical Scripture* (DIRC 2020),

Presiding over the Three Realms with great power, I will recalibrate the Degree Number of the Former World and open the destined pathway to limitless divine immortality in the Later World to establish a paradise (*Reordering Works* 1, 2).

God's Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth performed by Kang Jeungsan are supposed to rectify all the accumulated grievances and disorders. Although God, i.e. Kang Jeungsan, did complete this truly global Work, humanity should also cooperate. The way humans cooperate with the divine work is by practicing the twin principles of *Sangsaeng*, the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence (*Haewon Sangsaeng*) and reciprocating favors out of gratitude (*Boeun Sangsaeng*). These are both religious and social principles. They deal with the whole universe and with cosmic grievances to be resolved, yet at the same time call for overcoming widespread human grievances and for a concrete mutual beneficence through social work.

Education itself in Daesoon Jinrihoe is based on *Sangsaeng*. Daejin University proclaims that its aim is,

to nurture capable people who will contribute to developing the nation and human society based on faithfulness, piety and conviction, which are founded on the principle of living harmoniously without any resentment, the aim of Daesoon Jinrihoe based on benevolence and righteousness (Daejin University 2020).

The "spirit" of Daejin University is expressed by three principles, faithfulness (*Seongsil*), piety (*Gyeonggeon*), and conviction (*Sinnyeom*). Seong refers to "truth" and "sincerity" and relates to guarding against self-deception and putting this principle sincerely into practice. *Gyeong* is more than religious piety, as it "refers to moving forward by following the movement of body and soul in line with [their] proprieties." *Sin* implies that projects should be carried out with an unchanged mind, without being distracted by greed and self-deception.

As for health care, Kang Jeungsan himself created an integrated sacred and social space with his Donggok Clinic, where he cured both physical and spiritual illnesses, and where he passed away in 1909. There, he performed a special set of rituals known as "the Reordering Work for the Clinics of All Nations," which is described by Daesoon Jinrihoe as follows:

In 1908, He [Kang] built Copper Valley (Donggok) Clinic and carried out the Reordering Work for the Clinics of All Nations to save humanity from all diseases. He said, "with this Work I will revive the dead, allow the blind to regain their sight, allow the crippled to walk once more, and clear away all diseases." He further added, "Those who receive 'Descending Spirit' from Heaven will be able to cure the sick with merely a touch or even a glance. In the future, the

‘Descending Spirit’ from Heaven will come down to you. Therefore, you should sincerely devote yourselves in cultivation” (AADDJ 2017, 20).

These are prophetic words about a better world, an earthly paradise promised for the future. But they also indicate that hospitals and clinics were important for Kang and regarded as part of his Reordering Work, and he asked his disciples to approach them with care and love.

Coming to charity aid, Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that among living beings there is a type of symbiotic relationship known in biology as “mutualism.” Two organisms interact in such a manner that both parties’ benefit, such as when bees produce honey:

Flowers benefit from the cross pollination that occurs when honeybees fly from flower to flower, and honey bees benefit from the large variety of essential nutrients that they acquire from pollen. There is a certain beauty in this relationship, yet, in truth, no altruism is taking place. Anthropomorphically speaking, bees do not awake one day and think, “We should do something nice for those flowers over there by moving their pollen around for them.” Nor are the flowers then moved to politely offer, “Keep some pollen for yourselves. You’ve more than earned it.” Both parties are in it for themselves, but they benefit each other as a ‘happy coincidence’ (AADDJ 2017, 11).

Mutualism is a natural law, and already has several beneficial effects. However, *Sangsaeng* and “mutual beneficence” go much further, as they require “both parties to be motivated by pure intentions to benefit one another” (AADDJ 2017, 11). Conversely, when *Haewon Sangsaeng* and *Boeun Sangsaeng* are practiced with sincere heart, their benefits for society are much greater than those of mutualism. The biological sphere, ruled by mutualism, and the human sphere, ideally ruled by mutual beneficence, are regarded as strictly related, which explains the close connection between social work and ecology in Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Daesoon Jinrihoe’ Social Work in Comparative Perspective

The social work performed by Daesoon Jinrihoe is an answer to the question how Asian traditional religious values may be made relevant to address social injustice and solve contemporary dramatic social problems. Daesoon Jinrihoe, however, believes that it has gone one step further with respects to other movements and projects, as from the teachings of Kang Jeungsan and his successors Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958) and Park Wudang, it has learned that the ultimate causes of all social problems lie in millennia of unresolved grievances. The ideas that these grievances may be resolved by cooperating

with the divine work started by Kang Jeungsan is the spiritual source of the impressive social work performed by Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Although Buddhism is not the only root of Daesoon Jinrihoe (Kim 2017), it is an important reference for Daesoon Thought. Daesoon Jinrihoe's social work has several features in common with Tzu Chi's principle of "putting the Buddha's teaching into action," Soka Gakkai's humanistic Buddhism, and the Bhutanese (Buddhist) concept of Gross National Happiness. They are different forms of what Yao calls "engaged Buddhism" (Yao 2012), and certainly Daesoon Jinrihoe is engaged Asian religion. Although propagation, edification, and cultivation are defined as the three "basic works," the "three major societal works" of education, social welfare, and charity aid are also regarded as fundamental, "to put [...] principles into practice" (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2020). Cultivation is inseparable from social work in Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Daesoon Jinrihoe, like other Korean new religions, is a millenarian movement, in the sense that it awaits the advent of a Latter World, an Earthly Paradise. This theme is common in Buddhism, and connected to prophecies about the advent of the Maitreya. Although millenarianism is less emphasized by Tzu Chi, Soka Gakkai, and Bhutanese Buddhism, at least in their more public presentations, it is not absent from the Buddhist classics they propose as reference texts. Master Cheng of Tzu Chi mentions the "Western World of Perfect Happiness," a "ultimately wonderful land," although it can be something existing outside our world rather than a transformed Latter World (Yao 2012, 81). "Deathless life," or at least longevity beyond our possible imagination, which will exist in Daesoon Jinrihoe's Earthly Paradise, is also discussed in the texts of the Drukpa Kagyu, the dominant school in Bhutanese Buddhism and the driving tradition behind the Gross National Happiness project (Ura 2014, 85). Soka Gakkai believes that, since the year 1052, we have entered the third age of humanity, known as *mappō*, and in this age the eternal Buddha incarnated in Japan as Nichiren Daishonin, opening the way to a final release of human suffering through rebirth (McLaughlin 2019, 9).

A common feature of Daesoon Jinrihoe, Tzu Chi, Soka Gakkai, and the Bhutanese project of Gross National Happiness is the idea that human development and ecology are interconnected. Tzu Chi's most well-known example of "Buddhism in action" is its ability to mobilize thousands of enthusiastic volunteers for its recycling activities. Soka Gakkai dreams of "a world that prioritizes ecological integrity" (Ikeda 2020, 9), and frames its proposals for peace in ecological terms:

To coincide with the 1992 Earth Summit, the SGI established the Soka Institute for Environmental Studies and Research of the Amazon (CEPEAM) in Brazil, which has since carried out activities to restore the rainforest and protect its unique ecology. And it is not by coincidence that our exhibitions originally organized in support of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable

Development were titled “Seeds of Change” and “Seeds of Hope.” These titles encapsulate the message that every one of us, starting from where we are now, has the potential to become an architect of change for a sustainable global society, and that our every action is a seed of change, a seed of hope, that will bloom into flowers of dignity throughout the world (Ikeda 2020, 9).

Gross National Happiness implies preserving Bhutan’s unique ecology and wildlife. One aspect of it is welcoming tourism only if it is “ecotourism,” through projects developed together with the World Wildlife Fund (Schroeder 2018, 64–66).

Daesoon Jinrihoe is in turn an “ecological religion,” as evidenced by papers presented by its representatives at the Inaugural Yeosu Eco-Forum in 2019 (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2019). According to Ko Young Woon, Daesoon Jinrihoe’s key principle of *Sangsaeng*

leads human beings and nature to grow with each other in yin-yang harmony. The correlative cosmology of the opposite elements of yin and yang is developed in the patterns of diversity-in-unity and unity-in-diversity. The serial relationship of the patterns is that of the life and nature of the universe. By way of this close connection between the images of yin and yang, Daesoon presents the idea of mutual transformation in the process of the development of the cosmos. “The key of Daesoon thought is to make peace. The peace of humankind is to realize the infinite truth of the Way by embracing, respecting, and loving others. The Way is the initiation of the universe and leading the change of life and growth.” From the view of this correlative cosmology, human beings and nature respect and support each other, whereby natural worlds continue to produce their sources for the human world, and humans protect and love nature. For the ecological view of Daesoon, mutual beneficence is the ultimate principle to practice the peace and harmony of human and natural worlds (Ko 2016, 79).

This is also connected with the water-fire relation, which in Daesoon Thought corresponds to the relation between yin and yang, as “water comes from fire and vice versa” (Ko 2016, 79).

A third point in common between Daesoon Jinrihoe’s social work, Tzu Chi, Soka Gakkai, and Gross National Happiness is the idea that true happiness comes from inside, although a community where benevolent deeds are practiced to benefit others, and ecological harmony with nature is promoted, creates the appropriate conditions allowing happiness to be pursued and flourish. Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that what mostly prevents happiness is self-deception. It is also the root cause of deceiving others and engaging in unethical actions, but it starts as a corruption of the heart and the mind.

This is different from approaches to benevolence and happiness prevailing in the West and in Christianity. It is now becoming common in the West to observe that what prevents a holistic approach to humanity's problems and tragedies is the rigid dualism between mind and body theorized in its most rationalist form in the works of French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) and its successors, which is still conditioning the Western way of thinking today (Hanegraaff 1996). Although Descartes' thought, as Étienne Gilson (1884–1978) observed in his doctoral dissertation, used as its building blocks elements from the Christian philosophy of the previous centuries, it is also true that medieval and early modern Christianity also included forms of mysticism that were less dualistic (Gilson 2019). Without entering complicated philosophical questions, there are clear differences between the Western/Christian and the Eastern Asian approach to charity and humanitarian aid, not so much about what is done but about why it is done. Tzu Chi insists on collective karma (*gongye*: Yao 2012, 81), and we find similar notion that all humans and indeed all beings in the universe are interconnected in Soka Gakkai and Daesoon Jinrihoe.

The motivation sustaining the admirable Western Christian charities in the West, and their secular successors, are connected with an affirmation of the self. The self is wounded by sin, and rescues itself through honorable deeds, thus gaining salvation. These concepts have been secularized by modern Western ideologies, and persist even in a post-Christian context. By contrast, for example, among the keys to understand Bhutan's Gross National Happiness are,

the concepts of non-self, emptiness and the principle of dependent origination [...]. All these basically work towards deconstructing the artificial construction of 'I/me/mine' and the false divisions between self and other that dominate our daily life (Gyatso 2014, 144).

Soka Gakkai teaches that the arrogance of the self is the root of social and political evils (Ikeda 2019, 9). Tzu Chi claims that good fortune (*fu*) alone may lead to the arrogance of the self and ultimately make our life a failure, while we should practice *zhifu* (realizing *fu*) through exercises of self-awareness and by cultivating empathy and harmony with the whole universe (Yao 2012, 82).

In Daesoon Jinrihoe, self-deception means remaining within the prison of a self that is separate from the rest of humanity and the universe, and thus is incapable of resolving grievances and restoring harmony (Kim 2016). In fact, Daesoon Jinrihoe's notion of self-deception is different from both the Christian and secular models proposed in the West and at the same time is not identical with traditional Confucian and Buddhist ideas about self-deception (Kim 2016). It is intimately connected with the principle that what prevents

happiness and the possibility of a harmonious and peaceful world is the presence of unresolved grievances, and that grievances should be resolved through the principle of Sangsaeng. The focus on grievances in Daesoon Jinrihoe is original. Although several features of its social work are similar to Tzu Chi and Gross National Happiness, and others to Soka Gakkai, Daesoon Jinrihoe's explanation of why the world is in a condition making social work an urgent necessity is partially different.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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The Spreading of Caodaism to Taiwan: Man's Will versus Divine Will

Tuan Em Nguyen

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Abstract

Caodaism officially came into existence in 1926 in Southern Vietnam and soon became a spiritual phenomenon, in the sense of spiritual and social influence. Despite being sandwiched between political forces and ruling governments, Caodaism steadily grew far beyond its national boundary. After 95 years, Caodaism eventually reached Taiwan when a new small Cao Đài Congregation, approved by top Cao Đài Dignitaries in Vietnam, was established in Zhongli District, Taoyuan City by a group identifying as 'Vietnamese New Immigrants' in Taiwan. This article traced this religious organization's doctrine, philosophy, prophecy and relevant socio-cultural factors and found that (1) Caodaists see the successful spreading of Caodaism to Taiwan as having been prophesied long ago; (2) Caodaists believe that any human efforts by Cao Đài missionaries to spread Caodaism overseas without approval from Divinities could end up in failure; and (3) the similarities in social, cultural, and religious practices between the peoples of Vietnam and Taiwan lay a strong foundation for Caodaism to further develop in Taiwan.

Keywords: Caodaism; Spiritism; Prophecy; Missionary; Mission; Man's Will; Divine Will

Introduction

Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ (The Great Way of the Third Universal Salvation, 大道三期普度), commonly called Caodaism (Đạo Cao Đài, 道高臺), was officially established in a solemn inauguration ceremony held at Từ Lâm Buddhist Pagoda in the village of Gò Kén in Tây Ninh Province, approximately 99km to the North West of Saigon (the present-day Ho Chi Minh City).

From a very tiny number of 247 Cao Đài believers named on a list sent along with the 'Declaration of the Founding of the Cao Dai Religion' to the French Governor of Cochinchina on October 7, 1926, Caodaism has currently grown to become the third largest religious organization in Vietnam, comprising approximately five million believers throughout Vietnam and overseas in locations such as Cambodia, the US, Australia, Canada, France and most recently Taiwan. Among those overseas locations, Taiwan has interestingly been noticed to be the first nation in Asia where Caodaism could officially establish a Cao Đài Congregation.¹

To this point, several questions are coming up: How do Caodaists view the divine prearrangement of their religion?; How were its previous propagation missions conducted?; Why was Taiwan specifically chosen for propagation instead of other countries in Asia?; Why did Caodaists wait for almost a century before opening a Cao Đài Worship Site² in Taiwan despite Cao Đài being reasonably well-known in the West?, and Do Caodaists consider the spreading of Caodaism to Taiwan to simply be the result of intentional human effort or to be a destined prearrangement by God?

In order to answer all of these questions in a systematic way, this article will first briefly examine some mysterious prophecies about the coming age of the Third Amnesty of God in the name of Cao Đài. Then, the article will analyze how Caodaism was missioned in its early days before investigating early attempts to introduce Caodaism to the Han Chinese people outside of Vietnam based on historical facts and Divine teachings. Finally, the article will elaborate on the establishment of a Cao Dai Congregation in Taiwan and expectations for its future development.

Prophecies about Caodaism

Alleged Prophecies from the Buddhist Canon Predicting the Third Universal Salvation

The fact Caodaism came into existence in 1926 in Vietnam was believed by Caodaists to be neither an accidental incident nor an intentional human action, but the culmination of Divine Will as had been prophesied long before the Third Amnesty of God was revealed. This is seen as having resulted in the establishment of a new religion that aims to bring about Justice and Universal Love (Công Bình – Bác Ái) to all human beings and living beings.

In one spirit-séance in Cần Giuộc District, Chợ Lớn Province (present-day Ho Chi Minh City) on 5 June 1926, the Caoadaists believe that Sakyamuni Buddha as Đức Cao Đài (德³高臺literally, ‘Lord of the High Tower,’ this Supreme God is also known as the Jade Emperor, Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế, 玉皇上帝) taught that after Hui Neng, the sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism, passed away, the teaching of Buddhism was no longer available because its original doctrine had been denatured. Therefore, Sakyamuni Buddha, through a divine message, revealed that it was now time for the Third Universal Salvation in order to “not only save all living beings but also other higher spirits such as Genies, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas who had to reincarnate to this world to complete their missions” (Hum and Hong 2015). The Caoadaists hold a belief that all of this had long been prophesied in the Buddhist Canon but due to unawareness, human beings did not make the effort to discover it.

Prophecy from Daoism’s Tranquility Scriptures

It is documented that there was a verse written in the Tranquility Scriptures (Thanh Tịnh Kinh 清靜經), handed down from generation to generation of Daoist followers, prophesying that those who accumulated enough good deeds would be shown the way to self-salvation and that those who are destined by God should rush to spread the news of the Third Amnesty of God (Rạng 1970). This scripture specifically wrote the four words ‘Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ’⁴ (Third Amnesty of God), which went on to become the official name of the present-day Caoadaism.

Another signal of the coming of Caoadaism in Vietnam is that in the sixteenth century in China, there was a form of syncretistic religion called ‘Three in One Religion (sānyī jiào, 三一教)’ which was founded by Lin Zhao’en (林兆恩). This Three in One Religion attempted to unite the elements of the three Great Teachings: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism (Katz 1999). Historically, this syncretistic religion could be a fertile seedbed for the appearance of Caoadaism in Vietnam in the early twentieth century because this ‘Three in One Religion’ also practiced the spirit-writing and was spread to South Asian countries during the massive migrations of Han Chinese people towards the South during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Thanh 2009, Smith 2009).

When this Three in One Religion was brought into Vietnam, its name was changed into ‘Wise Master Religion’ (明師道 Minh Sư Đạo). It was reported that the Wise Master Religion followers frequently chanted the two Vietnamese verses “Cao như Bắc khuyết nhân chiêm ngưỡng – Đài tại Nam phương Đạo thống truyền” (literally translated into English: As high as the North Star for human beings to appreciate – At the Palace in the South, the Way will dominate). When the first word ‘Cao (高)’ in the first verse goes with the first word ‘Đài (臺)’ in the second verse, the two words would make the proper name “Cao Đài (高臺),” which went on to become the name that the Jade Emperor used

to establish Caodaism during the Third Amnesty (Rạng 1970). According to Rạng (1970), there were many other prophecies from scriptures of different religious groups and other great prophets such as the Vietnamese poet-laureate and prophet, Nguyễn Bình Khiêm (1491–1585), about the coming of Caodaism in the future. This poet-laureate is also considered as one of the three saints in Caodaism.

In addition, it is documented in the Collection Book of Caodaist Divine Messages that in a spirit-séance on 20 February 1926, aiming to teach the Great Way to HIS first few disciples, God, the Father, emphasized that, “For whatever happens, you (children) must remember that I Myself am in it” (Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển 1972).⁵ It could be inferred from this teaching that all incidents in life, including the appearance of different faiths or religions, occur because God wants them to be that way.

From the Caodaist perspective, devotees believe that all of the above-mentioned prophecies about the coming of Caodaism unfolded due to Divine Will rather than human will. Graeme Lang (2004), in his research on Caodaism also claimed; “Religions do not emerge fully-formed from the mind of a single person.” Furthermore, Caodaists hold that through the Cao Dai Doctrine and Spiritual messages, it is reasonable to assume that Caodaism did not emerge from human will but from the Divine Will (Hum and Hong 2015).

Caodaists believe that God’s divine messages had been announced by many great prophets in ancient times and in a multitude of different locations. Nevertheless, because of their unawareness or ignorance, human beings did not realize these messages until the Christmas Eve of 1925 in a spirit-séance conducted in Saigon. A ‘Great Spirit’ was reported to have finally revealed HIMSELF as the “Supreme Being” known as “Cao Đài.” He taught the Truth to the Vietnamese people, and this resulted in the official inauguration of Caodaism a year later. In Vietnamese, HE taught his first disciples:

“Rejoice this day. It is the anniversary of my coming to Europe to teach my doctrine. I am happy to see you. Oh my disciples full of respect and love to me. This house will have all my blessings. Manifestations of my power will inspire even greater respect and love in my regard . . .” (Gobron 1949)

The Caodaists hold a belief that the Jade Emperor used HIS superpower through HIS Messengers at different times and locations to announce the true coming of the Third Amnesty. Therefore, it is understood that all previous signals revealing the coming of Caodaism as an embodiment in the Third Amnesty of God were spread throughout the Buddhist Canon, Daoist Scriptures, teachings of other prophets, folk verses chanted by the Daoist followers, and the teachings of other religious groups because God had quietly and gradually prepared HIS third Universal Salvation (Caodaism in this case) to rescue HIS children.

Early Cao Đài Missions and Development

Propagation missions had taken place rather early; even before the official inauguration of Caodaism in 1926. It was reported by Caodaists that from the very first days of attaining contact with Divine spirits through spirit-writing, first disciples of the Supreme God, Đức Cao Đài, following HIS teachings, scattered to different locations in Southern Vietnam to convince destined people about the superpower of a Great Spirit and about the Truth to be revealed soon.

Paul Bowers, in his paper "Paul and Religious Propaganda in the First Century", wrote, "Not all religious expansion is intentional...where expansion is desired and intended, it is not at all always deliberately attempted..." (Bowers 1980). It could be assumed from this statement that there are still a few deliberate and intentional religious expansions, and Caodaism is one of those few. The Cao Đài religious propagation missions were documented to be initially intentional because both visible Cao Đài leaders and believers, instinctually made great efforts to spread the news of the Third Amnesty under the teachings of Đức Cao Đài.

It was noted that the Cao Đài missions took many different forms ranging from mouth-to-mouth to showcasing the Holy Spiritual Messages to interested people, to preaching the teachings of Đức Cao Đài, to introducing the worship practice in Caodaism, to doing charity works and to demonstrating miracles in spirit-séances.

It is reported that in a few missions, there were spirit-séances in which, the Caodaists believe, Đức Cao Đài or other Deities came to teach the Great Way, which convinced a large number of people to convert to Caodaism. These spirit-séances continued to be held more and more often, first at individuals' homes and then, in larger gatherings in Saigon enrolling hundreds of new adherents at each séance (Gobron 1949).

In a spirit-séance on the 15 September 1926, it was reported that the Jade Emperor (another name by which God is known in Caodaism), instructed HIS Disciples⁶ to open a Cao Đài Temple in Central Vietnam. HE communicated this via four verses that read:

"From now on, MY children are no longer divided into three
I have come to unite you under one roof
To Spread the Way to South, North, and then abroad
The Owner of the Truth is only ME"⁷

The Caodaists interpreted these verses that the Three Teachings: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism were, since 1926, no longer separated because God HIMSELF had come in this Third Amnesty to reunite them. Therefore, Đức Cao Đài instructed HIS disciples to spread this Truth to the mass, first within the country from South to North and then to overseas to remind everyone that God is the only Creator of this Universe.

Subsequently, soon after the official inauguration of Caodaism in 1926, the Cao Đài missions expanded to reach all of the Eastern and Western provinces in Southern Vietnam and other provinces in Central Vietnam. Within two months after the inauguration, an impressive number of over 20,000 people were converted to Caodaism (Blagov 2016), and a considerable number of Cambodian Khmer people came across the border to enroll in the new religion (Tam 2016).

In addition, it is believed that under the instruction of Đức Cao Đài through a spirit-séance in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 5 June 1927, the Cao Đài Leaders established the ‘Sacerdotal Council of Cao Đài Overseas Missionary’ (Hội Thánh Ngoại Giáo, 會聖外教) to specifically take care of overseas missions. The Caodaists also learnt from this spirit-writing session that in the invisible world, Victor Hugo – one of the three saints in Caodaism, was appointed to be the Superintendent of this ‘Sacerdotal Council of Cao Đài Overseas Missionary’ while in this secular world, this Sacerdotal Council was under the leadership of the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp (護法). In addition, it was reported that Đức Cao Đài prophesied to HIS disciples that although Caodaism started in Vietnam, it would later spread throughout the world (Tam 2016, 29).

Within 4 years after its official inauguration ceremony, there were approximately one million people following Caodaism (Perrin 2011). Commenting on the significant success of Caodaism in attracting a large number of believers within a short period of time, from a more political view, Stephanie Perrin remarked:

“Colonial oppression and disenchantment with traditional religious practices provided favourable circumstances for the Caodai to appeal to both the rural peasantry and the urban elite, creating an unprecedented union between the disparate classes” (Perrin 2011, 121).

Perrin also claimed that Southern Vietnam (Cochinchina) at this time was under the French colonizers and the people, especially peasants, were suffering the most in society. Caodaism, as a political movement disguised as a religious organization through its charity works and mental therapy, could thereby recruit a large number of followers.

Nevertheless, from the cultural and religious perspective, Gobron (1949) assumed that the new form of worship did not contain anything contrary to the principles of religions already practiced in the country, and this convinced the masses to convert to Caodaism. This assumption was more reasonable in the case of Cao Dai Religion. It has been noticed that Southern Vietnam was a new land chosen to be the settlement of Indian, Chinese, and later French immigrants together with massive waves of migration from North Vietnam. This transformed Southern Vietnam into a multicultural region that displayed a mixture of numerous religious and spiritual forms including Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and indigenous practices (Pham 2007).

Therefore, the pluralism of worshipping Buddha, Lao Tse, Confucius, Guangong, Jesus Christ, Holy Mother Goddess, and other divinities enabled Caodaism to attract a large number of believers. That Vietnamese people easily found their beliefs reflected in Caodaism led this religion to experience rapid growth.

For Caodaists, even if the development of Caodaism could be attributed to political, cultural, or religious factors, it would not undermine Divine Will. This is because the Divine Messages the Caodaists received through spirit-writing revealed that God, HIMSELF, came to establish Caodaism in the Third Universal Salvation to rescue HIS children and thus, HE would know what to do for HIS teachings to be spread to the destined people. After 95 years of numerous historical, social, and political changes in Vietnam, the number of Cao Đài believers has steadily climbed up to 5 million within and beyond the nation. This leaves Caodaists even more convinced of the prophecy by Đức Cao Đài that although Caodaism originated in Vietnam, it shall flourish throughout the world.

Prophecies and Initial Attempts to Introduce Caodaism to Chinese Han People

Through the Divine messages the Caodaists received in spirit-seances, they believe that the Jade Emperor and other deities have come to teach the Great Way and established the Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ (Caodaism, The Great Dao of the Third Universal Salvation). The Cao Đài Scriptures, the *Constitution of Caodaism* (Pháp Chánh Truyền, 法正傳), Canonical Codes (Tân Luật, 新律), rituals, religious documents, and mission plans were all claimed Divinely bestowed.

According to Caodaists, these Divine teachings are the core guidance for their religious life. Answer to questions such as where they should go, who they should preach Caodaism to, and other related matters rely on these teachings. Therefore, the propagation of Caodaism to other regions within Vietnam and to the outside world from the early days of establishment until the present day have always been carried out in a way that ensured missions would not go against Divine teachings.

With regard to the preaching of Caodaism to the Han Chinese people, the Caodaists basically followed the two following prophecies, the first of which is said to have come from the Jade Emperor and the second of which is attributed to Sun Yat Sen (Tôn Sơn Chơn Nhơn, 中山真人 The Perfected Person Trung Sơn).⁸

First Prophecy:

In a sermon given at a Midnight Ceremony in the Tay Ninh Holy See on 30 June 1948, the Supreme Leader Ho Phap reminded the Cao Đài followers of a prophecy

regarding the future overseas missions that he received from Đức Cao Đài in a spirit-séance in 1927 in the Cao Đài Temple in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In Vietnamese, Đức Cao Đài prophesied, “One day, the Han Chinese will wholeheartedly worship Caodaism while the American people will take the responsibility for spreading Caodaism to the world.”⁹(Ban Đạo Sử 1973)

Second Prophecy:

In a spirit-séance on 30 December 1936 at Hộ Pháp Đường (Residence of Hộ Pháp) within the compound of the Tây Ninh Holy See in Tây Ninh Province, it was believed that the spirit of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, as the Perfected Person Trung Sơn, left a spiritual message emphasizing that the time had not yet come for propagating Caodaism to China. He reasoned that the French Government (in Indochina) did not truly want to assist Caodaists and would arrest those Cao Đài Leaders if they went to China. He also reminded that Caodaists had to wait patiently until a new stable world order had been settled by the United States and Japan before carrying out missions to China because this was the destiny which had been predetermined by the Divine (Hong 2012).

Initial Cao Đài Missions to the Han Chinese People

Within Vietnam, since the early days of its establishment, it was reported that there was a large number of Chinese Vietnamese people living or doing business in Chợ Lớn, Saigon who had converted to Caodaism. This included those who followed the Minh Sư Đạo (formerly the ‘Three in One Religion’ that had been brought into Vietnam by the Chinese migrants). There was a Cao Đài Congregation called ‘Đường Nhơn,’ comprising entirely of ethnic Chinese Caodaists. This Congregation still exists in Tây Ninh Province. Also, a large number of other Chinese Vietnamese people who follow Caodaism are living in the Mekong Delta, but there are no official statistics on this group.

Outside of Vietnam, there could have been several individual cases of introducing Caodaism to Chinese people over the past few decades. However, these cases have never been officially reported to the Sacerdotal Council (Hội Thánh Cao Đài Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh, 會聖高臺座聖西寧) in Vietnam or documented. Therefore, the information about initial attempts to spread Caodaism to China is very limited. However, the following two reported missions are exceptions to that trend:

First mission (5 December 1938 – 30 October 1939)

On 5 December 1938, it was documented that Bishop Thượng Bửu Thanh and his secretary, Nguyễn Kim Sa, decided to take the train from Hà Nội, Northern Vietnam to Yunnan (雲南), China to introduce Caodaism to local Chinese people there.

Nevertheless, it was reported that this mission went on without any official approval or decision from either the Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See or the Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Overseas Missionary. The two pioneers were reported to have temporarily opened a Cao Đài representative office in Yunnan and started to introduce Caodaism to locals. However, their adventure soon ended less than year after they had left Hà Nội (Duyên 2012).

According to the Caodaists, the failure of this first ever attempt to spread Caodaism to the Han Chinese people could be explained by two main reasons. The first one is quite practical. With little money donated by some Cao Đài believers in Hà Nội, the Bishop and his secretary struggled to make a living in their new residence, and this meant having to look for jobs to survive. Subsequently, there was not much time left to introduce Caodaism to others. Another obstacle facing the two was that neither of them spoke Chinese. Therefore, they had to hire an interpreter to communicate with locals as they introduced Caodaism. Other problems arose due to China having a large number of dialects. Therefore, their efforts to introduce Caodaism to the Han Chinese people was not as productive as they had hoped.

It was also reported that even though they eventually found and received assistance from a Vietnamese national who had lived and worked in Yunnan long before their arrival, the job of spreading Caodaism still proved overwhelming. It was explained that during a period of less than a year the two pioneers stayed in Yunnan, the Bishop went back to Vietnam three times. It was reported that he stayed in Yunnan for a total of 134 days, and that he converted a total of 45 local people to Caodaism. However, the precise information about those 45 Chinese people remains unclear. Firstly, it is unknown whether or not the Bishop succeeded in establishing a Cao Dai Congregation in Yunnan. Secondly, it is unclear whether or not the converted Chinese Caodaists continued to follow Caodaism after the Bishop returned to Vietnam on October 30th 1939.

The second reason offered for his failure is more spiritual in nature, but the Caodaists believe it nevertheless. In a spirit-séance on 20 February 1926, Đức Cao Đài had already taught HIS disciples:

“I have one thing to tell you which is that you [children] should always wait for my order! Never let your individual opinion to judge anything. Your roles and duties have been predetermined by ME, but the time has not come yet. Obey my teachings!”¹⁰

In addition, in a sermon on 3 August 1948 at the Cao Đài Tây Ninh Holy See, the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp preached that the Sacerdotal Council is the visible representative board of the Jade Emperor in this world. On HIS behalf, the Sacerdotal

Council administrates the religion and guides HIS children to reunite with HIM. Then, the Supreme Leader emphasized, any decision from the Sacerdotal Council is considered to be a decision from the Divine (Ban Đạo Sử 1973). Therefore, the fact that the Bishop Thượng Bầy Thanh went to China according to his individual decision and without having received any official approval from the Sacerdotal Council, meant he acted against Divine Will.

Second mission (29 August 1954 – 12 October 1954)

On 29 August 1954, the visible Supreme Leader of Caodaism – Hộ Pháp and four assistants departed to Taiwan to officially conduct a mission of introducing Caodaism to the Han Chinese.

According to the diary written by Mr. Bùi Quang Cao, a secretary of the Supreme Leader, the Cao Đài Delegation, invited and sponsored by the R.O.C government, had several bilateral meetings and discussions about the political, social, and religious topics with the R.O.C President Chang Kai-Shek, Vice President Chen Cheng, top leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Businesses, and other religious leaders.

In addition, the delegation visited museums, factories, and cultural and religious sites throughout Taiwan. This included sites in Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung. Also, the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp took an interval of 11 days to fly to South Korea and Japan to discuss solutions for peace in Vietnam and the region. At his time, he also spoke about the ideal of a universal world as understood in Caodaist doctrines (Cao 1954).

On 12 October 1954, the visible Supreme Leader of Caodaism and his delegation went back to Vietnam, after spending 42 days in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. By the end of this mission to Taiwan, the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp said that he also wanted to establish a Cao Dai Representative Office in Taiwan as he had previously done in Paris.

Nevertheless, his wish could not come true because after He returned to Vietnam, the crisis of the Vietnam War escalated continually until 1975. Then, over the next twenty years, the social and political changes in Vietnam practically put an end to the missionary activities of Caodaism. Fortunately, since 1997, the government of Vietnam gradually gave authority and Cao Đài religious facilities back to the Sacerdotal Council to continue managing and developing the religious organization. Since 2010, the Sacerdotal Council has started to resume their propagation missions, and this has opened a new chapter in the history of Caodaism.¹¹

The Taiwan Taipei-based Cao Đài Congregation

The first ever overseas Cao Đài mission after Vietnam applied the open-door policy occurred in May 2013 when the Sacerdotal Council went to visit Oomoto in Japan. Since that time onward, international religious relations between Caodaism and

other religious organizations have been established. Examples of religions that have interreligious exchanges with Cao Đài include Oomoto in Japan, Daesoon Jinrihoe in South Korea, Weixin Shenjiao and Daoyuan in Taiwan, Daoyuan in Singapore and Malaysia, and Buddhism in Thailand. In addition, religious exchange visitations have also become more frequent (Thanh, Thanh, and Thanh 2013).

The Sacerdotal Council continued their missions to Taiwan twice in July 2013 and then, in June 2018. The first visit was to take part in the 64th Anniversary of Daoyuan Headquarters in Taiwan and to establish an international relationship with Yiguandao in Taiwan. The second visit was to attend the Unveiling Ceremony of The Golden Mega-Statue of Guiguzi Wang Chan Laozu and to participate in the CESNUR 2018 Conference held at I Ching University, Weixin College in Nantou, Taiwan. Also, during this second visit, the leaders of Vietnamese Caodaism, Taiwanese Weixing Shengjiao, and South Korean Daesoon Jinrihoe signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) together to establish the Association of East Asian New Religions (Em 2018).

Caodaists believe that fortifying religious relationships between Caodaism and religions such as Daoyuan, Yiguandao, and Weixin Shengjiao, and especially the abovementioned signing of MOU, represented a turning point in the history of Cao Đài Overseas missions. These were all actions that officially laid the initial groundwork to introduce Caodaism to the Han Chinese (Thanh and Thanh 2015).

Most recently, on 8 June 2020, the Sacerdotal Council of Cao Đài Tây Ninh Holy See in Vietnam officially established a Cao Đài Congregation in Taipei so that this Congregation, on behalf of the Sacerdotal Council, could continue to tighten the Caodaism's relationships with Taiwanese religious organizations and simultaneously develop Caodaism in Taiwan (Canh 2020).

The Congregation has, after six months, gathered approximately 30 Cao Đài followers living in different districts in Taipei, New Taipei, Zhongli, and Taichung to practice Cao Đài ritual ceremonies as well as to plan for an official Cao Đài Temple in Taiwan. These followers were Cao Đài devotees in Vietnam who went on to marry to Taiwanese men, and now have become 'New Immigrants' in Taiwan. Given their solid understanding of both Vietnamese culture and Taiwanese culture, these Cao Đài 'New Immigrants' will be a major force for the future development of Caodaism in Taiwan.

Currently, it would likely be hard to imagine the Han Chinese people (Han Chinese in Taiwan in this case) wholeheartedly worshipping as Caodaists as stated in the abovementioned prophecy. Nevertheless, the prospect for Caodaism in Taiwan appear quite promising. There are around 300 thousand Vietnamese people living, studying, and working in Taiwan, and a considerable number of this Vietnamese community are Cao Đài believers. It is highly possible for the Cao Đài Congregation in Taipei to expand in the future thanks to this community. Also, the second generation of the Taiwanese-Vietnamese interracial marriages will have better opportunities to observe and learn more about the Vietnamese religious tradition that their parents follow.

When introducing Caodaism, it is recommended that Vietnamese cultures be introduced first because the traditional cultures of Vietnam are embedded in Caodaism (Thanh and Dung 2020). It is interesting that the religious cultures and practices of the Vietnamese and Taiwanese people share a great deal of similarities. Therefore, the doctrine of uniting the Three Great Teachings: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, and the combination of the five branches of the Great Way in Caodaism will enable this home-grown, Vietnamese religion to lend itself naturally to the spiritual lives of Taiwanese people.

Conclusion

From the Caodaists' perspective, the appearance of Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ (Caodaism) was not an accidental incident but had long been prophesied and signaled by the Divinities at different times and different locations. Cao Đài is the symbolic name of the Jade Emperor who was revealed in the Orient during this third universal salvation. Through Spirit-writing, Đức Cao Đài, HIMSELF, is believed to come to teach HIS beloved children about the TRUTH as a spiritual shelter for them to live in peace and harmony and as a Great WAY for them to reunite with HIM.

For Caodaists, it could be assumed that the prophecies from Đức Cao Đài and other deities have gradually come true. The reality of this religious organization's expansion has demonstrated that Caodaism has been flourishing from Northern to Southern Vietnam and has become more and more popular with other people outside of this nation. Through the teachings of the divinities, Caodaists believe that the present-day development of Caodaism did not occur due to human effort, but instead, it was invisibly driven by the Divine Will.

After several achievements in overseas missions during the last ten years, Caodaists are now even more convinced of God's prophecy that "One day, the Chinese people will wholeheartedly worship Caodaism while the American people will take the responsibility for spreading Caodaism to the world."

A mystery remains as to whether or not it is again the Divine Will to have such a perfect pre-arrangement for Caodaism to be present in Taiwan after 95 years since its establishment. However, the fact that the world today is witnessing a strong alliance between the United States and Japan which creates a power balance between the West and the East meant to bring about a stable new world order, has convinced Caodaists of the truth of the prophesy attributed to Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the Perfected Person Trung Sơn, in 1938, one year before the Second World War.

In the present day, travelling from one country to another has become much easier. Globalization and seamless communication have brought peoples from every corner of the world closer to each other, and people have more intense cultural interactions. All of this makes it easier for them to accept new or different spiritual beliefs. And thus,

Caodaists sense that now is the divinely approved time for Caodaists to spread ‘Universal Love and Justice (Bác Ái – Công Bình, 博愛 – 公平),’ the message of God in the Third Amnesty of God to other peoples in the world; both in general and to the Han Chinese in Taiwan in particular.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Note

- ¹ I excluded Cambodia because Caodaism already existed in this country in the early days of establishment during the colonial period when the three countries in Indochina: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were colonized by the French; In Japan, it was documented that there was one Vietnamese national (Thượng Hòa Thanh) honorably appointed to be the representative of Caodaism (at the rank of Student-Priest) in 1954 by the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp, and then one Japanese national (Thái Nagafuchi Thanh) was appointed to be the next representative of Caodaism in Japan, replacing Thượng Hòa Thanh in a spiritist séance on 12 December 1968. Nevertheless, these two representatives of Caodaism did not set up any official Cao Đài Worship Site in Japan. Now, there is very little information or official document written on these two representatives of Caodaism in Japan during that time. Thanh at el, “Đạo Cao Đài...”, 2015.
- ² The temporary Cao Dai Worship Site is located at 4th Floor, No. 4, Lane 21, Xinglong 6th Street, Zhongli District, Taoyuan City, Taiwan
- ³ ‘Đức, 德’ is used as an honorific in Vietnamese
- ⁴ Original text: “Công đầy quả đủ sẽ được linh thọ đơn thơ (tức là kinh dạy cách luyện). Người có mạng Trời khá truyền đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ”. The last four words of this prophecy “Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ” perfectly match the official name of Caodaism or “Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ.” Rang, *Đại Đạo Sử Cương*, 1970, p. 20.
- ⁵ Original message: “...Chi chi cũng phải nhớ quyết rằng có Thầy trong đó...”. Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển, 1972, p. 7
- ⁶ This spirit-séance was held at the private home of Mr. Hồ Quang Châu and Phan Thị Lan. The Jade Emperor (Đức Cao Đài) instructed Mr. Hồ Quang Châu to go to Central Vietnam to preach Caodaism to the people in this region, emphasizing that, “I gave you this heavy but important duty to spread Caodaism in Central Vietnam. Remember to behave”. Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển, 1972, p.76
- ⁷ Original Message: “Từ đây nòi giống chằng chia ba - Thấy hiệp các con lại một nhà- Nam, Bắc cùng rồi ra ngoại quốc - Chủ quyền chon đạo một mình ta”. *Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển*, 1972, p.76
- ⁸ Sun Yat Sen (1866 – 1925) was the Leader of the Chinese Revolution in 1911. Later on, through spirit-writing, He was believed to reveal himself as a Saint in Caodaism.
- ⁹ Original message: “Một ngày kia, Trung Hoa sẽ thờ Đạo đạo đế, còn nước Mỹ sẽ lãnh trách nhiệm đi truyền giáo toàn cầu”.
- ¹⁰ Original Message: “Thầy dặn các con một điều, nhứt nhứt đều đợi lệnh Thầy, chằng nên lấy tứ riêng mà phán đoán chi hết. Phận sự và trách nhiệm các con, Thầy đã được trước, song giờ ngày chưa đến, phải tuân lời Thầy nghe!”. *Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển*, 1972, p. 7

- 11 The first thing the Sacerdotal Council did was to cooperate with the Cao Đài people living in the United States who wanted to return and assist the Sacerdotal Council to develop Caodaism. Accordingly, Priest Trần Quang Cảnh was appointed to be the President of the Cao Đài Overseas Missionary, in charge of overseas missions. With the assistance of Priest Trần Quang Cảnh, the Sacerdotal Council could tighten international relationships with other religious organizations, for example Daesoon Jinrihoe in South Korea, Oomoto in Japan, Weixin Shengjiao, Daoyuan, Yiguandao in Taiwan and went on missions in Asia and then France, Austria, Italy, Vatican ect., and supported different universities to incorporate Caodaism into their teaching programs, for example in the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh, the University of Vienna in Austria, the Missouri University and the Kansas University in the US ect. In addition, big media companies such as AP, National Geographic, ARTE, Arab, New York Times etc., have made documentaries on Caodaism.

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Traditions of Western Rhetoric and Daesoon Jinrihoe: Prolegomena to Further Investigations

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Abstract

Applying the long and distinguished heritage of rhetorical theory to any sacred text, such *The Canonical Scripture* of Daesoon Jinrihoe, could fill many volumes of many books. This study, then, will provide some suggestive prolegomena for directions rhetorical criticism of the Scripture can take, now and in future research. This study will, further, make necessarily broad strokes in order to familiarize audiences and scholars of new Korean religions, and Eastern thought generally, with Western, both ancient and more modern, modes of rhetorical thought. As rhetorical criticism is increasingly embraced by Western religious scholarship, and as comparative religious studies remain an important dimension of textual scholarship, this article will contribute to both areas by presenting perhaps the first rhetorical-critical approach to the sacred scriptures of Daesoon Jinrihoe. When the new English translation of the Scriptures becomes available in the West, general and scholarly readers will be interested to find parallels and departures with religious and critical traditions with which they are already familiar (in this case, early American Protestant Calvinism). This study will make contributions, then, to the areas of rhetorical-religious criticism, comparative East-West presentations of nature within scriptural contexts, and establishment of grounds for further comparative investigations of Western traditions and Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Keywords: rhetoric; rhetorical criticism; Aristotle; Augustine of Hippo;
Chaim Perelman

The tradition of offering prolegomena in the Western intellectual canon was largely established by Immanuel Kant and in religio-rhetorical criticism in English by Walter Ong (2000), author of such works as *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*. In his work of prolegomenon, Ong moves beyond considering prolegomena as merely an introductory part (its meaning in Greek, *prolegein*, "to say beforehand"), to using the concept to build bridges of understanding from one field to another. In much the same way, this study will be one of prolegomenon that attempts to build a bridge across which Western scholars of rhetoric might learn about Daesoon Jinrihoe and the oral tradition of Sangje and devotees and scholars of Sangje's teachings might learn about principles of Western religio-rhetorical criticism. To that end, this article will explore significant affinities that might be identified among *The Canonical Scripture* and the major traditions of Western rhetorical practice and criticism of Augustine, Aristotle, and Chaim Perelman.

Beginnings of Christian Rhetoric

Fortunately for this discussion, numerous examples abound of rhetorical elements correlative to classical principles both in the Christian tradition and in *The Canonical Scripture*. These examples serve well the current goal of building bridges of understanding as the Sacred Scriptures become more broadly introduced to Western audiences with the introduction of the first English translation. As that translation will be available to English-speaking scholars, our investigation here will consider the varying attitudes to scholarly work that are expressed in the Christian Bible and in the *The Canonical Scripture*. In the Biblical chapter Acts of the Apostles there is found one of the more noteworthy contests of rhetorical prowess recorded in the Christian New Testament. The event takes place at Athens's Areopagus, and the interlocutors were the apostle Paul and influential local Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, Greek heirs to the oldest philosophical and rhetorical traditions of the West. The apostle Paul was no stranger to verbal sparring, even in foreign lands in front of hostile audiences. But never had he faced a challenge quite like this, answering some of the most educated people in the classical world in front of the large and sophisticated audience at the Areopagus.

Paul's visit to Athens is introduced inconsequently enough in the text; he was waiting in the city for his helpers to catch up with him, in order that he might proceed with his journeys. But Paul was apparently had no intentions of enjoying the sights of the ancient cultural capital; what he noticed above all else was "that the city was full of idols" (*Acts of the Apostles* 17:16). Paul then took to the streets, to the marketplace, where his exhortations drew attention. "Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him," the text recounts, and the philosophers seemed to think Paul was "a babblers," but then perhaps out of curiosity and a desire to get Paul out of the market, the party proceeded to a meeting of the Areopagus (17:18). A governing body during

Athens's days as a city-state, the Areopagus had, by Paul's day, lost its official power, though it remained a vanguard of Greek culture. Paul's distaste for the Areopagus's purely academic function is evidenced in the rather parenthetical comment that the body spent time "doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas" (17:21).

At the meeting, Paul apparently ingratiated himself with some members of the court by discussing topics familiar to the Athenians. Paul mentions the religious sentiment of many people in the city, making special reference to the altar dedicated to an unknown god. He further demonstrates his knowledge of Greek culture by quoting from the poets Epimenides and Aratus. Paul's rhetorical display was by no means a triumph; several of his listeners responded in "sneers," but others suggested they would like to hear Paul again "on this subject," perhaps out of genuine curiosity, perhaps in an effort to dismiss this foreigner (17:32). Nonetheless, Paul's message had an effect on an audience accustomed to hearing accomplished disputations. The episode, as it is recorded in Acts, concludes that "[a] few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others" (17:34).

Despite his success at the Areopagus and elsewhere, the apostle Paul's attitude to rhetoric seems to have been ambivalent, at least to the empty flattery he identified in the philosophical rhetoric of his day. Paul's rhetoric, as the example in the Areopagus demonstrates, was message-driven and based in the needs and norms of society. Gerd Theissen (2004), for one, recognizes the social relevance of Paul's message, and he writes: "Paul's own analysis is informed by 'sociological' perceptions ... The social realities are interpreted, intensified, transcended" (164–65). An example of Theissen's claim can be found in Paul's discussion of Athens's temple to the unknown god, a symbol Paul utilizes, "transcends" in order to spread his message. Another scholar of the Christian New Testament, Ben Witherington (1995), writes that "Paul reflects more than a passing acquaintance with Cynic, Stoic, and Epicurean thought ... Paul was clearly influenced by Greek rhetorical style" (3). But this influence is not one Paul wished to emphasize, probably because of his insistence, repeated throughout his epistles, that it was the message that was important, not the messenger. Paul demonstrates this attitude, among other such places, in his first letter to the Corinthian Church. "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants." Paul wrote; "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants or he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (*I Corinthians* 3:5,6). While Paul may have benefited from rhetorical influence, his predilection for giving the "messenger" no credit for the message resulted in his downplaying any discussion of rhetorical influence.

Scriptural Attitudes Toward Learning: East and West

The early Christian Church in the West would share this ambivalent attitude toward the rhetorical tradition, largely because, as Sonja Foss, Karen Foss, and Robert Trapp write, the tradition “was condemned as a pagan art” (1995,6). Catholic Church Fathers, among them Jerome and Tertullian, found it difficult to distinguish an older rhetorical tradition, even the philosophical rhetoric of Plato, from the excesses of the Second Sophistic. By the time of the Middle Ages, when the Church’s influence had been firmly established, some Christian orators seemed to think that “possession of Christian truth was accompanied by an automatic ability to communicate that truth effectively” (6).

So, from even this very early account, the Christian New Testament’s disdain for scholarship and learning is evident. In *The Canonical Scripture*, however, we see a different approach. There, we read:

The commerce of a scholar is an occupation; The craftsmanship of a farmer is a job. Accordingly, the scholar's commerce and the farmer's craftsmanship are vocations. Except for that, commerce and craftsmanship of other parts stay in...(some words may be missing) All beings live based upon their vocations.” (*Progress of the Order 1:44*)

There are, of course, many currents of influence that inform the more generous view of learning and scholarship that appears in Sangje’s words and in *The Canonical Scripture*. One such stream was Confucian learning. According to Lee Gyungwon, “the Confucian scholarship of the late Joseon Dynasty pursued an increasingly practical bent and this more applied scholarship dubbed ‘Practical Learning’ or Silhak is seen as an important development in late Joseon Confucianism. In sum, Confucianism or Confucian learning was a basic subject of study in Korea beginning in ancient times and continuing on through the Joseon Dynasty. Confucian academes and educational practices were used to shape individuals’ moral characters and produce socially engaged Confucian scholars; this can be contrasted with the ‘life of faith’ emphasized in more monotheistic traditions” (Lee 2016, 173-174). The acceptance and integration of the older forms of scholarships in Daesoon and Korean New Religions provides a contrast to the early Christian tradition, which reflected Paul’s suspicion of the learned.

These examples, of course, are of rhetorical practice in action and show early, yet important, distinctions in rhetorical worldviews. In terms of first formulating, rather than only practicing, a unified rhetorical program, Augustine of Hippo was the first in the Western Christian to do so. Late in life, Augustine would lay down the precepts for what a Christian rhetoric should look like, and his focus was on the timely and practical. Augustine has long been credited for his role in legitimizing Christian rhetoric, and, in

more recent years, scholarly considerations of the practical advice Augustine offered preachers has been supplemented by a fuller understanding of Augustine's philosophy of education and culture. Because of Augustine's massive influence on early Christian rhetoric, much of the remainder of this study will demonstrate bridges of understanding that can be built by considering Augustine's rhetorical work in light of the new English translation of *The Canonical Scripture*. Rhetorical scholars familiar with Western traditions of religious rhetoric and criticism will benefit from learning the tenets and rhetorical forms of this growing New Religion in Korea.

Augustine's Rhetoric and The Canonical Scripture

Much more than a dry list of rhetorical rules and tropes, Augustine's major rhetorical and interpretive work *De Doctrina Christiana* is a commentary on how Christian believers ought to behave in society while propagating their faith. This present discussion of Augustine will consider *De Doctrina Christiana* as a benchmark in Christian rhetoric. From this classical text, we will draw several principles—*verba*, *res*, and *caritas*—that equip scholars to consider cross-cultural understandings between Christian theology and *The Canonical Scripture*.

Signs and Things

While Book IV, the final book, of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, has been studied for its rhetorical theory, the first three books, which deal with topics such as authority and metaphor, prove to be more rhetorical than previously supposed by many critics. Since *De Doctrina Christiana* would remain the most influential Christian rhetoric into the early modern era, I will briefly outline its most enduring concepts and consider how those concepts became the foundation for a specifically Christian rhetoric—something new under the sun, a *sacred* rhetoric.

In Book I of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine proposes that in order to understand Scripture, one must give attention to both "signs" (*verba*) and "things" (*res*). A thing is that which "is never employed as a sign of anything else," and signs "are never employed except as signs" (J. F. Shaw 2006, 625). Words are examples of "pure signs." Regarding "things" (*res*), there are three sub-categories: things to be enjoyed, things to be used, and things to be used and enjoyed. The Christian concept of the Trinity is the only "thing" that is to be enjoyed for no useful purpose. Augustine wrote: "The true objects of [Christian] enjoyment, then, are the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (625). To enjoy (without a useful purpose) any other "thing" is to commit a sin of idolatry. Daeseon would seem to have less of an "idolatrous" approach to *things*. For, according to Don Baker, "Daeseon philosophy combines traditional anthropocentrism

and traditional anthropomorphism to create a new form of spirituality, one that is focused not just on God or just on human beings but on both, recognizing the power of God but also recognizing the power of human beings to better themselves through their own efforts” including, probably, through “things of this world” (Baker 2016, 4).

In Book II, Augustine turns his attention to the subject of “signs.” Augustine suggests that there are two categories of signs, the natural and the conventional. Augustine does not discuss natural signs “at present,” preferring to limit his discussion to conventional signs, or words (637). An understanding of signs is important for the student of interpretation, for misreading signs may lead the reader astray. Augustine suggests that confusion regarding unknown or ambiguous signs may be clarified by learning Greek and Hebrew, in addition, of course, to Latin. In addition, and of interest to the rhetorician, Augustine suggests that the student of literature attempt to understand the cultural context in which sacred texts were written. *Signs*, of course, work similarly in *The Canonical Scripture*, as a signifier of something else, something greater, as in this example: “The big fire in Sinho is a sign that the energy of earth in Japan will be pulled out” (*Reordering Works* 3:31).

Book III also deals with a text’s cultural context, and it provides advice for attempting to recognize the meaning of ambiguous signs. Ambiguous signs may be classified as either direct or figurative. The ambiguity of direct signs may result from by pronunciation or punctuation or “doubtful signification” of words (657). These sorts of ambiguities may be clarified by attending to the text’s cultural context, similar texts by the same or other similar authors, or by consulting other translations. The explication of figurative signs leads to the occurrence of two frequent errors: interpreting literal signs figuratively and interpreting figurative signs literally. In the discussion of figurative signs, Augustine expounds upon his notion of *caritas*. The teacher who helps his student understand the distinction between literal and figurative signs demonstrates “useful” love, and that “charity of mind which aims at the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one’s self and one’s neighbor in subordination to God” (662). Sangje, too, addresses the issue of interpretation, as in this episode, when He is teaching: “Sangje, reciting the Incantation of Serving the Lord of Heaven with a specific rhythm, had the disciples recite the incantation every night. He said, ‘his sound is the same as that which people articulate while carrying a bier. The wails that mourners make while carrying a bier is *eo-ro*; *eo* (御) can also mean 'king' and *ro* (路) can mean 'road.' That is, it is a road upon which a king walks. Now the god of the Imperial Ultimate has been moved here.’ At that time, Emperor Guangxu passed away.” (*Reordering Works* 3:22) In this interesting example, the ambiguity serves as both a lesson and a sign. Scholars of rhetoric will be especially interested in the instructional potential of signs, whether they be ambiguous or unambiguous.

Caritas and Love

Book IV of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* was written some thirty years after its first three books, and this book, as distinguished from the others, deals with propagation rather than interpretation. In Book I of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine began to establish his theory of *caritas*, or brotherly-love. Augustine made the claim that no interpretation of the New Testament that advocates a spirit of goodwill and brotherly love is incorrect or deceptive, though it may be faulty. If a reader of the Christian Bible, Augustine wrote, "draws a meaning from that may be used for the building up of love, even though he does not happen upon the precise meaning ... his error is not pernicious, and he is wholly clear from the charge of deception" (635). No reading that advances a theory of brotherly love can be discounted, and the person who proposes such a "misreading" is likened to a traveler who takes a different road but reaches the "same place to which the [correct] road leads" (635). Though Augustine's notion of *caritas* was more fully explicated in Books I and III, the ideals of *caritas* are well represented in Augustine's advice to preachers and Christian teachers. Augustine claimed that he is writing no rhetorical handbook, but that Christian teachers should, nonetheless, familiarize themselves with the rules of eloquence. Augustine suggests that the authors of the Christian Bible themselves should be considered models of appropriateness. Augustine believed that perspicuity and clarity should, above all, mark the orations and writings of Christian teachers, though ambiguity has an important role, causing hearers and readers to pause at an important passage. Augustine recognizes three types of style, the subdued, the temperate, and the grand. The subdued style is especially appropriate for teaching. The temperate style should mark praise, and the grand style should generally be reserved for exhortation.

Augustine himself clearly defines his use of the central terms of *caritas* and the related *cupiditas*. He wrote:

I mean by *caritas* that affection of the mind which aims at the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and one's neighbor in subordination to God; by *cupiditas* I mean that affection of the mind which aims at enjoying one's self and one's neighbor, and other corporeal things, without reference to God. (*De Doctrina* 662)

Augustine purposefully distinguished between *caritas* (love, charity) and *cupiditas* (lust, cupidity). One author, Gerald Schlabach, suggests the straightforwardness of Augustine's distinction between these two kinds of loves actually masks an ambiguity of definitions. Schlabach writes that "Augustine's very definition of Christian charity in *On Christian Doctrine* hints that love for God itself might not be quite so straightforward," and in order to define love of God, "Augustine had to do so in relation to other loves,

including the false loves it was not” (Schlabach 2001, 30-31). Schlabach senses an uneasiness regarding Augustine’s definition by negative, defining *caritas* by defining what it is not. Schlabach probably overlooks, at this point, the fact that Augustine was a rhetorician, and that to define his terms was a necessary act. In any case, philosophical uneasiness aside, Augustine set up his terms, *caritas* and *cupiditas*, in a way that will be important for his rhetoric. The importance of love and charity within a community, of course, is central to the teaching of Daesoon Jinrihoe. According to Don Baker (2016), “Daesoon Jinrihoe not only offers hope that we can overcome moral weakness, it also provides specific guidelines for how to act morally. Those ‘commandments’ share the traditional anthropocentric orientation of the Korean moral perspective, which places more emphasis on harmonious interaction within the human community than on an individual’s relationship with a supernatural personality.” The community, in this sense, is both bound and defined by its acts of love toward members and others.

Hannah Arendt, whose doctoral dissertation, finally published in 1996 as *Love and Saint Augustine*, recognizes the importance of the terms in Augustine’s philosophy, though she grounds the terms in Augustine’s concept of Christian *communitas* without extending her argument to the way rhetoric functions in such a community. Arendt’s dissertation provides a discussion, relevant to an understanding of Augustine’s rhetoric, of “love understood as craving” and of “the neighbor’s relevance” to this love (Arendt 1996, 7). Considering *caritas* and *cupiditas*, Arendt made the important observation that “[t]hey are distinguished by their objects, but they are not different kinds of emotion” (18). *Caritas* and *cupiditas*, in other words, are both “craving,” the one for God, the other for the world. Given that human beings must actually live in the world, though, among other human beings, “would it not be better,” Arendt asks, “to love the world in *cupiditas* and be at home? Why should we make a desert out of this world?” (19). Arendt hints at the answer: “The justification . . . can only lie in a deep dissatisfaction with what the world can give its lovers” (19). Craving, in short, is not a “sinful” desire, and Augustine’s reason that craving for God (*caritas*) is superior to craving for the world (*cupiditas*) is a pragmatic one: in craving for God, humanity finds the fulfillment, not the repression, of its desires, while in craving for the world, humanity finds only frustration. Arendt wrote: “the reason that self-love, which starts with forsaking God, is wrong and never attains its goal is that such love” will always be outside of the person seeking love (20). In Augustine’s thought, *caritas* is the only way to achieve the goal of happiness, and Augustine wants humanity to achieve that goal.

Though the goal in Augustine is love of God, love of neighbor plays an integral role in a person’s attainment of love of God. Humanity’s love of neighbor is perhaps the least understood concept in Augustine’s *De Doctrina*, and Arendt does a good job of clarifying the love of the neighbor as an attribute of *caritas*. Arendt writes that “[l]ove of neighbor is man’s attitude toward his neighbor, which springs from *caritas*. It goes back

to two basic relations: first, a person is to love his neighbor as God does; and second, he is to love his neighbor as he loves himself" (93). The topic of love of neighbor is important for an understanding of Augustine's rhetoric, for, though Arendt herself does not pursue this rhetorical line of inquiry, loving a neighbor must include attention to how to understand and encounter a neighbor, how to communicate with a neighbor. Ideally, as Arendt suggests, "for the lover who loves as God loves, the neighbor ceases to be anything but a creation of God" (94).

This concept of all humanity as "a creation of God," existed in Christianity before Augustine, yet Augustine provides a new emphasis, a new communicative emphasis, on loving one's neighbor. When one loves an interlocutor as a creation of God, *caritas* enables an ideal level of communication. This love of neighbor, and the healing effects of that form of communication, are of course apparent in *The Canonical Scripture* as well. In one important example:

While staying in Seoul for a dozen days, Sangje conducted many Reordering Works. Yeong-Seon's neighbor, Oh Ui-Gwan, was suffering from severe asthma and had not slept well for the last three years. Hearing of Sangje's divinity, Ui-Gwan begged Yeong-Seon to let him have an audience with Sangje. When Yeong-Seon told Sangje about it, He allowed Ui-Gwan to meet Him and gave him a writing, saying, "Keep this in the room which you sleep in." Ui-Gwan humbly received it and did so as he was told. He was pleased because he was able to sleep from that night and his asthma was cleared up before long. (*Reordering Works* 1:20)

Not only is this example noteworthy for its miraculous event but for its endorsement of a communication that was initially founded in neighbor-love.

Normative and Corrective Rhetoric

Augustine has been credited, since medieval times, for helping to establish rules of interpretation that allow allegorical readings of Scripture. Discussions of Augustine's enormous influence in contributing to an allegorical understanding of the Christian Bible do not often address Augustine's rhetorical preoccupations, however. While it is true that Augustine's training as a rhetorician allowed him to recognize tropes and figures in the Bible, a recognition some critics have felt seems sometimes strained, Augustine's influence as a rhetorician was not limited to tropological issues. Indeed, in Augustine's establishment of an allegorical hermeneutics he hearkens back to Aristotle's rhetoric, which sought to identify the importance of arguing by probabilities as well as reasoning by certainties, and hearkens back, too, to the perhaps "purer" sophistry of

the early generations of sophists, such as Isocrates and Gorgias, who sought to teach people how to live practically in the world, how to adapt to a changing society. While Augustine, the scathing critic of the Second Sophistic, would probably not wish to be associated with any form of sophistry, his efforts to establish an allegorical tradition of Scriptural hermeneutics demonstrate his concern not only with the unchanging truth he believed was found in the Bible, but also with ways in which Biblical truth could be applied in a variety of ages and situations.

In short, Augustine believed absolutely that the Bible contained God's truth; however, he would remain suspicious of humans who claimed to fully "know" that truth. Human nature, he felt, was simply too fraught with sinfulness. Rules could be set down, generalities proposed, and communities established that could do their best to ascertain the truth of truth, but, in the end, the human agent would always be prone to error (and this is one reason why *caritas*, the rule of love, becomes so important: It serves as a safeguard to those who might adopt a harmfully dogmatic hermeneutics). Here, a distinction exists between the Christian Bible and *The Canonical Scripture*, one that deserves additional attention from scholars. For, as we see in Augustine, *sin* plays a central role in Christian terminology, but in the new English translation of *The Canonical Scripture*, the word *sin* appears only twice. In one of those two occasions, we read:

When Sangje visited Jeong Nam-Gi's house, He observed Jeong's younger brother's impolite attitude towards his parents and had him repent for this fault. The brother rebuked impolitely after being scolded by his father and he ran out of the house. Sometime later, when he tried to enter inside again, he suddenly could not move and just stood stiff in the front of the door, perspiring heavily, and screaming. The family were so surprised that they did not know what to do. After a while, Sangje turned to Jeong Nam-Gi's younger brother and asked, "Why are you suffering from such trouble?" Only then did he bend down and recover consciousness. When his family asked why this happened, he said that he had suddenly felt faint and had been unable to breathe in and out and felt suffocated. Sangje said, "At that time you might have been stifled, so it would have been hard for you to endure it." He severely rebuked him by saying, "When you assumed a haughty attitude towards your father, how did your parents feel in their hearts? Repent for your sin and do not thoughtlessly speak such words ever again." (*Dharma* 1:40)

In this passage, sin is very clearly tied to actions as well as *words* ("do not thoughtlessly speak such words ever again"). In this admonition of Sangje's, a connection can be seen between Christian and Daesoon traditions that is worth

exploring: that of the *normative* and *corrective* nature of their rhetorics. In the passage above, Sangje is both setting a standard (normative) for behavior (respect toward parents and elders) and a path for remedy (corrective) is admonishing that the disrespectful words not be spoken again. To further illustrate this point, in the following passage, Sangje provides *normative* guidance: "One day in the fall of that year, Sangje said to Ahn Nae-Seong, "Put all your efforts into farming diligently. Externally, do not neglect to serve in the Reordering Works, and internally, you shall hold a memorial rite for your ancestors with sincerity, serve your parents with respect, and raise your children with care. Then, you shall wait for Me to return" (Acts 4:44). In telling Ahn Nae-Seong how to properly behave, Sangje sets a standard to be followed. On the other hand, in the following passage, Sangje sets a *corrective* path:

"When Sangje asked Kim Gap-Chil, who had come over to greet Him, about how farming was going, he explained, "As the severe drought has prevented farmers from planting rice so far, the people have become rather agitated." Listening to him, Sangje said, "You have come to beg for rain. As I will send the rain god by attaching him to you. Go back immediately, but on your way, although it will rain, you should not avoid it." However, Gap-Chil did not seem to like this because he was sick. Noticing his reluctance, Sangje urged him to leave, "How can you delay even a minute when it comes to saving people's lives?" Gap-Chil hurriedly went on his way back and by the time he reached Court-Plain (Wonpyeong) Village, the rain started falling" (Acts 4:31).

Here, Sangje shows Kim Gap-Chil where he is doing wrong (delaying) and tells him how to correct his behavior. For Augustine and the Christian tradition, too, normative and corrective rhetorics are important. What prevents Augustine's orator, dedicated though he may be, from straying too far in his extemporaneous performances; what keeps the orator grounded in Scriptural truth? The answer must be that an orator must possess *caritas*. The importance of *caritas*, here, becomes apparent. In an orally taught culture, the orator must be careful to avoid pride and error. This task would perhaps intimidate many orators, but Augustine provides assurance. Training in interpretation under respected teachers, coupled with a true spirit of *caritas*, will enable an orator to behave rightly, and even, after an orator has done his best, he should fail, if he acted in a spirit of love, God would forgive the failure. Thus, *caritas* is not simply a virtue an orator must teach, it is a safeguard against preaching error.

In terms of interpreting sacred texts and language, Augustine provided advice that has guided scholars for countless generations and can serve as another bridge of understanding, one of rhetorical interpretation and criticism, between East and West. According to scholar David Dawson: "[a]ncient Christian allegorical readings of the

Bible have often been regarded as the means by which interpreters translated the unique images and stories of the Bible into the abstractions of classical metaphysics and ethics,” and, moreover, “Augustine’s recommendations concerning how to interpret Scripture suggest that nonliteral translation ought to move in the opposite direction”; that is, instead of “dissolving scriptural language into nonscriptural categories, allegorical reading should enable the Bible to refashion personal experience into and cultural ideals be reformulating them in a distinctively Biblical idiom” (Dawson 1995, 123). Dawson suggests that Augustine’s allegorical hermeneutics represents more than an attempt to make the Bible’s New Testament acceptable according to a classical standard.

That is because Augustine in his writings starts with the human condition (the rhetorical situation) and applies whatever intellectual traditions that are at his disposal to explaining and clarifying the human’s journey out of an earthly rhetorical situation toward what Arendt call “not-time,” a non-situation—salvation. For this reason, long lists of oratorical and interpretive rules should only be learned by students who are gifted in this way. Augustine writes that “the rules and precepts” of oratory and interpretation must be acquired “by those who can do so quickly” (457). Regarding this point of “acting quickly,” we see a contrast in *The Canonical Scripture*. There, in an instructive episode:

Shin Won-II begged Sangje to practice the Reordering Work of Great Opening soon. Sangje said, "There is an opportunity for human affairs, and there is a time for heavenly affairs. Therefore, wait for the opportunity and the time. To use them forcibly would take all lives away by causing disaster in the world. How could I undertake this Reordering Work so lightly?" But Won-II besought, "Now the world is so immoral that it is difficult to distinguish good from evil. I think it would be right to annihilate the current state quickly and open the new destiny of the Later World." Sangje agonized over his request. (*Reordering Works* 2:24)

“Timeliness” in the two traditions, Christian and Daesoon Jinrihoe, would seem to diverge on this point. “Quickness” takes precedence in the instructions of the apostle Paul and Augustine; while in *The Canonical Scripture* appropriate preparation, in the form of the Reordering Works, is more prominent. Thus, the Reordering Works can be understood in terms of classical rhetorical principles of *kairos* and *prepon*, as *kairos* refers to the appropriate and optimal moment and *prepon* to correct preparation for that moment.

Interpretation and Religious Rhetoric

In this way, perhaps, Augustine's rhetoric is pragmatic: he wants his allegorical hermeneutics to illuminate the particular conditions of specific people's lives, not necessarily to confirm eternal truths. Similarly, his advice to preachers in Book IV of *De Doctrina* displays this pragmatic bent; Augustine's rules are there for guidance, but the preacher should remember that the specific situation of a church or even an individual person might cause certain rules to be altered, amended, or discarded. David Tracy recognizes Augustine's willingness to accept arguments that are adaptable, not only eternal. Tracy considers Augustine to be "the first great rhetorical theologian," and *De Doctrina* the first great statement of rhetorical theology, for in *De Doctrina* "one may find both a classical reformulation of 'theology and culture' as well as a rhetoric of both discovery and communication" (Tracy 1990, 124).

John D. Schaeffer suggests a valuable reason for Augustine's acceptance of adaptability of interpretive rules. Augustine was, in short, "bending the rules" himself in many ways: by adapting classical rhetoric, by giving a new direction to allegorical hermeneutics, by emphasizing a law of love based on *caritas*. Augustine's many efforts to "refashion" rhetoric for Christianity resulted from, in no small part, the transition from orality to literacy taking place in his lifetime. John Schaeffer suggests that Book IV of *De Doctrina* is probably laying out advice for preachers to deliver sermons extemporaneously. In disavowing the second sophistic, then, Augustine is "returning to the orally based rhetoric of republican Rome" Schaeffer writes, "which he is adapting to a textually based religion attended by an emerging sense of interiority" (Schaeffer 1996, 1134). In this reading, Augustine's system of rhetoric must necessarily be highly adaptable, and this adaptability eschews rigid codification. "The paradox of Christianity in late antiquity," Schaeffer writes, "is that people were taught to believe in a written teaching that most could not read but only heard" (1136). Though Schaeffer does not make this point—a point that would become more important in the Reformation, with attention given to individual interpretation of Scripture—Augustine's *caritas* is important in an age when few people were literate. *Caritas*, which demands self-humility, is something any interpreter of the Scriptures must practice, for in claiming a rigid dogmatic interpretation, a preacher could easily lead his (illiterate) flock into error. But above all, extemporaneous performances demand adaptability, in order to gauge an audience's understanding. Schaeffer correctly senses that "an orator must sense the audience's thoughts and feelings and adjust to them" (1140).

The practice of Augustinian interpretation of a sacred text and history is, then, at last important for investigation between the Western religio-rhetorical tradition and Daeseon. As Edward Chung writes,

"I basically agree with Kim Chongsuh of Seoul National University (2005:134) that we need to explore how the similar and different aspects of influence actually 'helped the Daesoon religion in developing a new, creative interpretation of Korean religious experience; for example, why Jeungsan became interested in Ch'oe Che-u's Tonghak, and why Daesoon thought also addressed Western Learning (sōhak) [also related to Catholicism] ...' It is therefore important to study how Jeongsan became interested in Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Christianity" (Chung 2016).

Here, Chung and Chongsuh indirectly point out the importance not only of intra-textual analysis (deep study of a single text, be it *The Canonical Scripture* or the Christian Bible or another) but of inter-textual analysis of interpretive traditions. The practice of interpretation, as Chung notes, enriches the intellectual life of Daesoon, and studying Daesoon in conjunction with other religions—East and West—enriches interpretive communities themselves and intercultural understanding.

Aristotelian Criticism and Religious Rhetoric

This exploration of potential interpretive affinities between Augustine's work and a Korean New religion is not meant to suggest that rhetorical criticism must always take a religio-rhetorical text (such as *De Doctrina Christiana*) as its source. Much rhetorical criticism of the Christian New Testament, in fact, is Aristotelian in nature, and Aristotle's influence over the codifying and defining of central rhetorical terms is preeminent and undisputed. Aristotle (BC c.350) begins his treatise on rhetoric by suggesting that rhetoric is the *antistrophos* to dialectic, and Kennedy, in a footnote, writes that "Antistrophos is commonly translated 'counterpart'" (Kennedy 2006, 28). Kennedy also suggests that word may mean something like "correlative" or "coordinate" (28). Though the exact translation may be difficult to make, Aristotle writes that rhetoric and dialectic are common to all people and disciplines. Neither rhetoric nor dialectic is concerned with a "separately defined science" (29). Rhetoric and dialectic, then, are used by all thinking people. Dialectic seems to be the "art" of arriving at truths and first principles, while rhetoric is concerned with establishing and working within the realm of the probable.

Dialectic and rhetoric also share a similar means for establishing claims. In dialectic, the syllogism is used, and in rhetoric, the enthymeme serves as a "rhetorical" syllogism. Aristotle writes that "it is evident that artistic method is concerned with *pisteis* [proof, means of persuasion, belief] and *pistis* is a sort of demonstration," and that the "enthymeme is a sort of syllogism" (33). Rhetoric and the enthymeme are useful for establishing probable truths. Maxims are the conclusions of enthymemes, though

they can be presented independently of the enthymeme. Maxims are widely accepted “gnomes,” and are useful when communicating with the “uncultivated mind” (186). For scriptural studies, in particular, *pistis* is important. In the Christian New Testament, the word is what is simply translated into English as faith. The Aristotelian concept retains the fuller expression of *pistis* as a persuasive process rather than a stable position. A beautiful example of this kind of *pistis* occurs early in *The Canonical Scripture* with the story of the Deok-An. After almost losing his life, Deok-An arrived “at his home with joy, he believed that his way to this rebirth had been led by the light of a tiger glittering its eyes to him. Shortly after, Sangje suddenly came back to Guest-awaiting Village” (*Acts* 1:26). This passage well represents the persuasive *process* of faith because Deok-An was brought to his newfound belief through his ordeal of the night and his guiding sign.

Aristotle defines rhetoric, this time without mentioning dialectic, as the “an ability in each particular case to see the available means of persuasion” (37). These means of persuasion can take the form of two “modes” of persuasion: artistic and nonartistic. Aristotle writes that “I consider atechnic [nonartistic] those proofs that are not provided by ‘us’ but are preexisting” (37). Artistic proofs, on the other hand, consist of whatever can be prepared by method and by ‘us’; thus, one uses the former and *invents* the latter. An interesting example of this distinction can be found in this passage of *The Canonical Scripture*: “Regarding His saving the world by rectifying its faults, Sangje said, ‘It shall be completed when the Reordering Work of the Three Realms is carried out using with the new dharma outside the frame, rather than the existing dharma laws inside it’” (*Prophetic Elucidations* 4). In this case, Sangje’s words point to an inartistic proof (existing dharma laws) and an artistic one (the new dharma outside the frame), and both those sources can be drawn upon to make arguments and support persuasive claims.

In addition to the proofs, Aristotle lays out the three modes of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. Of these “species,” some deal with the “character [ethos] of the speaker, and some [pathos] in disposing the audience in some way, and some in the argument [logos] itself, by showing, or seeming to show something” (37). First, ethos is achieved whenever a speaker is considered to be “worthy of credence,” for “we believe fair-minded people” (38). Very early in *The Canonical Scripture*, Sangje is described in terms of ethos: From His youth onward, Sangje was so good-natured, generous, and unusually brilliant that He was much revered by many people. Even as a boy, He exhibited the great virtue of respecting life; for instance, he enjoyed planting trees but never broke off even a single branch or harmed any insects no matter how small” (*Acts* 1:11). Second, pathos is achieved “through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion” (38). An example of a pathetic episode occurs in *The Canonical Scripture* when:

“One day, when Sangje stopped by the tavern by chance, Goe-San wanted to treat Him to some dog-meat stew. But while he was cooking it from an

earthenware pot, the pot suddenly shattered. Since his wife just stood crying in despair, Sangje took pity on them and brought her an iron cauldron. From then on, their wealth increased day by day” (*Acts* 3:19).

This story reveals the persuasiveness of Goe-San’s wife’s tears and their power of pathos. On the other hand, *logos*, third, is achieved when one “shows the truth or apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case” (39). Such a situation unfolds in this scene: “And He [Sangje] put out the fire by causing great winds to blow. Gyeong-Hak was impressed by the fact that there was a way to extinguish fire with wind” (*Authority and Foreknowledge* 2:15).

Since a rhetor must establish which proofs will convince an audience through the modes of persuasion, and since probable truths must be established, Aristotle again emphasizes the fact that “rhetoric is a certain kind of offshoot of dialectic” (39). Aristotle distinguishes between induction and deduction. We read that in “the case of persuasion through proving or seeming to prove something, just as in dialectic there is on the one hand induction and on the other the syllogism or the apparent syllogism” (40). In rhetoric, specifically, the *paradeigma* [example] is an induction, the *enthymema* a syllogism” (40). Aristotle calls a “rhetorical syllogism” an enthymeme (40). An argument that builds a case through examples, then, is defined as induction; an argument that provides logical, rhetorical reasoning is defined as deduction. Unlike rhetoric, dialectic must be marked by a speaker’s attempt to be well understood by an audience. Not all audiences are capable of “reason[ing] from a distant starting point” (41). Aristotle defines the elements of a rhetorical situation: “a speaker and a subject on which he speaks and someone addressed” (47). If one is a hearer and must make a decision based on the speech, the hearer is the judge; otherwise, the hearer is considered a spectator.

Perelman and the Recovery of Classical Rhetoric

In the introduction to *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, philosopher Chaim Perelman (1979) clearly lays out what he is reviving from the classical tradition, as well as considering why rhetoric needs reviving at all. Perelman is anxious to revive, in *The New Rhetoric* and elsewhere, the Aristotelian practice of practical reasoning. Though it is true that Aristotle seemed to privilege rationalistic argument, he nevertheless left a space for practical reasoning, reasoning about that large sphere of human activity that cannot be reasoned about using a scientific method. Thinking people can still find their way to agreement, through reasonable if not rational argumentation, Perelman insists. Perelman, as other rhetoricians have done since, lays the blame for the diminishing influence of rhetoric on Descartes’s emphasis on the rational, doubtful individual. Knowledge and wisdom, after Descartes, no longer grew

out of communal interaction or reasonable argument, but purely from the conviction of a single individual after witnessing some scientific demonstration. Argumentation and persuasion gave way completely to demonstration, and rhetoric declined.

Perelman's *New Rhetoric* has much "new" to offer. In fact, the book was especially welcome and revolutionary in Europe, where rhetoric had declined even further than it had in the United States. Rhetoric, in departments of speech, after all, had survived in at least a limited way in the United States, and when Perelman visited the U.S. he declared his surprise at discovering departments of speech. Still, even in the United States, *The New Rhetoric* has helped to revive the study of rhetoric. In particular, Perelman brought something "new" to the study of rhetoric, in his discussions of epideictic rhetoric and in his utilization of philosophical rhetoric.

Perelman extends Aristotle's notion of epideictic, and therefore extends the realm of rhetoric. While Aristotle's epideictic mainly consisted of such things as funeral orations and other speeches of praise and blame, Perelman considers epideictic to be any sort of rhetoric that serves to increase (or decrease) adherence to cultural values. In Perelman's definition, speeches such as those given in the U.S. on the fourth of July, and much creative literature can be examined as epideictic rhetoric. The rhetorical activities of the Re-Ordering Works can be fruitfully examined under the umbrella of epideictic rhetoric, as can a scene such as this: "After the disciples did as Sangje had ordered, He stood in the front of the offerings Himself and concluded the ceremony. He then asked, 'To whom did you pray regarding your wishes?' One of the disciples replied, 'I prayed to You inwardly.' Sangje said with a smile, 'I received a memorial ritual alive. It shall be influential from now on. The mats made of cotton wool grass among the mats here are clean'" (*Progress of the Order* 1:40). In such a scene, the unity of the entire group, and its adherence to the teachings of Sangje, is strengthened: unity and adherence are hallmarks of an epideictic rhetoric.

Perelman's *New Rhetoric* also helped to usher in a philosophical rhetoric, a theoretical rhetoric that could nonetheless be applied in specific situations. Perelman considers various types of arguments and categorizes them based on their philosophical impact. For example, Perelman discusses quasi-logical arguments, arguments based on the structure of reality, arguments establishing the structure of reality, and arguments from dissociation. Quasi-logical arguments gain their power from appearing to be like logical demonstration. Arguments based on the structure of reality recognize a culture's values, their conceptions of reality, and attempts to build arguments that "identify" with those values. Arguments establishing the structure of reality rely heavily on metaphor. Perelman considers metaphor to have meaning-making potential, and when one does not share a culture or set of values with another person, arguments that establish a structure of reality, based on metaphor, are important. Finally, in dissociative arguments, Perelman's most unique and philosophical contribution to a

new rhetoric, an interlocutor must attempt to sever, not establish, a “causal link.” In this method, an argument is built by demonstrating that one’s interlocutor does not have a correct assumption, that their reality is merely appearance, and that dissociation provides “real” reality. Perelman’s new rhetoric, then, both recognizes certain aspects of classical rhetoric, yet it is not constrained by classical rhetoric, and his appreciation for a philosophical rhetoric opens avenues of discussion with religious rhetoric, both Western and Eastern.

Conclusion

I think it is significant that all three major rhetoricians considered here—Augustine, Aristotle, Perelman—turned (or returned) to rhetoric in order to achieve something or to solve a practical problem. Aristotle was primarily a scientist and philosopher, not a rhetorician, not a public speaker. His *Rhetoric*, foundational as it is to the discipline, has come down to us in the form of student notes, as Aristotle himself never published a definitive version of it. Yet he understood rhetoric’s importance for teaching all the other subjects in which he had an interest, for bridging the distances and cultivating understanding. That understanding takes place in communities of meaning-making, in close groups and families. Aristotle believed that even the earliest form of political organization, as Anselm K. Min reminds us, “was an extension of the family,” and the same can be said of most rhetorical activities, including religious ones, as an extended “family” is established in a new religious community (Min 2016, 315). The religious rhetor, to be sure, persuades through teaching as well as through elements of personality. As David W. Kim writes in *Daesoon Jinrihoe in Modern Korea*, “The charismatic philosophy in doctrine/ beliefs is demonstrated in the view that the god of Daesoon himself (like the Son of God in Christianity) was present in the world and directly involved in the restoration process of the corrupted universe” (Kim 2020, 5). But even before widely revealing Himself, Sangje was known to his extended community as a respected teacher. We read in *The Canonical Scripture*: “Everybody in the region began offering high praise for His remarkable teaching ability” (Acts 1:20). Persuasive first as a teacher, Sangje would soon travel beyond His school in Golden Ditch (Geumgu) County, and look to other methods of persuasion and propagation, though teaching within a community of believers would remain a consistent rhetorical activity for Him.

The sharing of ideas through the act of teaching is characteristic of all the figures considered here. In *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, Foss, Foss, and Trapp note, for example, that Chaim Perelman “was an individual of action as well as ideas” (1995, 120). The “action” to which Foss, Foss, and Trapp refer involves Perelman’s work, as a young man, in the Belgian resistance movement during World War II. Most

students of Perelman know that he participated in the movement, but--because he did not often discuss his involvement--few details have emerged regarding this important, formative period in Perelman's life. Indeed, when Perelman was offered a medal of valor following the war, he refused the honor, insisting: "My heart was on fire. I simply picked up a pail of water to douse the flames. I want no medals" (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 1995, 120). This historical reconstruction allows us to understand Perelman's distrust of Cartesianism, which he famously addresses in *The New Rhetoric*. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971) define their project as "*a break with the concept of reason and reasoning due to Descartes* which has set its mark on Western philosophy for the last three centuries" (1; italics original). It is no accident that *The New Rhetoric* addresses Cartesianism in forceful, battle-ready language. If the forces of "good" triumphed on the battlefields of Europe, the forces of "justice" were still estranged from Western philosophy and universities. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write: "it is the *idea of self-evidence* as characteristic of reason, which we must assail, if we are to make place for a theory of argumentation that will acknowledge the use of reason in directing our own actions and influencing those of others" (3). "Self-evidence," as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca believe, has grown, since the time of Descartes into an intellectual tyrant, one which is seen as a "force to which every normal mind must yield," and one which "imposes itself" (3). Reading *The New Rhetoric* in its post-war context, we cannot ignore the connotations of such terms.

In *The New Rhetoric and the Humanities*, Perelman writes that "[i]n 1945, when I published my first study of justice, I was completely ignorant of the importance of rhetoric" (Perelman 1979, 7-8). Perelman decided in that work that the "idea of value is, in effect, incompatible both with formal necessity and with experiential universality. There is no value which is not logically arbitrary" (8). For Perelman, values must be conceived of philosophically, but such values cannot remain the object of philosophical inquiry. However, in this schema, Perelman found something missing. He writes: "I was deeply dissatisfied with this conclusion, however interesting the analysis, since the philosophical inquiry, carried on within the limits of logical empiricism, could not provide [. . .] the establishment of rules and models for reasonable action" (8). Perelman searched for a model that could analyze behavior that was reasonable rather than logical. Perelman's immediate historical context, no matter how much he attempted to downplay this motivation, fueled his quest. This question lingered: "Is it possible for us to reason about values instead of making them depend solely on irrational choices, based on interest, passion, prejudice, and myth? Recent history has shown abundantly the sad excesses to which such an attitude can lead" (8). This search led Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca to "recover" the Aristotelian tradition of dialectical reasoning, a system which is "devoted to the analysis of human reasoning" (9). One cannot have justice at all, Perelman seems to have discovered, without arguing one's

way to a specific notion of justice which is not just a *notion* alone, but *action* within specific contexts and communities.

This work of justice, in the Western rhetorical tradition, is usually seen as being of two kinds: the normative and the corrective. The normative establishes rules and mores of right behavior, while the corrective points out when one has gone astray of right behavior. Similarly, we see a similar recognition of the value of the normative and corrective. In *The Canonical Scripture*, we read: “Instruct that which is good and rectify that which is evil” (Acts 3:44). Instruction in that which is good can be done, of course, by active example, as in acts of mutual beneficence, such acts being central to Daesoon Jinrihoe. Beneficence, we are reminded in *Essentials of Daesoon Jinrihoe*, is reciprocal, and “[p]romoting the betterment of others is the basic principle of the Great Dao of mutual beneficence, and the fundamental rationale behind universal salvation for all” (39). In the Western tradition, this model of mutual beneficence is one of *caritas*. Augustine, in adding the fourth book, emphasizes the importance of *communitas* and the role of *caritas* within that community. For interpretation is not to be an individual, philosophical enterprise; instead, one enters upon a study of Scripture in order to find the way to salvation, and brotherly love compels the exegete to share, to teach, what he has learned. Augustine wrote: “[I]t is the duty, then, of the student and teacher of the Holy Scriptures, who is the defender of the true faith, and the opponent of error, both to teach what is right and correct what is wrong” (458). Importantly, Augustine, here, identified the teacher of Scripture as always a student, as well, and the student should, likewise, always be a teacher.

Alasdair MacIntyre recognizes within Augustine a dilemma regarding the nature of teacher and student. In the Augustinian tradition, MacIntyre writes, “it seems that only by learning what the texts have to teach can he or she come to read those texts aright,” yet, and here is the paradox, “only by reading them aright can he or she learn what the texts have to teach” (MacIntyre 1994, 82). In other words, for the Christian to receive salvation, he or she must read the Bible in a spirit of truth, yet that spirit of truth can only be obtained from reading the Scriptures. MacIntyre is right to recognize a paradox here, and he is right, too, in proposing a solution for this paradox. MacIntyre writes that the “person in this predicament requires two things: a teacher and an obedient trust that what the teacher . . . declares to be good” (82). MacIntyre admits discomfort resulting from this paradox. MacIntyre’s discomfort could be lessened, perhaps, if he gave greater attention to the workings of *caritas* within a *communitas*. But this trust in *caritas* is not the something to be feared in Augustine’s rhetorical theology; it is one of Augustine’s great contributions.

Augustine saw as well as anyone the sins that burdened humankind, yet he did not give up believing in the *ideal* of humanity—humanity as God’s creation working toward salvation. Augustine understood sin, so he set forth precepts and advice for learning and

teaching Scripture that might lessen a preacher's "worldliness." But the rules should be set aside whenever they conflicted with the "rule of love," for the rule of love is the greatest lesson of the Scripture. Sandra Dixon(1999) acknowledges that "damage from the larger social and cultural environments can impinge so deeply on the psyche as to disrupt the human capacity to use the resources that remain" (214). This possibility, the lurking threat of sin, haunts humankind. Yet, as Augustine showed, believers must work toward salvation in spite of this threat and must manifest their belief through acts of brotherly. He writes that if a student of the sacred text "draws a meaning that may be used for the building up of love, even though he does not happen upon the precise meaning ... his error is not pernicious, and he is wholly clear from the charge of deception" (635). Dixon, for one, recognizes the importance of Augustine's words. She writes: "our fragile compositions of meaning in life can speak to those we love or could want to love" (215). Trusting and loving other humans can be risky, as MacIntyre fears, but Augustine, in *De Doctrina*, demonstrates that *caritas* should remain the centerpiece of human communication.

We can extend this idea, of reading in compassion and love, to our work of interpreting the new English translation of *The Canonical Scripture* in light of the Western (Augustinian or otherwise) rhetorical tradition. After all, even the ancient works of Western rhetoric and the Christian Bible have only been studied in tandem, in modern times, for a generation or two. The last decade has seen a recovery of rhetorical criticism of the Bible, and that field has flourished, especially since George Kennedy published *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* in 1984. I am hopeful that the English translation of *The Canonical Scripture* will result in a similar project, down the road, in a sort of *Interpretation of The Canonical Scripture of Daeseon Jinrihoe Through Rhetorical Criticism*. This article, this brief prolegomena, hopes to open a space for such an eventuality.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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B O O K R E V I E W

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- David W. Kim (ed.), *New Religious Movements in Modern Asian History: Sociocultural Alternatives*
Carole M. CUSACK (University of Sydney, Australia)

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One paradox of Daesoon Jinrihoe (“the Fellowship of Daesoon Truth”) is that it is at the same time the largest Korean new religion, and one on which very few academic studies are available in languages other than Korean. In addition to a handful of articles, some of them outdated or based on Korean sources hostile to the movement, the closest thing to a comprehensive treatment was a special issue of *The Journal of CESNUR* published in September-October 2018.

The situation has now changed thanks to David W. Kim, a Korean-Australian scholar who teaches courses at Kookmin University in South Korea and Australian National University in Canberra, and who has written and lectured extensively on Korean new religions. Kim’s book, *Daesoon Jinrihoe in Modern Korea*, is the first systematic treatment of this representative Korean new religion, which currently claims six million followers.

Kim opens his book by placing the emergence of the movement led by Kang Il-Sun, known to his disciples as Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909), within the context of the religious effervescence that manifested itself in Korea in the late 19th century, as a reaction against both foreign imperialism—Western, Chinese, and Japanese—and the sufferings of impoverished peasants within the framework of the rigid Korean class system.

In the second chapter, Kim reconstructs the prophetic career of Kang Jeungsan, and how, from 1901 until his passing in 1909, he performed many religious rituals, known as “the Reordering of the Universe” (*Cheonjigongsa*), and gathered a sizable number of disciples. Kim also explains the dynamics that eventually led to the fragmentation of Kang’s movement into more than 100 different religious orders, and the failed attempts at their reunification.

In the third chapter, Kim introduces the second and third leading figures recognized by Daesoon Jinrihoe as its historical leaders. Jo Cheol-Je, known to his disciples as Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958), was not a direct disciple of Kang Jeungsan, but claimed to have received a revelation from him after his passing. His role as successor of Kang Jeungsan was recognized by Kang’s relatives, and he worked at creating a new religious order, which he finally incorporated in 1925 as Mugeukdo. Due to pressure

by Japanese occupants, Jo was forced to dissolve Mugeukdo in 1941, but the order was reconstructed after the war, and its name was changed into Taegeukdo in 1950. After defining the rituals and rules of Taegeukdo, Jo Jeongsan designated Park Han-Gyeong, later known as Park Wudang (1917–1995, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar), as his successor; Jo passed away on March 6, 1958. Some of the leaders disputed Park's authority, and these conflicts led him to reorganize the movement under the name Daesoon Jinrihoe in 1969. Park passed away on December 4, 1995, and conflicts emerged between those advocating and those denying his deification. This led to several schisms, but the largest branch, which kept the name Daesoon Jinrihoe, emerged as the largest new religion of South Korea.

In the fourth chapter, Kim discusses the formation and publication of the canonical texts of Daesoon Jinrihoe. It is significant that Kim's book coincides with the publication, in the same year 2020, of the first official translation of Daesoon Jinrihoe's scriptures: an event of great significance both for the movement's devotees and for scholars. A particularly useful part of Kim's chapter is the detailed examination of the "Scripture of the Black Tortoise" (*Hyonmu-gyeong*), the only writing created by Kang Jeungsan himself, in 1909, and a difficult, enigmatic text including mystical illustrations and their comments.

In the fifth chapter, Kim offers a systematic presentation of the doctrines of Daesoon Jinrihoe. They are centered on the idea that, at one stage during history, Heaven and Earth fell into confusion and crisis and came on the verge of annihilation. All the divine spirits, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas petitioned the highest God, Sangje, who later incarnated on earth as Kang Jeungsan, to intervene. Accepting their requests, Sangje started a "Great Itineration" visiting the three realms of the world (Heaven, Earth, and Humankind), aimed at solving all grievances and ushering in the advent of a glorious Later World (*Hucheon*). The passage from the old to the new world is called *Gaebyeok* (Great Opening), a familiar millenarian concept known in Korean religions. An earthly paradise shall be established, where humans will enjoy good health, long life, and eternal happiness and wealth.

While the work of Sangje was in itself perfect and complete, the entry into the Later World is hastened through human participation. Daesoon Jinrihoe proposes four tenets, strictly connected between each other: "the virtuous concordance of Yin and Yang," "the harmonious union between divine beings and human beings," "the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence," and "the perfected unification with Dao." The moral practice of "resolving grievances" is central in Daesoon Jinrihoe. Only by resolving grievances accumulated in history will human be able to realize an earthly immortality in an earthly paradise. One way to grasp all or most of this complex theology is to meditate on a series of symbolic paintings found in all Daesoon Jinrihoe temples and called *Simudo* (ox-seeking pictures), of which Kim offers a detailed explanation.

The sixth chapter is, in my opinion, one of the most useful for Western readers, as they are guided into the rituals of Daesoon Jinrihoe, which are difficult to grasp for non-Koreans. *Gongbu* is a specifically timed devotional incantation ritual, which is believed to hasten the opening up of the coming Earthly Paradise, and is divided into *sibak* and *sibeop*, which are different ways to chant incantations in specifically designated places and ways. Although he discusses other mantras as well, Kim insists on the importance of the *Taeoul* mantra, which is also featured in personal prayer outside of the *gongbu*, and offers further details about lighting candles, daily prayers, devotional offerings, festivals, and the ritual use of the Korean traditional dress (*Hanbok*).

The seventh and eighth chapters cover subjects on which a pre-existing literature in English already was available (including my own writings and those of Rosita Šorýtè), i.e., Daesoon Jinrihoe's temples and centers and the three main branches of its impressive social outreach (education, charity aid, and social welfare). Yet, Kim's updated summary is the fit conclusion of a comprehensive book that, while occasionally not easy to read (it would have benefited from a better copy-editing), will remain as a milestone in the academic study of Daesoon Jinrihoe.

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Chang Chia-Lin (張家麟), *Chinese Religiosity (華人宗教) GPS3, Taipei: Taiwan Religion and Society Association, 2020, Hardcover. Pp. 224. \$523.*

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Imagine you live in an age of disconnection. Cut off from travel, quarantined, perhaps, and forced to depend on the accounts of others for information, you hunger for experience. Then by chance you hear of a universe so different and colorful it makes your mouth water. Such is the world described in Chang Chia-Lin's *Chinese Religiosity (華人宗教 GPS3, 2020)*. This book, the third in a series, takes on the incredible world of lived religion in current Chinese culture, broadly conceived. In particular Chang centers discussion on the variety of popular religious practices found in Taiwan.

As someone who studies Chinese religiosity, I do not find the themes tackled by Chang to be new. But his erudition and attention illuminate them in a new light. The picture that emerges is akin to what you feel when you land in a crowded night market. It is a noisy, bustling space of action. The air is filled with half-understood messages and crisscrossed movement. Like the marketplace, Chinese popular religion is a hectic world that does not allow a complete reading. But its very rawness keeps you spellbound.

Chang himself is an established expert in Chinese religion, and current chair of the Taiwan Association of Religion and Society. Yet he does not write this work for an academic audience. There are no extensive footnotes or bibliography, nor are his statements backed up with specific references. The book is clearly intended for a popular audience. At the same time this is more than a general introduction dealing in such generalities as the three teachings of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Chang provides a wealth of detail, certainly enough for a deep exploration into each subject. The style of writing is that of a discussion between scholars, a sharing of insights about things of common interest. He does not speak down to the reader.

This non-academic yet knowledgeable style illustrates an important point about the status of religion and spirituality in Taiwan. Taiwan enjoys an impressive level of awareness of religious issues. There are probably a number of reasons for this. First, much of the population is highly educated—fully 45% of adults have a bachelor's degree.¹ Secondly, religious practice is a common aspect of life in Taiwan. Atheism may exist, but it struggles to gain a foothold. As a result, religious affiliation is widespread. According to the *World Population Review*, the category of the "non-religious" account for 24% of the population in Taiwan, compared to 39% in the U.S., 33% in Australia, and an impressive (but suspect) 90% in mainland China.² Along with a highly educated

population, the people in Taiwan have broad knowledge of religious affairs. Temples and churches dot the landscape. Processions and festivals are an ingrained part of community life. Quite apart from the presence of organized religions, popular and ethnic religion, called *minzu zongjiao* (民族宗教) in Taiwan academic writing, thrives in Taiwan. As the scholar Paul Katz has noted there is a growing literature on Taiwanese popular religion.³

All these factors mean people have an awareness of and interest in religious topics. This in turn means there is a market for substantial books such as Chang's filled with insight and color photos. Yes, color photographs. While publishers elsewhere often ignore scholars' requests for color photographs, Chang's book has at least one per page. Most of these are paired with insightful captions explaining details of a topic. The author and publisher have adopted a strategy of giving equal prominence to text and photographs (圖隨文走，圖文並茂 *tusuiwenzou, tuwenmingmao*). A full understanding of each chapter requires a careful reading of *both* text and photographs. This reflects the author's goal of increasing the awareness of popular religion (常識化 *changshibhua*).

The discussion below will illustrate how Chang deals a few important topics, starting with a look at a temple dedicated to one of the most popular deities, Guan Gong (關公).

A Guan Gong Temple

Each section lists helpful information about where to visit each site and when to experience rituals. The first section, for instance, includes a section on worship of Guansheng Dijun (關聖帝君, or Guan Gong) at the Xietian Temple (協天廟), near the northern Taiwan city of Yilan (宜蘭).⁴ This temple, founded in 1804, is one of the few to practice the Announcement Ceremony (釋奠大典 *shidian dadian*), a ritual is generally practiced to honor Confucius. The ceremony in this temple was originally carried out four times a year, and has since been reduced to two, in the spring and fall.⁵ The ritual itself is ancient—it was first mentioned in the Book of Rites as a rite to honor previous saints and teachers (先聖先師 *xiansheng xianshi*).⁶ As the author states, all official temples (官廟 *guanmiao*) dedicated to Guan Gong were instructed to carry out this ceremony from the time of the Qing emperor Yongzheng (雍正皇帝). Yongzheng enfeoffed Guan Gong with the title of Doctor of the Five Classics (五經博士 *wujing boshi*), reflecting one of the deity's enduring roles as the patron saint for scholars. Chang found this same ceremony being observed in several Guan Gong mother temples (祖廟 *zumiao*) in mainland China as well. Chang goes into detail about which of the specific Confucian rituals are followed for each of the two ceremony dates. He notes that this ceremony symbolizes the fact that the Yilan temple enjoys the status of a public temple (公共廟宇 *gonggong miaoyu*).

Chang includes a full 22 separate color photos in his explanation of the ritual complex, each with citations explaining the general outline of each ceremony, including the names of functionaries and the Confucian ceremony involved. But he does not go so far as to provide a detailed, minute-by-minute ethnographic description in the text. In fact, most of the descriptive force of his account is found in the photographs, which provide a wealth of information. This approach often works better than a belabored written description.

Chinese Religions: A Complex Religious Form

What are some of the other themes found in this book? First of all, Chang show that the category of “Chinese religions” defies easy generalizations. A deep appreciation of Chinese religious practice comes not by study alone, but through exposure to the granular practices in temples, in small groups, and in ritual acts. At the same time there are multiple threads woven through all these angles, such powerful influences as Daoist cosmology, shamanic ritual, and Buddhist textual traditions.

A Pantheon of Deities

Another such thread concerns the role of the gods. Altars in each popular temple groan from the weight of deity images, each facing the worshipper. As a visitor, your gaze is drawn to theirs. Assuming you do not avert your eyes, you may feel yourself pulled into a relationship. Coupled with some knowledge of each deity—for each illuminates a different corner of reality—this awareness of the deity’s gaze can cause discomfort. The viewer may even feel an urge to retreat. Instead of dismissing the pantheon *in toto*, the wise path is to investigate each figure on its own terms. And the scholar of religion, like the specialist, is there to guide you in discovery.

One concrete example of the pantheon concerns the star gods. Veneration of the Big Dipper and Southern Dipper constellations (南北斗星 *nanbei douxing*) in Chinese culture goes back at least 2500 years, with many references in classical sources as the *Star Manual of the Masters Gan and Shi* 甘石星經 and the *Annals of the Historian* (史記) (106). The two constellations were humanized (擬人化 *ningrenhua*) as the Lord of the North Dipper (北斗星君 *beidou xingjun*) and Lord of the South Dipper (南斗星君 *nandou xingjun*). The Lord of the North Dipper is said to control death, and the Lord of the South Dipper controls life. Together they determine individual fate. These deities figures are found in Chinese temples today, often near the Great Year (Tai Sui) spirit tablet (太歲神主神牌 *taisui shenzhu shenpai*). Each of these two Daoist deities have their own sutra text for recitation on festival days.

Another deity example discussed by Chang is the Chinese evolution of the Buddhist figure Ksitigarbha (地藏王菩薩 *dizangwang pusa*, sometimes referred to by the Japanese name Jizo 地藏). Originally a bodhisattva able to assist all sorts of beings to pass beyond their realm of existence, in popular religion Ksitigarbha has been transformed into the god who oversees hell (幽冥教主 *youming jiaozhu*, 31). Ksitigarbha is often found accompanied by the deities Guan Gong and Wei Tuo (韋馱), two major figures in the popular pantheon. Because of his close association with hell, Ksitigarbha is often confused with the god of Hell, Yama (閻羅王 *yanluowang*), in popular religion called the Old Man of the People (大眾爺 *dazhongye*). The Buddhist deity Yama, for his part, has gone through a relatively more wrenching transformation in China. From being the single deity overseeing hell in India, once in China his official position and identity was transformed into those of ten separate bureaus or palaces, each overseen by a separate judge. This transformation from one to ten (由一化十 *youyi huashi*) reflects a thorough sinification of this figure into the Chinese cosmological vision (34).

The deity images found in Chinese religious practice frequently shift between traditions in this way. Ksitigarbha is most generally depicted as a Buddhist monk holding a staff with six rings (錫杖 *xizhang*, Skt. *kbakkara*) or vajra banner (金剛幢 *jingang chuang*) in his right hand, and a bright pearl (明珠 *mingzhu*, the *cintamani*) in the palm of his left. But when the Ksitigarbha image is seated on a *diting* (諦聽), a mythical hybrid creature able to distinguish truth from lies, it is a sign the image belongs to the popular religion pantheon, as opposed to being a strictly Buddhist figure.

Sacred Sites in Chinese Religious Practice

Chang investigates a range of religious sites in the text. Not all of these are in Taiwan. At one point he takes us through a detailed tour of the Ming Tombs (明十三陵 *mingshisanling*) outside Beijing, a spot on most tourist itineraries. I have struggled for years with finding the religious significance of this site. Absolutely, it reflects a reverence for and gratitude toward the royal ancestors, through whose beneficence each of fourteen emperors attained their thrones. (The last Ming emperor, Chong Zhen 崇禎, b. 1611– d. 1644, attained the throne but did not hold it when Manchu forces descended on Beijing in 1644.) In line with its historical importance, the tombs are absolutely well-sited from a geomantic point of view. But what connects this imperial site, and all places of imperial ritual practice, to what Chang is calling Chinese religiosity? Another way to ask is to wonder if the Ming Tombs deserve their status as a UN-registered intangible inheritance, granted in 2000? I have often felt that religious sites in China feel empty, stripped of their original significance, and left as empty hulls. A bit more analysis from Chang would quell my concerns here. As it is I find little of the sacred in the Ming Tombs.

Other sacred sites explored by Chang include Beijing's Baiyun Temple (白雲觀), and Nanjing's Mt. Mao (茅山); Yuanshan Martyr's Hall (圓善忠烈祠) in Taipei; the head temple of the Tenri religion (天理教) near Nara, Japan; the Id Kah (艾提朵爾 *aidtiduoer*) Mosque in Kashgar in China's far west; the Sacred Altar (靈台 *lingtai*) of the Daesoon Jinrihoe (大巡真理會) head temple complex at Yeosu in South Korea; and the Chinese Religion and Meeting Hall (越南華人宗教與會館 *yuenanhuaren zongjiao huiguan*) in Vietnam. His description of the visit to Daesoon Jinrihoe's head temple amounts to a compact introduction to the many aspects of the religion, from mythological paintings of ideal world (理想境界 *lixiang jingjie*) to pilgrimage (朝聖頂禮 *chaosheng dingli*). Such descriptions of visits are by definition brief and experiential, and leave out what could be extracted from interviews or textual study. Yet the sensorial data is invaluable for a well-rounded understanding of a religious group. Through step-by-step narration of his visit, along with the copious photographs, we come to understand Chang's conclusion that Daesoon Jinrihoe architecture, ritual and deities are linked at a deep level with what he calls the core of Chinese popular religion (中華夏民間宗教的本質 *zhonghua xiaminjian zongjiaode benzhi*, 197).

Ritual Circuits

Chang offers a thorough description of some important ritual circuits practiced in Danshui (淡水), on Taiwan's northern coast. These ritual circuits are a major characteristic of communal religion in many, but not all, Chinese cultural areas. They involve ceremonial processions where the deity figures are moved around a fixed route in the vicinity of the temple in which the image is normally housed. The deity in focus in this case is Qingshui Zushi, "The Master of Clear Water" (清水祖師, also known as Zushi Gong 祖師公). Originally a Song dynasty (960–1127) monk from Quanzhou (泉州) in southern Fujian, Qingshui Zushi is worshipped as a protector deity and to ask for rain. There are some 98 temples dedicated to him in Taiwan. He is depicted with black face and often without a nose, characteristics said to have been caused by his various struggles with demons.

On the worship day the processions are separated into two groups, labeled respectively the secret visit (暗訪 *anfang*) and the daily inspection (日巡 *rixun*). The *anfang* procession itself is split into two parts. A small group of some ten marchers will carry the deity's image to four points in the town, performing rituals of exorcism at each spot (57). The smaller group will eventually meet up with the larger procession of some 3000-5000 onlookers and marchers. Groups carrying images of deities from affiliated temples will join these processions as an expression of intercommunal reciprocity. Since the Danshui temple is one of three primary Qingshui Zushi temples in Taiwan, many smaller temples willingly participate.

What is Meant by Chinese?

Most of the examples of sacred sites and ritual circuits cited in this work are in Taiwan. But it would be a mistake to see this work as narrowly focused on Taiwan alone. As the title indicates, it is intended as a study of the religions/religiosity of the *buaren* (華人). In Chinese this term is not simply equivalent to “Chinese.” Instead, it is perhaps best translated as “ethnic Chinese” or “the Sinophile world,” in the same way we speak of the Francophone or Hispanic cultures. This is not a perfect English rendering, but in my opinion is better than the charged term “Greater China.” Chang’s text does not dwell on this issue, but it is important to mention the raging debates over “Chineseness” and the question of whether or not this implies an identification with one particular political regime, for instance the PRC, or another.

For those of us captivated by the noise and bustle of Chinese religious practice, the main point is not politics. It is instead the never-ending fascination with the religiosity inherent in all places touched in small or large degree by Chinese cultures. This short discussion has already illuminated many facets of existing popular religious practices. There are many more. Chang’s text illustrates one of the difficulties in studying popular religion in any contemporary culture—the very wealth of information is overwhelming. Even brief visits to religious sites present the scholar with so much data that it challenges the ability to make sense of it all. At the same time information from such visits is vital, not least because it allows one to challenge existing models. What Chang’s work offers is the chance to be part of this process of sense-making, to feel and taste this new universe. It is quite possible this work will perk the interest of such readers as you. And once the appetite has been whetted, the desire will recur. We can only hope for more explorations of Chinese religious practice from competent scholars such as Chang Chia-Lin.

Notes

- ¹ “5 mil. Taiwanese hold degrees from higher education institutions,” *China Post*, 13 March, 2016, <https://chinapost.nownews.com/20160313-28397>.
- ² “Most Atheist Countries 2021,” *World Population Review*, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/most-atheist-countries>; also see Jess Staufenberg, “The six countries in the world with the most ‘convinced atheists,’” *Independent*, 23 March, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/atheists-countries-list-six-world-most-convinced-a6946291.html>.
- ³ Paul Katz, “Identity Politics and the Study of Popular Religion in Postwar Taiwan,” in Paul R. Katz and Murray A. Rubinstein, eds. *Religion and the Formation of Taiwanese Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 157-180, p. 157.
- ⁴ Full Chinese address: 礁溪 宜蘭縣礁溪鄉大忠村中山路一段五十一號.
- ⁵ The Taiwan temple holds the ceremony on the (lunar) 13th of January and the 24th of June each year.
- ⁶ Book of Rites 禮記：文王世子.

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David W. Kim (ed.), *New Religious Movements in Modern Asian History: Sociocultural Alternatives* (Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Lexington Books, 2020); xix, 285 pp.; ISBN: 978-1-7936-3402-3; Hardback; US \$115.00.

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David W. Kim's edited volume *New Religious Movements in Modern Asian History: Sociocultural Alternatives* contains a "Foreword" by Eileen Barker, doyenne of new religious movement (NRM) studies, an "Introduction" by Kim, and a range of highly interesting and relevant chapters on Asian new religions. Barker and Kim emphasise distinctive Asian themes (ancestor veneration, political systems like Maoism, world peace, syncretism, multi-faith societies, anti-colonialism, and the question of what constitutes newness in the Asian context); their musings set the scene for the eleven individual contributions that focus on single, specific case studies in the main. Chapters are organised into two parts, "West, South, and Southeast Asia" and "East Asia".

The opening chapter is Lauren Drover's "The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat: A New Religious Movement Derived from Islam?" For insiders, Ahmadiyya is an Islamic reform movement started by Ghulam Ahmad (c. 1835–1908). However, the bulk of Muslims reject this claim and argue that Ahmad's incorporation of "aspects of other religions into their unique Islamic theology" (p. 22) renders Ahmadiyya a heretical sect or a completely non-Islamic new religion. Drover examines three contentious beliefs (continuous prophecy, Ahmad as a reincarnation of Jesus, and "jihad and living under a non-Islamic government" (p. 23) and argues that other Islamic groups hold similar or the same ideas. She concludes that while NRM qualities are present (charismatic leader, opportunities for female participation) Ahmadiyya is better characterised as a sect of traditional Islam. Next is Catharine Dada's "Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the Art of Living, and the Association for Human Values," which situates the charismatic leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar as a Hindu, but the Art of Living Foundation as a NRM. Dada argues that AoL's universalism, spiritual focus, and engagement with humanitarian and ecological values mark it as a new form of religion/ progressive spirituality, rather than a Hindu sect.

The third chapter is Fabio Scialpi's "The Radhasaomi Satsang: A New Religion Between Mysticism and Social Service." Scialpi discusses the founder Swami Shiv Dayal Singh (1818–1878), who was born into a Sikh family, but as a youth was taught by Tulsi Sahib, a follower of the Sant tradition. He lived in Agra, taught yoga, and after his death his followers consolidated Radhasaomi (alternative to Radhaswami), which is focused

on the oneness of God, the soul's yearning to join with God --- hence the identification of Radha with Sakti, the divine feminine. Communities were founded in India, and from the 1930s Westerners joined the movement; current estimates of membership are around two million. The next contribution, Lionel Obadia's "When New is Not-So-New: On the Meaning of 'Modern' in a New Tibetan Movement: The New Kadampa Tradition," is focused on a 1990s group which is highly controversial in Tibetan Buddhist circles. The NKT was founded in the United Kingdom in 1991 by Kelsang Gyatso, rejects the authority of the Dalai Lama, and employs fairly traditional Tibetan Buddhist techniques in different, arguably contemporary and pragmatic, fashion. Part I ends with Christopher Hartney's "*The Thánb Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển*: Translating and Understanding the Central Scripture of Caodaism," which focuses on the initial fifty-six messages of the Cao Dai new religion, that were received in the first year, 1926. Cao Dai combined spiritist traditions from French Kardecism and from Vietnam itself. The messages cover issues of ritual space, the meanings of symbols, and the nature of god, Đức Cao Đài, and include specific communications in French to Western colonial figures. Hartney argues that these messages are "a process of reinstituting a virtual and spiritual emperor God to help negotiate a colonial presence ... seeking to make Vietnam central to the emergent and unified world" (p. 128).

Part II opens with "The Filial Sectarian: Confucian Values and Popular Sects in Late Imperial China and Modern Taiwan" by Nikolas Broy, which examines the Chinese concept of filial piety (*xiao*) in the Dragon Flower Sect (which traces its genealogy to Patriarch Luo in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries). This sect is usually classified as "popular lay Buddhism" (p. 140) but Broy focuses on Confucian aspects of the teaching and practice, such as the lists of favours members must repay; for example, "to repay the kindness of one's mother and father" (p. 141), and how these obligations are enacted in ritual vowing, to persuasive effect. The next contribution is editor Kim's "The International Moral Association (IMA): A Chinese New Religious Movement in Modern Korea," which examines the Yiguando movement, which has established centres in approximately 80 countries as a result of Taiwanese missions. His focus is on the IMA, founded by Kim Buck Dang (1914–1991), a group known for their interest in the ethnic unification of Korea (a major theme in most Korean NRMs), rituals to deliver the dead from the unsaved state, aspects of Korean shamanism, and Buddhist millenarianism. The spotlight on (North) Korea continues with Emma Leverton's "The (New) Religious Dimensions of *Juche*-Kimilsungism." *Juche*, the ideology of North Korea, is a combination of the words for master and subject and is more than a reconfiguring of Marxism-Leninism. Combined with the personality cult of the ruling Kim family, Leverton argues, *Juche* becomes a religion, or at least religious.

The ninth chapter, Petra Tlcimukova's "Dislocating Soka Gakkai International," shifts attention to the controversial Japanese NRM's presence in the Czech Republic, which

was especially interesting to this reader, who was entirely unaware of the presence of Nichiren Buddhism in Eastern Europe. Jiro Sawai's "Scriptures and their Restoration: A Case Study of Tenrikyo" is a historical study of the development of sacred texts in Tenrikyo, which have been periodically revised and redacted for various reasons. Last in the volume is Leonardo Sacco's "Aum Shinrikyo: Millenarianism, Anti-Semitism, and Fundamentalism" which examines the most notorious Asian NRM to date, with the emphasis on the negative and criminal aspects of its existence. Overall, this edited book makes an important contribution to study of Asian new religions and should be of interest to scholars and students of Religious Studies generally.

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