

A Relational Approach to the Study of Korean Religions

An Overview

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There are many ways of studying religions, Korean or non-Korean. We can study each of the religions in itself, its history, its theology, its politics, its art and music. Most studies of religions, one can say, belong to this category. There exist all kinds of histories of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and other religions, each taken in itself, which then can be subdivided into ancient, medieval, and modern, depending on the particular period the author decides to concentrate on. There also exist philosophical, theological, or doctrinal studies of each religion, as there are sociological, political, and cultural studies of each. There are many studies of each of the major Korean religions from these and other perspectives. There are also comparative studies of Korean religions that compare different religions with one another at the doctrinal level, pointing out their conflicts, their similarities, their possible convergences.

There exist, however, relatively few studies of Korean religions *in their mutual relations*. How have Korean religions, mainly Buddhism, Confucianism, Catholicism, and Protestantism behaved and related to one another and with what consequences? It is well known how Buddhism prospered as the dominant religion during the Goryeo dynasty, but not many are aware of the fact that Confucianism was the political

ideology of the state. How, then, did the two treat each other? It is well known that Catholics were martyred by the Confucian state throughout the nineteenth century, but it is not known in any significant detail how some Confucian scholars tried to integrate Catholic teachings on morality into the reigning Neo-Confucian philosophy of human nature. How was this kind of Confucian assimilation of Christianity possible? Was there also a Catholic assimilation of Confucianism? It is well known that Korean Protestantism has been intolerant and exclusivist toward traditional Korean religions, but it is little known that many of the early Protestant missionaries wrestled with what we today would call an “inclusivist” approach to other religions. What, then, was the relation between Protestantism and other religions in the early twentieth century? Sheer conflict, practical accommodation, or even assimilation, or a combination of these? Confucianism is patriarchal and hierarchical and has a history of oppressing women and obstructing democracy, but is it not conceivable that Confucianism may also have insights and doctrines that can contribute precisely to the causes of women and democracy in the contemporary world, and how would Confucianism and Christianity compare in this regard?

It is this relational approach to the study of Korean religions that I am introducing in this collection of essays. This is neither a general survey of Korean religions nor a study of a particular religion in isolation. It is a historical study of how the three Korean religions, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity, thought of and treated one another in terms of three categories—conflict/exclusion, practical accommodation, and assimilation/dialogue—taking these categories in a very broad, flexible sense. The relation is approached historically, politically, sociologically, philosophically, and even theologically, depending on the nature of the relation under discussion. The need for a relational approach of this sort to the study of Korean religions should go without saying today when relations among religions are so critical to peace in society and the world. As far as I know, we do not have a comprehensive in-depth study of the relations among the three religions in Korean history.

Nor do I claim that this volume is such a comprehensive, exhaustive study of those relations. I am only too keenly aware of so much more yet to be done on the subject. I am confident, however, that this is the first major study of those relations from a variety of perspectives by a team of experts, each with a distinguished record of scholarship in his or her field, and do hope that more comprehensive studies will follow that will

also include Tonghak and other religions of Korean origin. Many readers will note the absence of any formal discussion of animism and shamanism, which it is widely recognized are pervasive of Korean religions and culture. Many recognize the presence of shamanism in Buddhism and Christianity in particular, often with a decisive impact on the character of Korean Buddhism and Korean Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant. Certainly, a more comprehensive treatment of Korean religions in relation should have included an adequate discussion of animism and shamanism. I regret that time and space did not permit inclusion of these religions in this volume.

Let me now introduce the basic concerns and arguments of each of the ten essays that follow. We begin in part I with the story of the encounter of Buddhism and Confucianism during the Goryeo period. One of the conventional assumptions accepted by both scholars and laypersons in Korea is that the Goryeo dynasty was a Buddhist state and that Buddhism dominated all areas of life during the period. The period is still remembered as the period in which Buddhism pervaded the whole of Korean culture with its spirit, as a gloriously Buddhist age, in much the same way that the European Middle Ages are sometimes looked at, rightly or wrongly, as a gloriously Catholic period. In chapter 2, "Interactions between Buddhism and Confucianism in Medieval Korea," Professor Jongmyung Kim of the Academy of Korean Studies in Seoul develops a novel and provocative thesis that demolishes this conventional view. The Goryeo dynasty (918–1392 CE) was a Confucian state, not the Buddhist state it is often described to be, although Buddhism was the most dominant religious influence; and the Buddhism that was so influential was a Buddhism transformed and degraded into the political tool of a Confucian state, a deviation from its original purity in the teachings of the Buddha.

In order to develop this claim Kim mobilizes not only historical sources from this period and existing scholarship on the subject but also his vast knowledge of the history of the relation between Confucianism and Buddhism in China, which had an impact on Korean politics as an exemplar of Confucian statecraft. The state during this period was a thoroughly Confucian state for which the Confucian classics set the paradigm of kingly rule; and while kings favored Buddhism in so many ways, such privileging was all political, that is, to use Buddhism, its beliefs, its spirituality, and its rituals to ensure the prosperity of the royal families, invoke blessings on the nation in times of foreign invasions and natural

disasters, and strengthen the Confucian ideals of kingship. Buddhism was not a state religion in the sense in which Confucianism was one during the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910), and coexisted with other religions such as Daoism, Confucianism, shamanism, geomancy, and astrology, in a multireligious society. In the process, Buddhism lost the political influence it used to enjoy during the preceding Silla period, and became Confucianized, reinterpreted in the Confucian terms of humanity or *jen*, filial piety, loyalty to the king, yin and yang, and the theory of heavenly warning, and using its doctrines to support the political aims of the state and its rulers with little regard for the Four Noble Truths and the paths of spiritual liberation they demand. This essay has significantly altered my conventional view of the relationship between the two religions during this period, highlighting the central political role of Confucianism, of which I was not fully aware, and relativizing the role of Buddhism, which I thought was the all-dominant influence on Korean culture at the time. One could say that according to Kim, the relation *between the two religions was one of practical accommodation accompanied by a Buddhist assimilation of major Confucian virtues, with no major conflicts.*

Different religions in Korea coexisted in relative peace and practical mutual accommodation both during the Three Kingdom period and during the Goryeo dynasty. With the explicit foundation of the Joseon dynasty on the ideology of Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism, however, the relation between Confucianism and Buddhism seems to change from practical accommodation to explicit confrontation. In chapter 3, “Philosophical Aspects of the Goryeo-Joseon Confucian-Buddhist Confrontation: Focusing on the Works of Jeong Dojeon (Sambong) and Hamheo Deuktong (Gihwa),” Professor A. Charles Muller of the University of Tokyo tells the fascinating story of this confrontation in some detail from historical, comparative-religious, and doctrinal perspectives. As Prof. Kim illuminated the history of accommodation between Confucianism and Buddhism in Korea with the prehistory of that relation in China, so Prof. Muller sheds light on the conflict between the two toward the end of the Goryeo dynasty and the beginning of the Joseon dynasty with the Chinese antecedents of that confrontation. As the Chinese monk, Zongmi (780–841), responded to the critique of Buddhism by Han Yu (768–824) during the Tang period, so the monk Gihwa (1376–1433) responded to the Neo-Confucian critique of Buddhism by Jeong Dojeon (1342–1398). The notable thing here is the astonishing degree to which the Korean Neo-

Confucian critique of Buddhism and the Buddhist reply to that critique repeat their Chinese antecedents.

According to Muller, there are two sides to the Korean confrontation between Buddhism and Confucianism, the sociopolitical and the philosophical. The sociopolitical side refers to the tense political situation toward the end of the Goryeo dynasty when the Confucian intellectuals and activists were increasingly alienated from the Buddhist establishment because of its pervasive religious, political, and economic corruption and ended with a call for the overthrow of Buddhism from the center of national life and the founding of a new dynasty on the explicit foundation of Neo-Confucianism. Buddhism completely lost its credibility, incurring the outrage of the political elite, a situation that explains the polemical vehemence of the Neo-Confucian critique of Buddhism even to the point of being exclusivistic. The philosophical side refers to the Confucian critique of Buddhist doctrines. Here Korean Neo-Confucians largely repeat the Chinese Neo-Confucian critique of the Song period that Buddhism is antinomian, escapist, antisocial, and nihilistic in its doctrine of emptiness, and that it neglects the duty of cultivating one's humanity by practicing the social virtues and participating in the life of this world.

After this prehistory and introduction Muller devotes the main part of his essay to the discussion of the exchange between Jeong Dojeon, the chief architect of the new dynasty who also provided the most substantial philosophical critique yet of Buddhism, and Gihwa, who was himself a disciple of Jeong Dojeon at one time and who converted to Buddhism in his later life and wrote the most thoughtful response to Jeong's and generally Neo-Confucian critique of Buddhism. Basically, Jeong's criticism, which covers every major doctrine of Buddhism, especially Seon Buddhism, is not only that Neo-Confucianism is superior to Buddhism but also that Buddhism is dangerous to society and only fit for extinction because of its antisocial, escapist, and nihilistic tendencies. In an equally thorough response Gihwa provides a point-by-point rebuttal for every criticism Jeong makes, but his central point is that that Confucian practice, which allows the killing of animals, is not consistent with its theory of humaneness and the interdependent unity of all things, which Confucianism shares with Buddhism and Daoism. What is most distinctive of Gihwa's response is his inclusivist view that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism are three different ways to the same truth, the interconnected unity of all things. Muller also goes on to reflect on the conditions for

interreligious dialogue, especially the sharing of a certain worldview without which no dialogue can proceed, something useful to keep in mind today. He singles out the conceptual pair of essence and function as such a shared worldview in the debate between Jeong and Gihwa.

As we leave the religious world of the Goryeo dynasty marked first by practical accommodation and then by conflict between Buddhism and Confucianism, and enter the world of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910), we observe different forms of relation between Christianity and Korean religions, the Confucian-Catholic relation as seen through the eyes of Catholic converts and a sympathetic Neo-Confucian intellectual in part II, and in part III the relation between Protestantism and Korean religions as seen from two Protestant perspectives, that of Protestant theologies of non-Christian religions and that of a Protestant theologian who tried to appropriate essential insights of various Korean religions into an indigenized Christian theology. We see here the rejection and exclusion of Catholicism by official Confucianism, a Confucian attempt to appropriate something of the Catholic tradition into its own philosophy of human nature, a Protestant attempt to include Korean religions in its perspective against its own exclusivist tendencies, and a creative Protestant appropriation of the substance of Korean religions. It is no longer practical mutual accommodation as during the Goryeo period but serious mutual encounter in various forms such as rejection and exclusion, tolerance and inclusion, and substantive appropriation of the other.

In chapter 4, “Catholic God and Confucian Morality: A Look at the Theology and Ethics of Korea’s First Catholics,” Professor Don Baker of the University of British Columbia provides a provocative analysis of the encounter between Neo-Confucianism and Catholicism in eighteenth-century Korea that challenges much received interpretation with original insights and enlightening backgrounds. In a three-part narrative he shows the radical nature of the break Catholic converts risked with their religious culture, describes the backgrounds that might have motivated some Neo-Confucians to embrace Catholicism, and ends with a description and analysis of three paradigmatic examples taken from among the first Korean converts with regard to what they were expecting to receive from the Catholic faith. His narrative is based on documents left behind by the martyrs and records of government interrogation.

For Baker, conversion to Catholicism meant a radical break with existing Korean religious culture. Catholicism was monotheism, and there had been no monotheism in Korean history prior to the introduction of

the Catholic faith. Most Koreans, including most Buddhists, had been polytheistic, and Neo-Confucianism, although not atheistic, did not consider God as relevant. There had been no clear concept of the human soul or life after death except some nebulous idea of the continued existence of the dead. The emphasis of the culture had been on behavior and ethics, not on beliefs and theology, and the result had been the nonexistence of any concept of religion as an organized community of faith with its own distinctive set of beliefs that would separate it from other communities. It is no wonder that there had been no urgent call for the separation of church and state in traditional Korean culture. We today do not fully appreciate the radical challenge posed by Catholicism with its clear monotheistic faith. Baker wonders, therefore, why, of all groups, some Neo-Confucians, for whom the question of God was irrelevant, found Catholicism attractive.

Baker surmises that there were two crises facing eighteenth-century Korean society that might have motivated some Neo-Confucians to turn to Catholicism. The first is the demographic crisis, the sharp decline of the population through a whole series of natural disasters, drought, famine, epidemics, and flood that caused mounting deaths and sicknesses to the entire population, which naturally turned many to religion. Coupled with this was the sense of guilt and responsibility on the part of some Confucian elite for the eruption of natural disasters: lack of virtue on the part of the rulers, according to the Confucian tradition, was the cause of natural disasters besetting a nation. The demographic crisis led to the moral crisis, the failure of the Confucian ruling elite to live up to the ideals of Confucian virtue. Is there any religion that can help with a better theory of human imperfection and a greater hope of rescue from that moral crisis? Baker insists that it is this moral crisis, not the modern political ideal of equality nor interest in Western science and technology, as some history books claim, that motivated some Neo-Confucians at this time to convert to the Catholic faith. It was a moral and religious motive, not a political or scientific one.

In order to demonstrate his thesis Baker examines three examples from the first Catholic community. In the case of Paul Yun, the first Catholic convert to be executed for not performing the Confucian ancestor veneration rite on his mother's death, it is clear from the records of government interrogation that his motive for accepting the Catholic faith, even to the point of martyrdom, was his conviction that it is more imperative to obey his divine Father in heaven and his commandments than to

obey parents and rulers on earth. It was filial piety, the main Confucian virtue, but transferred to God the Father, not his belief in the Trinity, the Incarnation, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and/or the specifically Catholic doctrines, of which no mention is made, that proved decisive. In the case of Tasan Chong Yagyong (1762–1836) (more of him in the next chapter), it was his conviction that morality needed a foundation in a personal God or Sangje, not an impersonal principle like *li* as taught by Neo-Confucianism, something he found in Matteo Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, not the specifically Catholic doctrines, that moved him to the Catholic faith, but which was also decisive in his renouncing that faith once he learned that Catholics were not allowed to perform ancestor veneration rites so central to Confucian morality. He accepted Catholicism as a means to Confucian morality and could easily renounce it when it was found to contradict that morality. In the case of his own brother, Chong Yakchong, however, it was the total Catholic faith from the Trinity and Incarnation to the death and resurrection of Jesus and the eternal life it promised that he accepted and accepted to the point of renouncing his own life through martyrdom. His faith was a truly religious faith, not merely a means to morality as in the case of his brother.

Tasan Chong Yagyong, perhaps the most important Korean thinker of the nineteenth century, is the best exemplification of the dialogue of Neo-Confucianism and Catholicism at the philosophical level. Baker already indicated something of this. In chapter 5, "On the Family Resemblance of Philosophical Paradigm between Tasan's Thought and Matteo Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi* [*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*]," Professor Young-bae Song of Seoul National University provides a full philosophical discussion of this dialogue. He first presents some of the essentials of Ricci's critique of Neo-Confucianism, and then shows how Tasan uses that critique to modify and transform the existing Neo-Confucianism of his time, providing a significant synthesis of East and West, of Confucianism and Catholicism, without, however, accepting Catholicism in its totality, a paradigmatic example of a Confucian assimilation of some aspects of Catholicism.

On the basis of an Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), the Jesuit missionary, provided a critique of contemporary Neo-Confucianism on the issues of human nature, moral life, and the nature of ultimate reality. Human beings are endowed with an intellect and a free will, which distinguishes human beings from animals who

only follow their pre-given instincts; and it is the possession of the free will that makes moral life, responsibility, the imputation of good and evil, possible for human beings. Human goodness or moral perfection is not a matter of an inherited *qi* but one of moral practice in which one struggles to cultivate virtue by means of consistent free choices against the animal tendencies of human nature. The Neo-Confucian ultimate, *Taiji* or *Li*, cannot be truly ultimate because they are at best accidents and formal causes, not individual substances that alone can act and cause other things. More ultimate is the personal, intelligent, and spiritual being, *Sangje* or Lord of Heaven, who alone can be the efficient and final cause of the universe.

Tasan accepts this critique of Neo-Confucianism by Ricci. He too rejects Zhu Xi's attribution of the same original nature or *li* to all beings, human and nonhuman, with *qi* as the only differentiating principle. It is not true that all beings possess the same nature, an idea Tasan attributes to a Buddhist influence, and one of the fundamental differences is between nonintellectual and intellectual beings. Human beings as intellectual beings have the capacity to reason and choose between good and evil, even against animal desires, which nonintellectual creatures do not. Thus, moral life belongs only to human beings, not to all beings as Neo-Confucianism claims. The source of moral evil is not the body but the mind and its free choice. Tasan clearly rejects the Neo-Confucian determinism of *qi*. Furthermore, moral perfection is not the result of theoretical meditation on *li* or *tao* but that of moral practice strenuously and consistently carried out throughout one's life. Likewise, for the same reasons as given by Ricci, Tasan argues that *taiji* or *li*, both accidents and impersonal, cannot be the ultimate efficient and final cause of the universe, its movement, its moral order, its teleology; only an intelligent, personal being, who "watches over us like the sun," from whom we cannot hide anything and who rewards the good and punishes the evil, can be such a cause.

Korean Protestantism has long been fundamentalist and exclusivist toward other religions, but it has not always been so, argues Professor Sung-Deuk Oak of the University of California–Los Angeles, who, in chapter 6, "A Genealogy of Protestant Theologies of Religions in Korea, 1876–1910: Protestantism as a Religion of Civilization and Fulfillment," traces the early history of Protestant attitudes toward Korean religions and advocates retrieving some of these early discussions today to counteract the rather dogmatic exclusion of Korean religions from the possibility of salvation still prevailing in much of Korean Protestantism. These discussions between 1880 and 1910 reveal an open-minded evangelicalism that

is both “inclusive” of other religions as stages toward Christianity as their “fulfillment” and eager to see points of contact with and even to learn from them. In a theologically fascinating and historically informative documentary survey Oak presents the internal discussions of four different groups, each with an impact on the attitudes of Korean Protestants toward Korean religions. They are the theologies of religions produced by the late nineteenth-century North American scholars that formed the theological background of the early American missionaries on Korean religions, the theological discussions by Western Protestant missionaries in China during the nineteenth century whose Chinese texts were available to educated Korean Christians, the works by North American missionaries themselves based on their experience of Korean religions, and finally the works produced by Korean Protestant intellectuals under the impact of all of these.

The North American contribution to the theology of religion is represented by five authors, James Freeman Clarke, William E. Griffis, Frank Field Ellinwood, George M. Grant, and Samuel H. Kellogg, authors of books on comparative religion reflecting the tension between the progressive view of non-Christian religions as not false but incomplete to be fulfilled by Christianity (“fulfillment theory”) and the conservative view that regards them as false religions, as degradations from primitive monotheism in need of salvation through Christianity (“degradation theory”). The Chinese contribution is presented on the basis of works by John L. Nevius, William A. P. Martin, and the two Shanghai missionary conferences of 1877 and 1890, again reflecting the tension of the open-minded accommodation of Confucianism and ancestor veneration on the model of Matteo Ricci (minority) and the conservative condemnation of ancestor veneration and other elements of Asian religions as idolatry (majority). The Korean missionary contribution focuses on the works of missionaries themselves such as G. Heber Jones, George O Engel, and Horace G. Underwood, and the conversion of some missionaries to the theory that healing miracles and demon-possession did not stop with early Christianity but still continued, as testify the experience of Korean Christians. These Korean missionaries likewise show a tension between the theory of degradation and that of fulfillment. Finally, the story of how these three influences were integrated by the early Korean Protestant leaders is told through an analysis of the works by Choe Pyeongheon, Hong Chonghu, and Kil Seonju. These were highly educated intellectuals who were steeped in the classics of Confucianism and up-to-date on

the theologies of religions promoted by the missionaries in China, and argued that Christians and Confucians worship the same God although Confucianism still needs fulfillment by Christianity. As a theologian with a special interest in the contemporary discussion of various theologies of religions, I have found this chapter especially theologically fascinating and informative with regard to the early history of Korean Protestantism, a history crying out to be told again today.

Ryu Yongmo (1890–1981), perhaps the most original thinker of Korean Protestantism and the greatest synthesizer of Confucianism, Buddhism, and shamanism on the basis of Christianity, grew up in the period when Korean Protestantism was still open to the voices of greater openness and theological accommodation of Korean religions. In chapter 7, “What Can Christianity Learn from Korean Religions? The Case of Ryu Yongmo,” Professor Young-Ho Chun of Saint Paul School of Theology tells the fascinating story of how at least one Korean Protestant theologian grappled with the challenges of traditional religions and tried to push the fulfillment theory as far as it could go by integrating many of the essential elements of traditional religiosity into a reconstruction of the Christian faith.

Committed to the idea of affirming and learning from whatever is good and true in other religions, Ryu provides a thoroughgoing reconstruction of the Christian faith by reformulating and integrating its traditional content into the terms and perspectives of Confucianism, Buddhism, and shamanism. According to Chun, his conversion to Christianity did not entail the rejection of other religions; it was but part of the journey of “awakening” to the most ultimate and comprehensive truth to which other religions also had an important contribution to make in a process of mutual learning and mutual transformation. Ryu’s theology is the result of this process of learning and transformation, as Chun illustrates it in terms of certain basic concepts taken from Confucianism, Buddhism, and shamanism, such as *eol* (얼, indigenous Korean term, of shamanistic origin), *seong* (性, “nature” in Neo-Confucianism), *bulseong* (佛性, Buddha nature), and filial piety (chief Confucian virtue), which Ryu employs as the chief hermeneutic categories of his theological reconstruction. Ryu identifies God with *seong*; *eol* or spirit is the presence of God in nature and human life, the invisible but real core of living things; and *bulseong* is the divine nature immanent in all things to be awakened by all *eols* in their spiritual journey to maturity. With no use for the traditional incarnational Christology of the hypostatic union, Ryu considers

Jesus as the being who was thoroughly and only human in whom the *eol* of God was fully realized, especially through his self-sacrifice on the cross to the will of the Father, achieving sagehood and becoming a *gunja* [君子] in Confucian terms, a paradigmatic example of filial piety for all to follow. Chun concludes with theological reflections on the tension between the orthodox Christian faith and Ryu's reconstruction.

Part IV, the last section, brings Confucianism and Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) together in their encounter with the challenges of the modern world, especially, feminism, democracy, and globalization. In chapter 8, "Resurgence of *Asian Values*: Confucian Comeback and Its Embodiment in Christianity," Professor Namsoon Kang of Texas Christian University conducts a comparative analysis and critical evaluation of the concept of the family, regarded as the core of Asian values, in Confucianism and Christianity from the feminist perspective, and examines the historical impact of misguided Confucian familism on Korean society as a whole and on Christianity in particular.

For Kang, so much of the talk about "Asian values" is merely a reversion of Said's "Orientalism" now only used to put in a positive light exactly those Asian values that used to be dismissed as retrogressive with all the problems of Orientalism. The discourse on Asian values is dangerous for several reasons: it overlooks both the vices of the so-called Asian communitarianism with its hierarchy and patriarchy and the virtues of Western ethical individualism, masks the root cause of women's oppression by idealizing the patriarchal family structure, and justifies and perpetuates the hierarchical and gender inequalities of inherited social status. She goes on to describe the classical ideal of the family according to Confucian classics as centered on filial piety and its patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal emphasis, and contrasts it with a variety of Christian views on the family, advocating what she calls "critical familism" as constructed by contemporary Christian feminists centered on doing the will of God, justice, and mutual care. The Confucian view reduces human beings to their role in the family and subjects women to men in so many oppressive ways, while the Christian view relativizes the family in light of God's will and justifies ethically responsible individualism, legitimizing the possibility of human rights, which Confucianism has trouble accepting. Kang goes on to show how Confucian familism has also contaminated the Korean Christian view of the family and the institutional life of the churches with endemic patriarchy, producing a "Confucianized" Christianity with all the problems of Confucian familism.

While Kang's perspective on Confucian familism is clearly negative and critical, in chapter 9, "Korean Confucianism and Women's Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century," Professor Un-sunn Lee of Sejong University, Seoul, presents an opposite, positive view of the Confucian view of the family and the role of women in the contemporary world where the family and civic life in general seem to be collapsing, and does so by retrieving certain—often neglected—aspects of classical Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism. I want to note here that Professor Kang and Professor Lee were not explicitly responding to each other's essay, yet they do have a history of arguing and dialoguing with each other in Korean journals as representatives of two very contrasting perspectives on the relation between Confucianism and feminism. These essays were published elsewhere as remarked on in the Acknowledgments, and are being reprinted here, with some revisions, with their consent to my invitation. I am delighted to include both essays next to each other because Lee also seeks, as does Kang, to address the same issue, the Confucian potential for feminism, although from an opposite point of view. If Kang's ultimate concern is the protection of justice and human rights, Lee's concern is the restoration of the family and proper human relationships in the public realm when both are radically challenged today. Lee is fully aware of the fact that Confucianism did contribute to the repression of women but quite hopeful that there are still Confucian resources that can help us in promoting women's subjectivity and community life. It is precisely the purpose of her essay to explore and retrieve them.

Lee argues that it has been central to Confucianism to promote the public realm in which we live together and the common good and condemn individualism, the seeking of private, personal interests, an important aspect to be revived in the contemporary world where self-interest and individualistically conceived subjectivity have been the ruling ideology to the collapse of authentic public life or life with others and its reduction to the Hobbesian "war of all against all." In this context it is one-sided to regard Korean Confucian women's lives, especially during the Joseon dynasty, as passive, lowly, and miserable, a misunderstanding derived from the failure to appreciate the religious aspect of Confucianism, which is to sanctify all lives without distinction between private and public, through the virtue of sagehood, the way to authentic humanity or *jen*, which is to "become one with all things in the universe" through compassion and care. The traditional dedication of women to their role of giving birth to and taking care of lives must be understood precisely as a

Confucian way of sanctifying all lives by ritualizing and civilizing them. There is also plenty of evidence that Korean women took this religious aspect seriously and positively with the full realization of their equality with men in the pursuit of sagehood and authentic humanity, which lies in the cultivation of self through the service of others, not in the pursuit of self-interested subjectivity. Korean women's dedication to their role as mother, daughter, and wife was not the source of their oppression as is often argued but the transcendent, religious source that empowered them to cope with the difficulties of life with faith and hope, seeing the ultimate not in heaven (as does Christianity) or in the inward self (as does Buddhism) but in the concrete *other* before them, their children, ancestors, husbands, guests, and neighbors in need of care. Lee illustrates this aspect of Confucianism and Korean Confucian women's experience with examples from classical Confucianism, Korean Neo-Confucianism, and Korean women's lives, both from the Joseon and contemporary periods, and Hannah Arendt.

We now move on to another contemporary topic, democracy. How have Confucianism and Christianity been doing with regard to democracy in Korea? Have they been progressive or retrogressive forces? In chapter 10, "Confucianism at a Crossroads: Confucianism and Democracy in Korea," Professor Young-chan Ro of George Mason University reviews the Confucian tradition in light of the democratic challenges facing Korea, especially its failure to promote democratic institutions, and tries to retrieve its classical humanism, especially its concern for the well-being of the people as the primary norm of all politics, as moral resources for the integrity of democracy now under great tension and strain.

Ro readily admits that Confucianism did not make a positive contribution to the democratization of Korea even though it may have contributed to the economic prosperity of the nation as it did in Singapore, Taiwan, and China with its emphasis on hard work, discipline, loyalty to the nation, and the promotion of family values. He attributes the introduction of democracy to Korea to Western culture and Christianity, the two sources responsible for the modernization of Korea from the end of the Joseon dynasty. This does not mean that Confucianism did not have some of the democratic values. Confucianism was anthropocentric or humanistic, believed in the equality of all human beings in their potential to become sages, and regarded the mind of the people as the mind of heaven. Why, then, wonders Ro, did Confucianism not develop democracy while Western culture did?

According to Ro, Confucianism had the democratic “ideology” that regards the people as the “foundation” of all government (*minbonjuui/minbenzhuyi*, 民本主義), but it could not develop the necessary democratic “institution” in the sense of the government that is at once “of” the people, “by” the people, and “for” the people because of its optimistic view of human nature. It considered every human being capable of being a sage, requiring only proper “learning” and “cultivation,” not political institutionalization. It also regarded the government “for” the people as the best form of government to be secured by the properly educated and cultivated kings; its ideal was sage-cracy, not demo-cracy. Lacking a doctrine of “original sin,” Confucianism trusted the system of education and cultivation, especially for rulers, which it did extensively develop, to make up for any failures of the ruling class. Even dictatorship was acceptable as long as it was by a virtuous and enlightened ruler. Believing in human perfectibility, it failed to develop institutions of checks and balances that would prevent human beings from falling into evil and corruption. Ro attributes this failure to the predominance of the Mencian line in the tradition to the neglect of the realistic insights of Xunzi (298–238 BCE). It is time today, for Ro, that serious Confucian scholars should study ways of retrieving and institutionalizing Xunzi’s idea of “propriety” (*ye/li*, 禮) and contribute to the creation of a uniquely Korean form of the democratic system.

While Professor Ro discusses Korean Confucianism at a crossroads in the face of the institutional challenges of democracy, Professor Anselm Kyongsuk Min of Claremont Graduate University discusses Korean Christianity, both Catholicism and Protestantism, now facing a crossroads of its own, in the last chapter, chapter 11, “Between Tradition and Globalization: Korean Christianity at a Crossroads.” Contemporary Korean Christianity confronts the daunting task of renewing and defining itself in the double contexts of tradition and globalization. It has to somehow come to terms with the Korean religious and cultural tradition, a problem that usually goes by the name of indigenization, so as to consider itself authentically Korean, and it has to respond, as do all other Korean religions, to the impossibly complicated challenges of globalization now engulfing the whole of Korean society with the force of a hurricane in order to fulfill its mission in contemporary Korea.

Min first presents the relation of tension between Christianity and other religions in Korea in its historical context while also calling attention to a universally neglected phenomenon: Korean Christians already

embodying much of Korean religions in their mentality and behavior and this de facto indigenization of Christianity already operative in them, which requires theological reflection prior to all the talk about interreligious dialogue and mutual appropriation among religions at the explicit conceptual and practical level. Min goes on to describe the essential challenges of globalization, which he considers to be *the* context of all contexts for *all* major human endeavors. He ends with a critical analysis of a debilitating problem facing Korean Protestantism and Korean Catholicism, individualist fragmentation and clerical authoritarianism, respectively, and with a suggestion for a three-step methodology of indigenizing Christianity precisely in the contemporary context of the globalizing world. He argues that the indigenizing retrieval of ancient sources, whether Buddhist, Confucian, shamanist, or Christian, requires a hermeneutic of suspicion in terms of an ideology critique, a social-scientific analysis of the contemporary context, and a political theory that mediates between the ancient world and the contemporary context. Without these steps, retrieval runs the danger of becoming irrelevant antiquarianism, a repressive ideology, or a confusing mix of the two. He concludes with former president Kim Dae Jung's approach to updating the Confucian ideas of loyalty to the king and filial piety as a good illustration of this method.