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**THE NEW RELIGIONS OF KOREA: A PRELIMINARY INTERPRETATION**

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**Understanding New Religions**

The study of religion is a delicate process because it touches on one of the most sensitive and intimate areas of human life. Therefore in order to avoid misunderstanding it is necessary at the outset to clarify my approach. There are at least three kinds of approaches to new religions: 1) by advocates of the new religions ; 2) by critics of the new religions ; and 3) by scholars of various fields. Advocates of the new religions, of course, are existentially committed to their respective faiths, and usually are eager to persuade others to join their groups. Critics of the new religions, especially members of the older religions, are committed to their own faiths, and are eager to criticize the new religions and dissuade people from joining these groups. Scholars attempt to interpret new religions in universal categories. My own approach as a scholar of religion differs from the other two approaches, since I intend neither to advocate nor to criticize new religions. Rather, my purpose is to understand them.

To understand a religious movement is neither to be for nor against it, but to analyze it in terms of human history and culture.

1I want to make special acknowledgment to two persons and institutions for making my research in Korea possible: Dr. Edward R. Wright,Director of the Korean-American Educational Commission,and Dr. David K. Suh, Director of the International Summer School in Asian Studies, Ewha Womans University. I am also grateful to members and staff of several religious groups,without whose help this study would not have been possible. Some of the ideas in this paper have been formed in conversation with a number of American and Korean colleagues.

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Let me lay down here briefly some of the guiding principles of this academic study of religion. The academic study of religion is dis-tinguished by its interpretation of religion in universal categories- In this light, religion is viewed as a generic and integral part of human culture. Religion is constituted by symbolic systems through which man gains a sense of orientation in the world,a sense of time and place which he celebrates as a world of meaning. The peculiar content of religion is relative to the culture in which it appears, but each religious tradition possesses an integral unity. To understand the meaning of religious phenomena,we study their historical development, internal dynamics, and interaction with other cultural developments.

**New Religions in Japan and Korea**

My interest in new religions first arose out of my study of Japanese religion, for in Japan there is an amazing contrast between the older established traditions and a number of dynamic newer move- ments. For example,in the Kyoto-Nara area,the heart of classical Japan, shrines and temples are preserved mainly as museums and the visitors are mainly tourists. A mere thirty miles away from Nara is the city of Tenri, the very lively Mecca of the new religion known as Tenrikyo. The pilgrims who visit Tenri are overflowing with enthusiasm, and Tenri is bustling with worship activities and building programs. For the past five years I have been studying the many new Japanese religions and making comparisons with similar movements in other geographical areas, such as in the South Pacific and among American Indians. My purpose in Korea is to compare and contrast new religions here, in order to understand both contemporary Korea and more generally the problem of religious change.

In Korea,too, it is easy to find remarkable contrasts between [page 9] old and new religious traditions. For example, a few days after I landed in Seoul the Confucian ceremonies for the late Yi prince were held at Chongmyo (the royal ancestral shrine). The buildings, costumes, processions, music,and rites were quite impressive,and yet it was obvious that they were being preserved as museum pieces. As one observer commented to me, there were more foreigners in attendance than Koreans. By contrast, in the Seoul area there are a number of new religious movements that have exhibited an amazing vitality. The new religion called Chondogwan (or the Evangelical Church),2 founded in 1957 by Pak Tae-son, is claimed to have close to a million members. It has built three “Christian towns,” two close to Seoul and one in Pusan, each with thousands of residents. This is just one example; there are many vital new religions in contemporary Korea.

In both Japan and Korea we see a sharp contrast between some traditions that are preserved formally, almost as museum pieces, and other traditions which are blooming with vitality. This contrast provokes a number of questions about religious change. How is it that some religious traditions disappear or become fossilized at the same time that others emerge and prosper? What are the religious and social conditions that tend to foster the appearance of new religions Is there a common phenomenon of “new religious movements” that we can compare and contrast between several countries And generally what is the significance of these new religions My study is not yet completed, but I will attempt some tentative answers to these questions, trying to place the new Korean religions within the larger context of new religious movements in general.

On the basis of my earlier work, 1 identify new religious movements in terms of four interrelated features. New religious movements:

2 Also called Pak Changnokyo,The Religion of Elder Pak, or the Olive Tree Move-ment.

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1) presuppose a prior or established or classical tradition, 2) involving a radical break therefrom (not just an inner critique or reform), 3) whose thrust is toward renewal or revitalization, 4) which results in a significantly new reorganization (or Gestalt). This definition has been discussed in other articles, and will not be defended here.3 Rather,I would like to introduce an interpretive framework for analyzing the emergence and nature of such new religious movements. My direct work on the new Japanese religions and comparative analysis of similar movements has resulted in the following interpretive framework, which is given here in outline form.

**An Interpretive Framework for New Religious Movements**

I. *Background*

The notion of new religious movements presupposes a prior tradition (classical or established religious tradition), and significant break therefrom,not just an inner criticism or reform.

II. *Preconditions ana T iming*

New religious movements arise out of a combination of factors:

a) when the religious tradition reaches a condition of fossili- zation or stagnation ;

b) and when non-religious (social,economic, and political) factors reach a condition of crisis, disclosing a lack of confidence in the religious tradition,such that

c) neither the established religious tradition nor an inner reform is able to speak to the critical and existential situation of the people.

III. *Content*

The content of a new religious movement is the result of the

3 See the author’s “The Interpretation of the ‘New Religions’of Japan as Historical Phenomena,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XXXVII,No. 3 (September 1969), 237-48.

[page11] interaction of several variables:

a) the prior religious tradition as a kind of religious watershed ;

b) the experience of the founder and/or leader in selecting from,modifying, criticizing, or innovating on that water-shed ;

c) the force of non-religious factors for placing emphasis on contemporary issues.

IV. *Organization*

Organization of a new religious movement is dependent on the interaction of:

a) revelation or insight of the founder or leader;

b) organizing principle of the founder/leader and/or a sub-sequent disciple or “organizer” who institutionalizes the founding revelation or insight;

c) The “channeling” effect of non-religious factors-6

**The Emergence and Nature of New Korean Religions**

This outline forms the basis of my analysis of the emergence and nature of Korean new religions.

I. *Background (Prior Religious Tradition)*

The Korean religious tradition is difficult to analyze, because it is both diffuse and pluralistic. Even before the introduction of high Chinese culture there seem to have been two major avenues for religious expression. On the one hand was the cosmic religion venerating the sacredness of the universe typical of an agricultural society, with emphasis on family and village patterns of worsnip. This religious life was closely related to the seasonal rhythms of vegetation and the

4 For more complete treatment of this interpretive framework, see my “The Inter-pretation of the ‘New Religions,of Japan as New Religious Movements,” in Religious Ferment in Asia, edited by Robert J. Miller. Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas,forthcoming.

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human cycle of life and death. In broader terms, the sacred origin of Korea was handed down through the legend of Tangun as the first king. On the other hand was the special religious leader, mudang, often translated as shaman or shamaness, and the colorful religious ceremony kut performed by the mudang. In brief, the mudang was a professional medium between man and the sacred powers of the universe, and the kut was an occasion when men were able to celebrate this power and draw upon it for special blessing, such as healing. These two avenues of religion, cosmic religion and the mudang complex,were diffuse in that they tended to rely upon the existing institutions such as family and village. They did not form complex ecclesiastical institutions with scriptures, priesthood,doctrine, etc.

The advent of “high” or literate Chinese culture introduced to Korea not only diffuse Chinese religious practices, but also the three Chinese traditions of Taoism, Confucianism, and imported Buddhism. Taoism expanded and refined the Korean cosmic religion without ever becoming an institutionalized religion. Confucianism and Buddhism were the major institutionalized religions, and they competed for the patronage of the state. Buddhism provided a rationale for the state and a high personal ideal, but also became mixed with indigenous folk beliefs. However, by the early Yi Dynasty, Confucianism won over Buddhism, and Buddhism was forced into retreat in the mountains. Confucianism became the major religious force in the Yi dynasty, providing the rationale for individual, family, and state existence. (Some people prefer to see Confucianism as an ethical or political system, but in this case I think it can be called a religious system, since it provided an almost total understanding of the world and almost total pattern of behavior.)

All these religious elements mixed with one another to form a total worldview for the Korean people. This is the traditional religious system which forms the background for the development of new [page 13] religious movements.

II. *Preconditions and Timing*

The preconditions and timing of the new religious movements are determined by those internal and external factors which tended to undermine the traaitional religious system in the late Yi dynasty. The internal factors are the tendencies for the Korean religious tradition to become fossilized, while the external factors refer mainly to political intervention of foreign powers.

From time to time every religious tradition tends to become formalized and needs renewal. When that renewal is not forthcoming from within the tradition, it occurs outside the tradition. In other words, this cycle of normalization and renewal is not limited to Korea, but occurs in many traditions. The late. Yi dynasty may be seen as a period of formalization and renewal. In the late Yi Dynasty the most obvious instance of such formalism is the Confucian system. Historians have noted the high degree of formalism in late Yi Confucianism : excessive concern for ritual detail ; emphasis on conformity to orthodoxy rather than creative thinking ; factional strife ; the gaining of yangban status through family and financial considerations rather than through merit and learning; exclusion of talented men without the right familial and financial connections ; oppression of women on a formal basis. There was no effective movement of reform and re- newal witnin Korean Confucianism. Buddhism was also in a weak position. Its long exclusion from the capital and confinement in the mountains made it rather ineffective in meeting the spiritual crisis. At the time Buddhism did not have a grassroots organization that would have made possible a large-scale renewal movement. The diffuse traditions of cosmic religion and shamanism (and we might include Taoism, too) existed and continue in abbreviated form to this day, but increasingly the fabric of traditional society became [page 14] disoriented.

During the Japanese and Manchurian invasions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the country was laid waste and great social upheaval resulted. The government, hard pressed for money, began to sell official ranks for money or grain ; the holding of rank entitled one to yangban status, and made the nonworking class even more swollen. Increasingly, financial wealth was more powerful than the traditional social status,and there was greater economic movement and social mobility than in the earlier class system. Private ownership of land became widespread. Also, due to the invasion of foreign forces, the government for the first time enlisted lower social classes into the army. This social instability, provoked partly by internal formalism, partly by external intervention, heightened during the latter part of the Yi Dynasty. Yet the Confucian establishment did not adequately reform, nor did it respond to popular movements. And because these popular needs were not met within the main established traditions, people came to seek solutions in other ways. As one Korean historian has put it, “By the middle of the eighteenth century, after centuries of patience and submission, the people came to long openly for a certain transcendental assurance for spiritual salvation beyond that world of present reality as well as for social freedom here and now”5 In short, the conditions and time were ripe for the appearance of new religious movements.

III. *Content*

Much of the content of new religious movements is actually composed of the older elements from the background tradition; the “newness” of the new religions is found not so much in the religious content as in the organization of old elements into a new form. The

5 Wanne J. Joe, *Traditional Korea: A Cultural History*, Seoul: ChungAng University Press, 1972,p. 409.

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older elements found in the new religions are standard features in the Korean tradition. For example,most of the new religions emphasize: natural affinity with the cosmos as a sacred entity; a close bond between religious salvation and national identity; orientation of the group around a semi-divine or charismatic leader; techniques of healing and divining ; Confucianistic ethical codes ; Buddhistic rituals and images ; Taoistic (and Neo-Confucian) forms of geomancy. To take just one example—natural affinity with the cosmos—a basic teaching of the pioneer new religion Chondogyo is the unity of God and man.

In other words, the traditional worldview was a kind of water-shed from which flowed various new religious movements. The particular content of a specific movement depended a great deal on the inspiration of the founder and how his movement became organized. Most groups synthesized their own religious system out of the many elements of this watershed,but some founders emphasized one set of elements rather than another. Some groups center on the cosmic power of pure water and natural healing, while other groups focus on Confucian etnical teaching ; another tendency is Buddhist groups, especially Won Buddhism.

Non-religious factors also had a way of directing attention to some elements. I think that the political instability of Korea in the last few centuries has helped place the focus of most new religions on the religiously based national identity of Korea. These new religions see themselves as re-establishing the Korean identity on the basis of a Korean savior or leader, with the Korean language and the Korean country as the center of salvation. Many of the groups profess a universal salvation, but on the basis of a Korea-centered foundation.

IV. *Organization*

The reorganization of earlier elements into new socio-religious [page 16] forms is one of the most distinctive characteristics of new religious movements. In most cases the reorganization takes place through the dramatic, and sometimes successive,inspiration or revelation of the founder or foundress. The founder’s inspiration may specify himself (or herself) as the divine or semi-divine foundation of the new world. At any rate it lifts out of the earlier tradition those elements which are to bring about the new religious orientation. For example,Chondo-gyo rejected the Confucian establishment, but in turn proposed its humanistic reinterpretation of Confucian values that linked equality among men with the unity of God and man. The founding inspirations such as this example from Chondogyo usually state the ideal for renewing the religious tradition.

In almost every country and age there are self-proclaimed reli-gious leaders, but many of them fail to attract a following large enough to develop their ideal message into a religious program. To be successful a founder,often with the aid of a disciple-organizer, must institutionalize the founding revelation. As the following becomes sizeable,the founding event is canonized,usually in the form of a scripture. Gradually other marks of institutionalization appear—the ecclesiastical group, the lines of religious ministry, a recognized liturgy, and organized attempts to gain additional members. Some typical features of organization in new Korean religious are: central importance of the founder, both in his lifetime and after his death; the use of distinctive symbols,often revealed to the founder; conception of the religious group as a kind of larger family with the founder as a divine ancestor ; frequent passing of the religious leadership hereditarily, or to the primary disciple; doctrinal variations on the unity between Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism ; ethical codes of Confucian origin ; liturgies combining indigenous practices with chanting and veneration of images more after the fashion of Bud-dhism. [page17]

Non-religious factors have a way of influencing the organization of new religious movements. For example, just as political instability tended to focus the content of these movements on the religious character of national identity,it also tended to channel these movements into political forces. It might also be noted that after Korea’s liberation from Japanese rule, and especially after the Korean War, Chondogyo has been less explicitly political. In the past two decades probably the most decisive non-religious factor has been the all-out thrust for industrialization, and a number of new religions have become closely linked to the development of commerce and industry.

**Korean New Religions: Several Examples**

This interpretive framework is still tentative,but its intention is to help us understand the general phenomenon of new Korean religions as we continue to study the many individual groups. These may be dated from as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, and continue into the present,with new appearances likely. There are many small and several rather large new religions, with the total membership of all these groups running into the millions.

In the early eighteenth century a popular book of prophecy forecast the coming of a new dynasty and a kind of paradise on earth that was associated with the former capital site at Mount Kyeryong. This prophecy was an indication of widespread disappointment with the established order, especially Confucianism,and was eagerly accepted by the common people who were looking for some means of renewal. Later this prophecy was taken more literally,and the Kye-ryong valley has become a haven for many new religious movements, At present Kyeryong is a kind of living museum of traditional Korean religious beliefs and practices in contemporary dress.

The first concrete expression of religions renewal was Chondo- [page 18] gyo, founded in the mid-nineteenth century,and subsequently the model for some later groups. At this time the fate of Korea was quite grim, and confidence in the Confucian order was at a low ebb. Some Koreans had already begun to look to Western learning and Christian teachings,by way of China, for the solution to Korea’s problems. However, the founder of Chondogyo posited as an indigenous solution what he called Tonghak, or Eastern Learning, the first name of Chondogyo. An able man who had been excluded from the yangban class,the founder of Tonghak had already rejected the Confucian establishment when he received a revelation from Heaven to found a new religion. The major tenet of the new faith was that man and Heaven were identical ; on the earthly plane this meant the equality of all men. The new faith forged a new set of doctrines out of the old Confucian teachings, making an explicit system out of the implicitly syncretistic worldview of the late Yi dynasty. This breakdown of class lines presented a challenge to the Confucian-dominated class society. Furthermore, the founder felt obliged to lead his country into the Utopian world of equality, and trained his followers in both religious and military practice.

The Tonghak teaching gained a rather wide following, and the government not only suppressed the movement but also executed the founder. Nevertheless, the next leader strengthened the doctrine and ecclesiastical organization, and it became even more highly involved in Korean nationalism. Factionalism was already a problem within the Tonghak movement in the military campaigns (which some describe as rebellion, some as revolution). At this time the third leader officially renamed the movement Chondogyo, or Teaching of the Heavenly Way. Later, during the Japanese regime,the main Chondogyo body was instrumental in opposing the Japanese,especially in the 1919 Independence Movement. Chondogyo leadership suffered after this time, and the partition of the country after liberation. [page 19] particularly after the Korean War, hurt Chondogyo, main membership strength of which was in the north. Today Chondogyo is a highly organized, intellectually sophisticated movement with headquarters in Seoul. (There are also more conservative expressions of Tonghak and Chondogyo, especially in the Kyeryong area.) Chondo-gyo was the major pioneer of new religious movements, and by now has practically achieved the status of an established religion.

Won Pulgyo, or Won Buddhism, was founded in 1916 by the son of a farmer, but did not emerge directly from Buddhism. The founder, known as the venerable Sotesan, received his inspiration after reflection and meditation on the meaning of life. After his enlightenment, which resolved all his questions, he studied more closely the teachings of various religions, and came to identify his enlightenment and message most closely with Buddha and Buddhism. However, he was very critical of traditional Buddhism,which had been locked up in the mountains. Traditional Buddhism was practiced by and for Buddhist monks, and was unrelated to the daily life of the common people. The founder was equally critical of the materialism and selfishness of the people. He advocated social reform for women’s rights and better educational opportunities. Won Buddhism emphasizes the perfection of the circle (or won), which is the universal Buddha-nature, preferring to worship the Buddha-mind rather than the literal Buddha image. Moral training is coupled with this spiritual ideal, and it is emphasized that material civilization should be controlled by spiritual civilization. The founder himself began his movement by organizing his first disciples into cooperative ventures for improving farm lands and for mutual savings. But he insisted that such physical and moral training was integrally related to Buddhist spirituality. Gradually Won Buddhism was able to develop extensive agricultural and industrial production,and its interest in education led it to found a number of lower schools and also a modern univer- [page20] sity.

Won Buddhism stands as a separate religious organization, as borne out by its inner structure and worship patterns. The organiza-tion claims that there is no qualitative difference between the full- time celibate devotees and lay people ; nor is there a special difference between men and women. Regular weekly worship services are held with a congregational-style ceremony. There are numerous branches in Korea,with a total membership of over 600,000 and a large number of overseas branches have been started.6

There are two highly active new religions of Christian origin: one, Chondogwan, or the Evangelical Church; the other, the Tongil-gyo,or Unification Family. In some respects these two movements are dissimilar,and are actually keen competitors with each other, but in terms of new religious movements they present some striking similarities. Both groups originated in the post-war era,are derived from Christianity,and are oriented around leaders who are similar to new Christ figures.

Pak Tae-son, the founder of the Evangelical Church, was active in the Presbyterian Church, but by the mid-1950s he had developed his own charismatic abilities and teachings to the extent that the Presbyterians labeled him a heretic. Nevertheless,despite opposition from established Christian groups and several lengthy periods of imprisonment by the government, in about two decades his group’s membership has reached about 700,000. Pak’s inspiration to found a new religion came from his vision in which he received the blood of Jesus and the ability to transmit the power of the blood of Jesus. Through a special rite of “laying on of hands” he can transmit the blood of Jesus directly to people,and thereby assure them of for-

6 It is diffcult to verify membership numbers; the figures used in this paper are taken from the 1972 publication by the Ministry of Culture and Information, Korean Religions.

[page 21] giveness. In another rite, he is able to change ordinary water to holy water, or the blood of Jesus, which the believers then use to purify themselves from sin. The Evangelical Church is characterized by highly dynamic singing and preaching,often led by Elder Pak himself. Especially in Seoul there is a large network of church organizations. As mentioned earlier, this group has built two “Christian towns” in the Seoul area, and now is building a third with major industrial strength in Pusan.

Moon Sun-myung,the founder of Tongilgyo, or Unification Family, was active in Christianity early in life and received special revelations which enabled him to give new interpretations to the Bible and Christian history. He first founded a church in Pyongyang after liberation from the Japanese and was imprisoned by the Communist authorities ; later in Seoul he was arrested, but subsequently cleared of the charges. Nevertheless his group has grown substantially,with about 300,000 members in Korea and a rapidly increasing international division.

The major religious tenet of Moon’s teachings is that the sin of Adam and Eve was not erased by Christ, who brought a spiritual but not physical salvation. Moon understands himself to be the Second Advent spoken of in the Bible. Because he is the Second Advent, he discovered the Divine Principle which explains the complete nature of human history, from Adam and Eve to the present, and a complete logical critique of all philosophical systems. The heart of Tongilgyo is the “teaching” of this divine principle in highly programmed lectures ; this religion also features a highly organized church structure. The ideal is for all peoples and all religions to become one family under God. In this sense an individual’s entire life, even his marriage, should be according to the divine plan, not according to one’ s own selfish desire. Tongilgyo also is involved in a number of industrial and business ventures. This group is very active in Korean and international [page 22] anti-communist or “victory over communism” movements. Tongilgyo has a large, effective overseas network and is rapidly expanding,especially in the United States.

Both the Evangelical Church and the Unification Family have become controversial movements, especially due to the absolute commitment of the followers. It may prove profitable to examine these groups as possible “mass movements,” but at any rate they must be examined on an objective basis; they cannot be rejected on the theological grounds of being heretic groups. For the moment my concern is to show that they are new religious movements.

Although it may seem strange, especially to Westerners,that Christian groups may be called new religions, nevertheless they fall within our comparative definition and general interpretive frame-work. They represent radical breaks from the pre-existing pattern of Christianity in Korea,and attempt to revitalize the Korean tradition through a significant new reorganization. Comparable to Christian Science, each movement is initiated by the revelation of a new founder, whose revelation becomes normative for salvation, teaching, and church organization. However, for these Korean examples, great emphasis is placed upon a Korean savior, the Korean language, and the Korean nation as the center of salvation. Therefore, however else we view them, the Evangelical Church and the Unification Family are certainly new Korean religious movements. By contrast,it is interesting that in Japan there are only a few small Christian-derived new religions, and no major Japanese new religion is basically Christian in orientation. This is an indication of the extent to which Christianity has penetrated Korean culture,something which cannot be said for Christianity in the context of Japanese culture.

**Conclusion: The Significance of New Korean Religions**

Before any definitive conclusion can be reached regarding the [page 23] new Korean religions, much more work must be done, particularly detailed work on individual groups, and then a comparative over-view of the general phenomenon of all such movements. I might acknowledge here my indebtedness to some pioneering works, especially the articles in *The New Religions of Korea*, edited by Spencer J. Palmer7 and *Reform, Rebellion, and the Heavenly Way* by Benjamin Weems.8 We may look forward to the publication in Western lan-guages of some ongoing research by Korean specialists in the field. However, even in the imperfect state of research at present, it may be helpful to venture some conclusions on the significance of new Korean religions.

The new religions appeared at a time when the traditional worldview was in question and social change made it almost impossible to maintain the earlier worldview in its traditional manner. At the inspiration of founders, the older elements were significantly reorganized into new forms that enabled the people to reintegrate themselves into the Korean worldview. Or we might say Korean religion became revitalized through these individual movements. (These conclusions, of course, can be seen as a restatement of my interpretive framework.)

What are some significant innovations of these movements? For one thing, these movements appear outside the established institutions such as formal Confucianism and temple Buddhism. In traditional Korea, as in most other traditional countries, it was very difficult to begin a movement outside the established channels. The new religions began as lay movements, rather than as elite move-ments from the top down. Generally these new religions can be called grassroots movements, at least in origin. Both in leadership and membership they represent individual initiative. In other words, they

7 Transactions of the Korea Branch, Royal Asiatic SocietyXLIII (1967) .

8 Tucson: University of Arziona Press,1964.

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may be called voluntary organizations. Such voluntary organizations differ markedly from the traditional religious culture. For example, in traditional Korea the Confucian system was followed by everyone in the natural institutions such as family and state. In the modern setting one must choose to follow the specific Confucian teaching of one new religion or another, or to belong to an alternative group. This voluntary organization provides both small-scale,face-to-face relationships and also large-scale organizational strength.

With the new religions, for the first time we have truly nationwide movements. For example,in traditional times people all over Korea might venerate a Buddhist statue such as a Miruk, but there was no direct tie between Miruk worshippers in different parts of the country. Now, if a new religion is founded on the revelation that a certain man is the reincarnation of Miruk, the believers of this group are united throughout the country in a tie of common religious belief. In another sense, we can say that the new religions make the traditional religious system over into more explicit kinds of religious forms. For example, in traditional times it was usually taken for granted that every major mountain was presided over by a mountain spirit who protected the area; but in one new religion there is an altar with ten specific mountain spirits surrounding the central image of the earth mother. In other words, parts of an implicit worldview generally accepted by everyone are made into an explicit pantheon accepted by a special group.

The new religious movement is not only more explicit than the traditional worldview but is also more comprehensive, in several ways. The doctrine is more comprehensive, the religious movement expands into wider social areas such as economic ventures, and a more exclusive demand is placed on the individual. In this sense— the total system, and particularly the tendency toward absolute claim on the individual—the new religious movements must be examined [page 25] further as possible mass movements.

One of the problems in the modern world is the breakdown of traditional worldviews and the attempt of the individual to retain a sense of cultural indentity. In this context the implicit worldview is fragmented, and the individual must deliberately put together his world out of the remaining pieces. A serious dilemma of the modern world is whether or not man can live with any sense of transcendence beyond the physical here and now. Broadly considered,the new Korean religions are attempts to transpose traditional Korean understandings of transcendence into new modes and forms. These attempts deserve further investigation, and comparative study with new religions in other geographical areas.