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Journal of Korean Religions, Volume 6, Number 1, April 2015, pp.
191-223 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jkr.2015.0013>



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Abstract

The late Cardinal Sou-hwan Kim (Kim Suhwan) is well known for his role in the democratization process and his defense of human rights in South Korea over almost two decades (1970s–1980s). Nevertheless, very little is known about the prelate's inner, religious world, which inspired his prophetic voice that had a crucial impact on both the ecclesiastical and the civic life of the country. This study aims at investigating his spirituality, that is, the totality of his religious thoughts, ideals, values, ethos, motivations and intentions, which animated his concern for and involvement in the socio-political realities of South Korea of his day. For an in-depth understanding, it attempts to contextualize and interpret Kim's Christian spirituality. Therefore, focusing on his biographical and historical context, it highlights details that have significant bearing on his life, experience, and spirituality. Furthermore, by theological contextualization, it brings out the fundamental theological orientations and characteristics of Kim's spirituality. It demonstrates that his spirituality exemplified a novel theological-spiritual development that has emerged in worldwide contemporary Catholicism. Kim's spirituality, it argues, emerged in his earnest effort to live as faithfully as possible a life of Christian faith, with the new vista and understanding opened up by Vatican Council II and post-conciliar liberation theology. It also examines the more personal, intimate dimensions of Kim's spirituality, and offers an interpretative consideration of its salient features.

Keywords: Cardinal Sou-hwan Kim, Kim Suhwan, Korean Catholicism, Christian spirituality, Vatican II, liberation theology, social involvement

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This work was supported by the Sogang University Research Grant of 2014 (10045.01).

Cardinal Sou-hwan Kim (1922–2009)’s death in February 2009 was the occasion for both national mourning and celebration in South Korea. There was a spontaneous upsurge of a nationwide commemorative spirit. Four hundred thousand mourners visited his body lying in state in the Catholic cathedral of Seoul. The long line of people, representing all faiths and walks of life, was a telling testimony to the bishop’s life of selfless service. Though a leader of a minority religious community (the Roman Catholic Church) in Korea,¹ he aspired to minister to all people in their total life context and promoted the common good of all in Korean society. As a result, he emerged as a respected moral authority, and came to be considered a wise elder or leader of society.

Cardinal Kim deserves a place in a list of Korean Christians whose lives and thoughts are tied to specific contexts and yet have wider significance. Both inside and outside Korea Cardinal Kim is well known because of his work for democratization and human rights. Far less known are the inner sources and motivations for his fruitful life. Hence, this study aims at an in-depth examination of his vision, thought, and the ethos that animated and shaped his life as a Christian and pastoral leader, which to the best of my knowledge has not been attempted hitherto.²

My intention here is to carry out an *interpretative* study of Kim’s *spirituality* as expressed in his written texts: *Ch’ugigyŏng Kim Suhwan iyagi* (Story of Cardinal Sou-hwan Kim), an autobiographical narrative,³ and *Kim Suhwan ch’ugigyŏng chŏnjip* (Complete Works of Cardinal Sou-hwan Kim), the 18-volume collection of writings produced on various occasions, mostly while he was the archbishop of Seoul (1968–1998), that is, pastoral letters, directives, lectures, speeches, sermons, retreat notes, reflections, meditations, prayers, and the like.⁴ However, as a way of complementing and substantiating my reading of personal dimensions of Kim’s spirituality, I will occasionally refer to testimonies to Kim’s life, personality, and spirituality, made by people who in their own way had close and intimate dealings with him.⁵

Here, a word about the notion “spirituality” is in order. I take spirituality to mean the lived quality of a person, resulting from the way the person understands and lives out his or her embraced ideal (Principe 2000, 47–51). A person’s spirituality, thus, entails a hermeneutical process that involves a praxis

by which the person forms his or her life according to a particular understanding and aspiration. Along the way, certain attitudes, values, and motivations are generated to become part of the constitutive whole of the person's spirituality. Spirituality, then, is a comprehensive term denoting a person's vision, thought, and ethos. In this sense, this study aims to offer a rather comprehensive look at an overall spiritual profile of Cardinal Kim.

Cardinal Kim's spirituality was a specific instance of Christian spirituality.⁶ He lived out his Christian faith in the specific historical and cultural context of contemporary Korea. In this study, I want to show how his spirituality took shape as he, in his Christian faith, earnestly discerned and responded to the signs of the times in the Korea of his day. Further, I would like to argue that Kim's spirituality exemplified the novel theological-spiritual developments in the worldwide Catholic Church that were stimulated by the Second Vatican Council. I desire to show that Kim's spirituality emerged in what Karl Rahner called *aggressive fidelity* to Vatican II,⁷ in his effort to live out his faith in light of the new vista opened up by Vatican II and post-conciliar liberation theology.

This study, therefore, investigates Cardinal Kim's Christian spirituality in its historical and theological contexts, exploring how these two contexts intersected to give rise to his spirituality.⁸ It will first offer a biographical sketch of Kim's life and work. Second, it examines his spirituality in relation to post-conciliar theologies, notably, political and liberation theologies. Third, it examines personal dimensions of Kim's spirituality.

Historical Context: A Biographical Profile

A Martyr's Family

Sou-hwan (Stephen) Kim was born in 1922 into a poor family that included a martyr in its bloodline. His paternal grandfather was martyred during the persecution of 1866–1868. Due to a series of persecutions, Catholic Christians in nineteenth-century Korea became marginalized and poor. Yet they persevered in keeping their faith through hardships, even unto death.

Kim's life of faith was inspired by a "spirit of martyrdom" (*sun'gyo chōngsin*): "I have never forgotten the fact that the blood of martyrs runs in my body," he wrote (*Iyagi*, 226). That Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian Church, was his patron saint was a factor in his commitment to radical discipleship, to suffer the ultimate sacrifice if necessary (*Nōhūiwa*, 58–60). Marginalized by persecution, Korean Catholics, including Kim's family, earned their living by making pottery. Onggi (earthenware vessel) was Kim's pen name, and he cherished it in his heart throughout his life. He chose it not only because of its link to martyrdom, but also because of Apostle Paul's reference to Christians as holding "treasures in earthenware vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7).⁹

For those descended from the martyrs, two defining characteristics of their life were faith and poverty. These traits bore significantly on Kim's spirituality as well. On the one hand, faith was the core issue for his life, the marrow of his spirituality. He stated, "It is not an exaggeration to say that for me faith is the foundation and the center of my life" (*Chōnjip*, 4: 483). His conception of "spirituality" (*yōngsōng*) is revealing: "To have faith in God and live it, this is what spirituality is all about" (*Chōnjip*, 11: 331). Kim appreciated greatly the gift of faith, and yet struggled with it. For him, faith demanded a "resolute decision"; it was a "task" to "realize in life the word of life [from God]" (*Chōnjip*, 8: 141–42). Poverty, on the other hand, was seen by Kim as the issue of his age. Kim's concern for the poor had deep roots in his own experience of poverty. It emerged early in his work as a pastor in a rural parish, eventually instilling in him a life-long desire to live with the poor. That he could not live such a life was a matter of deep regret for him (*Iyagi*, 354, 427, 431). Moreover, the spirit of voluntary poverty was at the core of his spirituality.

Social Concern

Kim was ordained a priest in 1951. His early work as a priest (1951–1956) had a strong component of social work for the poor and the marginalized. As a rural parish pastor (1951–1953), he entertained a dream of creating a kind of *common life* conceived as a family-like communal life (*kajok kongdongch'e*) in which "faith" and "life" were not separate but one (*Iyagi*, 147). This basic orientation was crucial in the shaping of Kim's spirituality. His life-long social

concern would evolve into social involvement, as his life took its course within the concrete historical and social context of the seventies and eighties in the national life of South Korea. His social concern, first theoretically informed by the social teaching of the Church, was profoundly nurtured by the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, and further strengthened and enriched in the post-conciliar period, especially by liberation theology. It might have been also motivated by his nationalistic devotion to the people (*minjok*) of Korea, fostered especially in his youthful days under Japanese colonial rule.

Looking to the future of the Korean Church, Kim came to regard further studies in Europe, with its deep Christian tradition, as a desirable path for him to follow. Consequently, following his years in a pastoral situation, he pursued studies in theology and sociology in Münster, Germany (1956–1963). His study of Christian sociology (*Christliche Gesellschaftslehre*) with Joseph Höffner was instrumental for his grasp of Christian social teachings, and what he calls the gospel values (*pokŭmjŏk kach'i*) of human dignity, freedom, unity, equality, and, above all, justice and peace founded upon the love of God. Quoting *Mater et Magistra* no. 226 (a social encyclical by Pope John XXIII), he pointed out that the social doctrine (*sahoe kyori*) of the Church has “truth as its guide, justice as its end, and love as its driving force.” It, he stated, is “the only force workable in favor of the construction of civilization of love” and also “‘a valid instrument of evangelization’ (*Centesimus Annus* no. 54), which is the most valuable service the Church can offer to the humanity (*pro vobis et pro multis*)” (*Chŏnjip*, 10: 238, 239).¹⁰

Kim wrote that what he learnt from his studies in Germany provided him with a solid theoretical foundation for his life-long social involvement and commitment to the cause of human dignity, justice, and truth in Korea: “Without such a theoretical foundation I doubt that I could have met the difficult challenges of the 1970s and 1980s” (*Iyagi*, 163). In his teaching and various pastoral statements, we again and again find echoes of the Church’s social doctrines, replete with characteristic terms of gospel values. However, his social concern was essentially a pastor’s concern stemming from compassion for the poor, the unfortunate, and the marginalized in the society. Hence, there is in him the primacy of love (*sarang*). His meditation on the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37) maintains that the love of neighbor has

an inseparable relation with the love of God, and the love of God cannot be perfected without the practice of the love of neighbor.¹¹

Second Vatican Council

During his studies in Germany, Kim was deeply impressed by the fresh developments in the life of the Church associated with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). On his return to Korea, he became a tireless champion of the spirit and teaching of the great reform council. First, as editor (1964–1966) of the *Catholic Newspaper* (*Kat'ollik sibo*), Kim worked enthusiastically and with a sense of mission to introduce the teachings of the Council to the Korean Church. Then, as the first bishop (1966–1968) of the diocese of Masan and later as archbishop of Seoul (1968–1998), the renewal of both himself and the whole Korean Church according to the spirit of Vatican II (*kongūihoe chōngsin*) became the leitmotif and the mission of his life (*Iyagi*, 190–91).¹² After becoming in 1969 the youngest cardinal in the Church, it was largely due to his committed leadership that the Catholic Church in Korea was able to emerge from its citadel and become open to social realities (Ku, *Saranghago*, 45).

The *spirituality* of Vatican II was decisive in shaping the fundamental orientation of Kim's spirituality. He saw the Church's new self-understanding to be the crux of its renewal. The Church exists—he continually reiterated—not for its own sake but for serving the world, and so must be in the world (*Iyagi*, 176, 190–91, 194, 211; *Chōnjip*, 1: 141). In this fresh vision of the Church's identity Kim found the ultimate ground for its “social involvement” (*sahoe ch'amyō*).¹³ He drew his inspiration especially from the celebrated opening passage of *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*) that for him encapsulated the whole vision and spirit of the Council. Kim maintained:

The Second Vatican Council is the key to the Church's engagement in the realities of everyday life. What was the spirit of the Council? Even though the origins of the Church do not lie in this world, the Church must be open to the world for she exists in and for the world, that is to say, for the sake of the salvation of all. The spirit is most clearly expressed in the *Pastoral*

Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The document opens with the following. “The joys and hopes (*Gaudium et Spes*), the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.” As we can see here, Christians cannot be indifferent to the world and to all the problems of humanity, especially to those of people who suffer under poverty and injustice. (*Iyagi*, 244)

The illustrious beginning of *Gaudium et Spes* captured Kim’s heart and mind so that for him it was simply the “spirit and life of Christ” and “the path that the Church must follow” as well (*Chŏnjip*, 13: 52). According to John W. O’Malley, it shows in a nutshell “a profile of the ideal Christian,” presented by the Council as a profile of Christian holiness today (2008, 310). That ideal is *incarnational* in emphasis. It is in line with the image of Christ consistently presented by the Council, i.e., “Christ as servant and liberator” who is “celebrated as friend of all people, especially the poor and victims of war and injustice” (*Ibid.*, 295). Schooled in the Council’s teachings, Kim had an incarnational understanding of the life, mission, and work of Christ who is above all the liberator of people: “Jesus is the liberator” (*Chŏnjip*, 13: 60). Interpreting the Incarnation in terms of liberative praxis and self-emptying sacrificial life, totally given for others, he often quoted the programmatic statement with which Jesus inaugurated his messianic work of liberation in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:18–19) (*Chŏnjip*, 7: 26; 13: 58; 16: 408). It was, for Kim, what the Eucharistic existence of Jesus was all about, and what the Church and Christian life according to the Gospel meant.

It is to the Eucharistic existence of Jesus that Kim, at 85, still related his pastoral motto, *pro vobis et pro multis* (*nŏhŭi wa modŭn irŭl wihayŏ*)¹⁴: “Like the Lord in the sacrament of the Eucharist, I must live a life of becoming the bread of life and food for all people, in accordance with my motto as bishop ‘for you and for all’” (*Iyagi*, 189–90, 465).

Seen in this context, the significance of his pastoral motto *pro vobis et pro multis* becomes manifest. It is the expression of the heart of his religious ideal that is informed by this clear theological and spiritual vision of Christ, the

Church, and Christian existence. His prayer (1969) on the occasion of his promotion to the cardinalate shows this well: “I pray that the spirit of the motto, just like a flame burning within my heart, would suffuse my whole being” (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 251).

Social Involvement

From the time he became a bishop, especially in his capacity as the Cardinal archbishop of Seoul (1968–1998), Kim was led to a life of active involvement in the socio-political affairs of Korea. It was primarily due to Cardinal Kim’s vision and leadership that the Korean Catholic Church really began to engage in the world so as to publicly express ethical judgments on the socio-political realities of Korea.¹⁵

In the 1970s, the nation of South Korea was becoming increasingly a police state. People under oppression lived in fear, effectively silenced by the violence of a despotic regime under the president Park Chung-hee. Cardinal Kim emerged as the voice of conscience for all in this dark age of Korean history, especially after he delivered a message at the midnight Mass for Christmas of 1971 demanding democratization, the first voice raised against Park in Korean society (Ku, *Saranghago*, 73, 118, 124).¹⁶ People came to recognize in his social involvement and intervention a *prophetic voice* (*yeŏnjajŏk moksori*) raised at the most necessary occasions and appropriate times, earning for him a prophetic authority in Korean society (*Iyagi*, 252). Particularly noteworthy in this regard was the opportune character of his decisive interventions, something that points to a capacity for *discernment* in terms of Christian spirituality and *sijung* (timely mean) in Confucian spirituality.¹⁷

Partly as a result of his social involvement, Myŏngdong Cathedral in Seoul, from where he acted on behalf of the Church, became the “sacred arena of democratization” (*minjuhwa ŭi sŏngyŏk*) for the people of Korea. He saw this development as the outcome of a wider social consensus, on the one hand, and the proper nature of the Church that must side with and stand by the poor, on the other (*Iyagi*, 375–76, 403). People came to the cathedral to make an appeal or a protest for justice, and also to seek refuge. In this connection, at least one instance of Cardinal Kim’s social involvement has to be mentioned:

his decisive act in June 1986 of protecting a group of students who took refuge there in the wake of the June 10 protest for democratization. It was the eve of the birth of a civil government in Korea. He realized that this was a crucial time (*kairos*): “I thought that we stood at a fork in the road: this country would move towards democracy or continue in the way of authoritarian military rule” (*Iyagi*, 370). In reading *the signs of the times*, as he was thoroughly schooled in the teachings of Vatican Council II, Kim opted to act accordingly. He stood by the students to the end, saying famously to a government official: “If you send the police, they will first find me at the front, then priests, and then sisters, and after that the students. If you want to get to the students, you can only get through by trampling on me first, and then the priests and sisters” (*Ibid.*). This timely act became a turning point in the process of democratization in the country.

It is *Gaudium et Spes* [4] of Vatican II that teaches about the Church’s responsibility of reading “the signs of the times” and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, so that, understanding the aspirations and the dramatic features of the world, the Church should be able to answer in an intelligible language people’s questions about life. Kim, thus, was able to say in 1976: “In a word, the signs of today’s world (*onŭl ũi segye ũi chingp’yo*) can be said to be an age longing for human liberation (*in’gan ũi haebangŭl kalmanghanŭn sidae*)” (*Chŏnjip*, 4: 337). For Kim, therefore, the Church’s involvement in the realities of life (*hyŏnsil ch’amyŏ*)—such as protest against the anti-democratic rule of the despotic military regime, and intervention in the problems of human persons groaning under poverty and suffering—was rooted in the teaching and spirit of Vatican II, especially of *Gaudium et Spes* (*Iyagi*, 372). Moreover, his deep concern for the value and dignity of the human being, as revealed in such social action, also had a firm basis in the *imago dei* doctrine (that the human being is created in the image of God). In fact, the first chapter, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” of *Gaudium et Spes* begins with that theological anthropology. For Kim, this concern for the human being (*in’gan*) flowed from his desire to follow “the way of Christ” (*Kŭrisŭdo ũi kil*) as well (*Iyagi*, 245).

What I am most concerned about are human beings. Since human beings are created in the image of God, their rights and dignity must be kept and protected in all places and at all times. This conviction was critical in shaping my choices as I went through the difficulties of the 1970s and 1980s. (*Iyagi*, 198)¹⁸

However, as the Church's political involvement became an increasingly thorny issue, Kim came to receive opposing criticisms from both sides of the political spectrum within the Catholic Church (*Iyagi*, 283). On the one hand, he was criticized for his involvement in political affairs, and even accused of having a penchant for politics. In his memoir, Kim maintained that he was only "unwillingly" placed by circumstances right in the middle of the civil movement for human rights, justice, and democratization (*Iyagi*, 242). Kim, thus, became involved in social issues, large and small, finding himself constrained to raise his voice on behalf of all people, advocating human dignity, justice, and truth, and because all sorts of people pleaded to him for help.¹⁹ And, as Kim recalled, the most painful thing for him to bear in the first ten years of his archbishopric was the fact that a group of conservative senior priests had raised a dissenting voice, showing a lack of understanding of the Church's involvement in the democratization movement (*Iyagi*, 289). Nonetheless, Kim also found himself receiving criticism from a group of radical priests who demanded of him more decisive and radical acts in the struggle for democratization.

In the midst of polarizing opinions and mounting tensions, Cardinal Kim agonized over the divisive situation of the Church.²⁰ Addressing both camps of opposing political ideologies within the Church, he endeavored to strike a balance (*Iyagi*, 271, 283, 289). And that stance-taking was governed by his understanding of his role as the *leader* of the Church, the obligation of which was in his mind to prevent at all costs the division of the Church due to the difference in political ideologies (*Iyagi*, 283–84, 289). Moreover, his stance was informed in a more fundamental way by his thinking that the Church, free from all political ideologies (capitalism, socialism and communism), should work to build up a social system founded upon Christian thought, according to the mind of Christ, the central values of which are human dignity, equality and brotherhood (*Chōnjip*, 15: 396).²¹

Going through the turbulent period of 1970s–1980s, I never had in mind the so-called ‘progressive’ or ‘leftist.’ Even less did I ever do anything with any political intention and purpose. Standing on the side of the poor, the suffering, and, therefore, of people who are called the powerless, I simply wanted to protect their dignity. And I believe that was . . . the way of following Jesus Christ. (*Iyagi*, 271)²²

This could be taken as an expression of Kim’s own perspective, as it were, on the question of change in his stance toward social realities, which is often formulated as whether or not Cardinal Kim took a rather “conservative” turn in 1990s. There may be diverse estimations, but this much seems certain: Kim endeavored to respond to varied circumstances, with discernment but always consistently motivated more by the same religious thinking than by political ideologies.²³

Vocation Experience

Kim’s vocation experience bears on a major theme of his spirituality: a *deep sense of Mystery* (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 53–54).²⁴ Kim felt he was all along led by what he called the “Mystery” (*sinbi*) into various offices in the Church, and the varied social tasks that followed from them. His sense of the Mystery of God seems to have grown out of his perception of mysterious providential hands—invisible yet real—that were guiding him into unexpected paths. He was led into the path of priesthood through his mother. A filial son, he tried to obey his mother’s wish, though not without reluctance and reservation. He later recalled he had attempted to escape, but found himself continually hemmed in by God. Psalm 139 was one of Kim’s favorites, which appeared to describe vividly his own experience of the Mystery of God (*Chŏnjip*, 10: 528; 14: 207; 17: 490).

Cardinal Kim intimated that he was in some way not wholly committed, and yet led into taking up his cross to follow Jesus on the way (*Iyagi*, 227–28, 232).²⁵ At the same time, the way he lived his life was at heart always that of a pastor concerned with society’s poor, marginalized, and afflicted. There were two elements that contributed on the human level to the evolution of his career

as pastor: his pastoral concern and work, and his responsive obedience to the destiny of his life. Hence, he was led into bigger and ever more demanding roles and tasks.²⁶ It is when he was chosen as a member of the College of Cardinals that he surrendered finally to God. Significantly, commenting on the office of cardinal, he associated the color red with the blood of martyrdom.

Cardinal Kim mirrored the reluctant prophets of the Hebrew Bible, prophets who had to surrender to the will of God and to perform the prophetic tasks given by God in the concrete politico-religious life of ancient Israel. When his political involvement was harshly criticized within the Church, Kim felt the loneliness of a prophet (*yenŏnja*) who is not welcomed in his hometown (Luke 4:24). In such situations of struggle and anguish, he could not but cry out to a silent God with an appeal and a lament. It was through prayer that he was able to persevere in social tasks that came along with his public role (*Iyagi*, 243–44, 365). Thus, he found himself again and again having to *surrender* to the intangible God the Mystery.

Theological Context: Post-Conciliar Theologies

In his spirituality and holiness, Cardinal Kim is by no means an isolated and singular case. His experience and life pattern reflect larger theological and spiritual currents within the Roman Catholic Church in the contemporary world. It is helpful to consider Kim's spirituality in the light of some theologies that had a significant bearing on it: Karl Rahner's theology and two contextual theologies, that is, political and liberation theologies. Considering these will lead to deeper insight into the meaning and significance of Kim's spirituality.

Karl Rahner's Theology

Rahner convincingly showed how the biography of an ordinary person can be meaningfully connected with and illuminated by Christian faith. Here is Johann Baptist Metz's evaluation: "Rahner's theology is in some measure . . . the mystical biography of the ordinary, the average Christian person; it is the attempt to spell out, in the canon of doctrines, a Christian life without great

transformations and turning points, without special illuminations and conversions” (Metz 1998, 103). This helps us understand why, as we shall see, Rahner’s theology sheds light on much of Cardinal Kim’s spiritual experience.

Declan Marmion enumerates four major themes of Rahner’s spirituality flowing from his theology: God as the holy, loving Mystery; a mysticism of everyday life; prayer as surrender of the heart to the Mystery; and love of neighbor as love of God (Marmion 1998, 55–88). All these are in fact major features of Kim’s spirituality in its more intimate and personal dimensions, as will be discussed later.

Rahner’s theology and spirituality has two poles: the “transcendental” pointing to the incomprehensible God as the ultimate horizon of the human activity, and the “categorical” referring to the concrete, finite dimension of the human life in time and history. Holding these two poles in unity, Rahner helps people to discover that the mystical is in fact found in the ordinary experience of transcendence.

In his commentary on the political theology of Johann Baptist Metz, Rahner says that Christian life consists of the “mystical” (having to do with a union with God in a total surrender) and the “social” (having to do with social tasks for neighbors) (Rahner 1986, 181–85). For Rahner, the dual structure of Christian life is theologically derived from the two great commandments of the Gospel: love of God and love of neighbor. Since there is unity between them, there is unity between the mystical and the social in Christian life as well.

It is in the post-Rahner contextual theologies that this dual structure is articulated with particular clarity and with specific reference to the social realm. This has a crucial bearing on the theological character of Kim’s spirituality.

Political and Liberation Theologies

Spiritualities of political/liberation theologies belong to a new paradigm of Christian spirituality, “prophetic-critical spirituality” (Sheldrake 2007, 172–93). Here, we consider Kim’s theological thought in light of two closely-related theological tendencies in the post-conciliar era of Catholicism: *liberation theology* (Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino, and Segundo Galilea)²⁷ and *political theology* (Johann Baptist Metz).²⁸

Let us first clarify Cardinal Kim's relation with liberation theology. Kim was not an expert theologian professionally schooled in a particular school of liberation theologies of Latin America. He was above all a pastor deeply concerned with the new developments in the Catholic Church's life and theological reflection stimulated by Vatican II. And it is quite clear that he assimilated prevailing theological thoughts of the post-conciliar era of Roman Catholicism, the core concern of which was the integral liberation of the human being. Liberation theology of Latin America came to be the most prominent and convincing theological voice, and was deeply relevant as well to the life-context of South Korea of the 1970s–1980s. While acknowledging a lack of theological competence in liberation theology, Kim was in an interview (1984) able to say that he resonated wholly with the notion of "liberation theology," and that Catholic theology ought to become "liberation theology" as far as liberation from oppression is not reduced merely to liberation in a political sense (*Chŏnjip*, 15: 238). In another interview (1986), we can find Kim commenting on the thorny issue of the use of Marxist social analysis in liberation theology. According to Kim, the employment of Marxist social analysis, even with some risk and danger, might have been in some sense necessary and inevitable partly because there was no better tool available. Nonetheless, he believed that professional liberation theologians of Latin America had the critical acumen and capacity for discriminating between the use of Marxist social analysis (as a tool) and embracing the whole of Marxism as political ideology (*Chŏnjip*, 398–99).

The ethos of liberation theology with its characteristic ideals, themes, and vocabulary are, in fact, conspicuous and pervasive in Cardinal Kim's theological reflections on Christian life. A statement from a 1980 meditation entitled "The Social Aspect of the Church's Role" well illustrates this point:

The Church should become a Church that really brings the Good News to the poor. It demands that the Church that serves the people of the Third World perform the messianic task in Luke 4 [. . .] Hence, the words of God that the Church proclaims ought to be in themselves words of liberation, and theology itself must be a theology of liberation (*haebang sinhak*). (*Chŏnjip*, 13: 58)

We should also note his speech (1988), “History, Politics and Salvation,”²⁹ addressed to Gustavo Gutiérrez on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the English edition of *A Liberation Theology: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Kim as an Asian bishop shared his thoughts on five areas where liberation theology had particular significance for Asia, especially Korea: (a) it rediscovered a more realistic place for theologizing; (b) it corrected a distorted view of the Church; (c) it taught a new way of reading the Scriptures; (d) the grass-roots communities led people to the heart of Christianity, i.e., community through the Spirit; (e) it showed the way to reconciliation.

Kim took a great interest in Basic Christian Communities (*kich'o kongdong-ch'e*) in view of their promotion of Christian life as one of fellowship, service, and sharing, and their practice of a “preferential option for the poor” (*kananhan idülül wihan usönjök sönt'aek*) (*Chönjip* 6: 483–84). In the 1990s, Kim endeavored to establish Basic Christian Communities within the parish structure of the archdiocese of Seoul.³⁰ He wanted to promote communities of believers, where “faith” (*sinang*) and “life” (*salm*) were united. Korean society in the 1990s, as he saw it, faced new problems of materialism, secularism, and consumerism arising from economic growth. In the archdiocese of Seoul, the churches were becoming bigger, and also being transformed into churches of the middle class distanced from the poor. In those circumstances, Kim’s concern was to reform the churches so that they may become true to being the Church according to the mind of Christ.

For him, the Church’s identity, as envisioned by Vatican II and liberation theology, was the messianic people (*Chönjip*, 1: 231), that is, the Church of Jesus, the Messiah and liberator of human beings (*Chönjip*, 13: 60). For Kim, the parable of the great judgment (Matthew 25:31–46), the scene of Jesus’s inauguration of his messianic mission (Luke 4:18–19), and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37) were the privileged loci of Gospel texts embodying the messianic mission of Jesus the liberator, and, hence, that of the “messianic Church” (*mesiajök kyohoe*) (*Chönjip*, 1: 226). The messianic way is nothing other than the way of total love for others, which necessitates social acts such as protection of the poor, weak, and afflicted, and the promotion of social justice.

While liberation theology was a key inspiration of Kim's pastoral initiative in the 1990s, it was already emerging as the fundamental character of his theology for at least two decades previous. His theological ideas, drawn from his reading of theologians, are fragmentary, and scattered in his writings. Therefore, it is most helpful to consider them in the light of an exposition of political and liberation theologies.

Dual Structure of Christian Life: Political and liberation theologies are contextual theologies that dwell decisively on a specific context of a people. The context is "suffering" in the political theology of Metz, and, in liberation theology, "poverty" and "oppression" of the poor.³¹ The dual structure of Christian life is, then, formulated as "*mystical-political*" or "*mystical-prophetic*." The precise significance of the two poles in each pair differs. What is most significant is the way the two theologies conceive of Christian life as having a dual nature: the mystical (ultimately and directly concerning God) and the social/political/prophetic (concerning social involvement).³²

Kim's spirituality has this dual structure. It is, in fact, I argue, the major legacy of his spirituality. In his 1981 sermon, "Truthful Way of Christ," delivered at a prayer gathering of the Peace and Justice Committee, Kim takes the model of "Jesus as liberator" to meditate on a truthful way of Christian discipleship. He dwells on respective perils in both a "radical reformer" type (preoccupied exclusively with social reform) and a "charismatic movement" type (preoccupied exclusively with inner cultivation). Kim, then, gives an explicit formulation to the dual structure of a truthful way of Christian discipleship: simultaneously "activist" (*hwaldongga*) and "person of prayer" (*kidohanŭn saram*).

Maintaining tension between matter and spirit, between the world without and the world within, true workers of the Kingdom of God ought to exert efforts to pursue an integration of both. The Christian workers committed to social reform ought to be a reformer who must not lose one's own soul, and also an activist who at the same time is a person of prayer. (*Chŏnjip*, 13: 67–68)

Following Christ through Liberative Social Praxis: A social (liberating) praxis in the following of Christ is primary and central in political and liberation contextual theologies (Martinez 2001, 218–20). Both theologies insist that the following of Christ is epistemic. One comes to know Christ (that is, who Christ really is) to the extent one follows Christ in social praxis (Metz 1978, 39; Galilea 1988, 28–33). This was precisely what greatly motivated Kim. Hence, his commitment to a following of Christ that necessarily entailed a continual conversion to authentic Christian discipleship. Furthermore, for political and liberation theologies, privatization of the message of Christianity poses problems for Christianity in modern times. The two contextual theologies aim at overcoming the privatization of Christianity by returning to the following of Jesus in the Gospels with social praxis. By bringing the relevance of the Christian message back to the public sphere, they hope to overcome the dichotomy of private-public in Christian life. This was precisely what Kim tried so hard to accomplish throughout his career. He attempted to unify faith and life in the Church, and preached tirelessly of the necessity of social involvement and prophetic action.

Prominent Virtues: Nonetheless, in political and liberation theologies, the moral and interior imitation of the person of Christ is not abandoned. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12) are taken to be the spirit of Jesus, and especially honored. But they are considered as the proper spirit to be cultivated precisely in the very following of Jesus in social praxis in order that the social-political act remains in fidelity to the liberating praxis of Jesus (Sobrino 1996, 245–48; Metz 1998, 157–67). This is the defining characteristic of the spirituality emerging from political and liberation theologies, as it is also central to the spirituality of Cardinal Kim.

Privileged Biblical Texts: Political and liberation theologies privilege certain biblical texts, for instance, the parable of the great judgment (Matthew 25:31–46) and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37). As noted above, they became privileged texts for Kim as well. For Kim, they showed Christ's identification with the poor, the marginalized, and those who suffer. Those who would be his disciples must seek and find the presence of Christ right there in the brothers and sisters who are poor, alienated, and mistreated.

Contemplation and Action: Hence, in political and liberation theologies, contemplation takes on a new dimension, and liberating praxis new urgency. Contemplation of God and liberating praxis are closely joined together (Galilea 1980, 529–40). Leonardo Boff speaks of *contemplativus in liberatione* (contemplation in liberation) in his article, “The Need for Political Saints.” It is, in fact, a liberationist specification of a formula of Jesuit spirituality *contemplativus in actione* (contemplation in action) (Boff 1980–81, 370, 374). Kim’s perspective and practice of Christian discipleship (simultaneously “activist” and “person of prayer”) clearly belongs here, granted that Boff’s formulation is one that is more incisively conceived.

New Model of Holiness: Liberation theology, thus, seeks a new model of holiness, the locus of which is the public, social world. In his book, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, Jon Sobrino offers a profile of political holiness, in which “holiness” means an outstanding practice of three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) and other virtues in the following of Christ Jesus, and “political” means the liberating social-political action for the Kingdom of God (Sobrino 1988, 80–86). Sobrino’s felicitous conception of *political holiness* is especially illuminating in bringing out the character of a Christian holiness embodied in Cardinal Kim.

Not only Action but also Passion: Furthermore, the following of Christ, in political and liberation theologies, entails not only liberating actions in an active pursuit of the Kingdom of God, but also passion and suffering in solidarity with Christ and the poor. Kim showed this understanding and willingness as well. His autobiographical narrative lets us see him preparing for the suffering that would come as a consequence of his social action, and actually desiring it in solidarity with the oppressed (*Iyagi*, 271, 302).

Contemplative Turn to the Mystery of God: Finally, we should consider a thesis of Gaspar Martinez, which provides us with an instructive theory for explaining a faith dynamic in Cardinal Kim’s spiritual career. As Rahner in his theological career increasingly dwells on the incomprehensible Mystery, Martinez observes, Metz and Gutiérrez each in his own theological career increasingly turns to God and God-talk (*theo-logia*) as well (Martinez 2001, ix, xi–xii, 215, 241–49). But, why should that be? The salvation or integral liberation in liberation theology to which human beings aspire will not come

as expected. Disciples must come to terms with the delay in the coming of salvation. They would have to acknowledge and succumb in faith to the incomprehensible mystery of life and, above all, the Mystery of God. In that problematic situation, real God-talk would issue in prayer. For Rahner, it is a surrender of the heart in faith to God, the incomprehensible, loving, and holy Mystery (Martinez 2001, 20). For Metz, it is *Gottespassion* in a double sense of a passion for God and a suffering unto God (*leiden an Gott*) as it cries out to God in expectation and hope of salvation (Metz 1978, 63–71, 157–163). For Gutiérrez, it is like Job's talk to God as he, while maintaining faith and trust in God despite counterevidence, comes to realize the gratuitousness of God's salvation (Martinez 2001, 232, 248–49). Most interestingly, this kind of trajectory in faith dynamic is discernible too in Cardinal Kim's spiritual life. In a turmoil of struggle and anguish due to his social involvement in the 1970s, Kim was increasingly led to turn to God with God-talk. It was fundamentally, as in Rahner, a surrender in faith to God the Mystery, enacted again and again in the midst of, as it were, Metz's *Gottespassion* and the crying-out/lament in Gutiérrez's Job in suffering (*Iyagi*, 243–44, 270). In fact, there occurred a crisis in Kim's spiritual career, to be discussed shortly. As he emerged with a decisive contemplative turn to God, it seems, the Rahnerian character of Kim's surrender in faith to the Mystery intensified.

In sum, political and liberation theologies were the signs of the times. As responses to concrete, human situations and contemporary problems, these theologies broke new ground in the search for an authentic mode of contemporary Christian life. Kim's spirituality very much paralleled this search, but within a Korean context.

A Personal Profile of Kim's Spirituality

Thus far, I have discussed the fundamental orientations and theological characteristics of Cardinal Kim's Christian spirituality. Here, I turn to the more personal dimensions of Kim's spirituality. Though specific to Kim, they are, nonetheless, instructive in illuminating his understanding of the meaning of Christian existence, which holds general significance.

A Spiritual Crisis

Cardinal Kim at one point underwent a spiritual crisis. It is possible to pinpoint the critical moment in Cardinal Kim's spiritual career: his 30-day retreat according to *The Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola. He made that retreat in early 1979 (January 15–February 13) at the Jesuit retreat house, *Malssŭm ũi chip* (House of The Word).

His autobiographical narrative includes a section dedicated to that experience (*Iyagi*, 309–14). Luckily, there exists a retreat journal entitled, *Lord, Help Me Open My Heart to You* (*Chuyŏ, maŭm ũi munŭl yŏlge hasosŏ*).³³ This title indicates what he desired during the whole retreat that was for him a life and death issue (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 440). By then, it had been ten years since he began his work as archbishop of Seoul. His social involvement created serious conflicts with a tyrannical government, especially in the late seventies. He seems to have felt exhausted by his efforts to realize the justice and peace of the Kingdom of God. He could not see any signs of its coming. To make matters worse, he had been subjected to criticisms from within the Church for his social involvement. For him, such involvement was a necessary task of being a new Church according to the Vatican II. Nonetheless, while persevering in religious and social tasks, he agonized over the division within the Church. Thus exhausted, he must have felt a kind of deadlock and needed a certain breakthrough in his spiritual life: “I have come to a point where I feel I cannot go on without a more profound encounter with Christ” (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 442). He spoke similarly of feeling a “spiritual thirst” (*yŏngjŏk kaljŭng*) (*Iyagi*, 309). It was in such circumstances that he decided to make a long retreat, seeking a more decisive experience of Christ. He was hoping the retreat might provide a major turning point (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 423). This turned out to be the case, though not in the way he had envisaged or wished.

The two main issues for the retreat were “true knowledge of Christ” and “prayer.” Kim came to a clear realization that, even if he had dedicated himself to the Church's renewal and social involvement, what was truly essential was lacking in him. This was a true knowledge and love of God. He came to see that everything depends on a true and real knowledge (in Ignatius's term, “interior knowledge”) of Christ. *The Spiritual Exercises* no. 104 taught him

that true love follows from true knowledge, and leads from there to a true following. He realized the vital importance of prayer, and became acutely aware of his negligence in this matter. He came to know that prayer itself was life for him, and that there is an absolute necessity of practicing prayer, even in order to live for others, especially for the poor. It was in line with this realization that in the eighties and nineties he assuredly instructed priests in prayer and true knowledge of Christ.³⁴ Undoubtedly, his instructions originated from what he learned from his own experience during the retreat.

The whole thrust of the retreat was conducive to Kim's renewed surrender in faith to God, the intangible Mystery. Thus, he wrote on the last day of his retreat: "Surrender (*sŭngbok*)! This would be the conclusion of the 30-day retreat" (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 478). He longed for a palpably powerful experience of the presence of God. But nothing extraordinary happened to him. There was just another ordinary experience of surrender in faith to God, albeit one that entailed being renewed in earnestness and intensity. However, he came to attain a new level of religious consciousness with a more contemplative attitude, which must have put his active works into perspective. His contemplative spirit manifested itself in his increasing sense of the Mystery of God and in his felt need for prayer. After his long retreat of 1979, his God-talk (in the sense of both talking to God and talking about God) seems to have taken a more serene character. He came to live and work with even deeper conviction concerning his mission and with a more heightened sense of the Mystery of God. He was able to re-dedicate himself to the task of putting into practice the vision of the Christian life that he had cherished up to that time, but now with a different heart, that is to say, with a more expansive state of religious consciousness.

So, the spiritual crisis of Cardinal Kim came to a resolution with his renewed surrender in faith to God. But the surrender was novel in his spiritual career in that it entailed a synthesis of two elements: (1) an honest recognition and acceptance of his limitations as a finite human being, a recognition obtained in the heightened awareness of the Mystery; (2) a renewed sense and discovery of a mission and calling from God. His surrender came about in what he calls *prayer of silence* to a silent God the Mystery, which necessitated an interior silence and self-emptying. He became contemplatively more open and free before the Mystery. Following his 1979 retreat, Kim came to a

renewed resolution that he, more than anybody else, as bishop of Seoul, should follow Christ and live an evangelical life (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 440). In this way, the retreat became a major turning point for his spiritual career. It amounted to a wholehearted contemplative turning towards God.

Salient, Personal Features of Kim's Spirituality

Deep Sense of Mystery: Mystery is Kim's favorite notion, the center point of his spirituality. It is an expression of the totality of his thinking and feeling about the nature of human life and God. He often offers an intriguing reminder that "we cannot live without Mystery" (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 54). Hence, Kim's spirituality, theologically grounded in his understanding of the *imago dei* doctrine, manifests a deep sense of the mystery of human life and God, and of the worth of the human being. Because human beings are created *according to* and *toward* the prototype, Christ, they are not only endowed with inalienable dignity, but also live in hunger and thirst for God (*Chŏnjip*, 9: 181–83). Thus, human fulfillment is possible only through a union with Christ. This demands a following and imitation of Christ Jesus, which has a twofold structure (the mystical and the social). However, the ultimate realization of being human comes true in surrender to God the Mystery, which is practiced especially in prayer.

Respect and Reverence for Human Beings: Kim's conviction of the inalienable dignity and worth of the human being manifested itself as humble respect and reverence for every individual. That fundamentally Christian attitude may have been informed by his well-attested Confucian learning (Ku, *Saranghago*, 22, 142–43). In fact, his humble demeanor and respectful care with kindness in dealing with any person made a deep impression so as to remind some people of a crucial virtue in Confucian self-cultivation, *kyŏng* 敬 (respect and reverence) (Ku, *Saranghago*, 5).³⁵ Hence, people tend to attribute Kim's far-reaching influence to that overall quality of his cultivated character, which seems to have most touched people's hearts.³⁶

Sincerity and Repentance: Kim's life of Christian faith echoes another primal Confucian virtue intimately related to *kyŏng*, namely *sŏng* 誠 (sincerity and authenticity).³⁷ People perceived Kim's sincerity with honesty in his words and deeds, and its connection to the reality of his constant and deep self-examination

practiced especially in prayer (*Kürium*, 25–26, 60, 113, 172, 184, 259–60; *Kürium II*, 101, 124, 137). Kim endeavored earnestly to be true to himself as a Christian and, moreover, a priest of Christ, which meant for him a complete commitment to God in the following and imitation of Christ. His recognition of continual inadequacy and failure in Christian discipleship created in him a deep sense of remorse. Hence, his spirituality was marked with a repentant spirit ever seeking the conversion of his heart. His retrospective confession (2007) reveals his deep-felt and long-cherished desire for “tears of repentance” (*t’onghoe üi nunmul*) stemming from a keen awareness of failure in wholehearted conversion to Christ and, particularly, of failure in living his life for and with the poor in a more truthful and actual manner (*Iyagi*, 424–25, 427, 431, 433).³⁸

Life of Faith with Ordinary Spiritual Experience: Kim lived with an unquenchable hunger and thirst for God’s presence, and yet without special experience. He came to realize that what was essential was *faith*. Faith was, for him, the marrow of spirituality. Nonetheless, an apparent absence of God haunted him. He had to learn to be content with his lot, and to take his cross in surrendering again and again to the will of a silent and intangible God.³⁹

This crucial aspect of Kim’s spirituality calls for explanation. Here, I suggest, it can be interpreted as an eminent case of Karl Rahner’s “a mysticism of everyday life.”⁴⁰ For Rahner, the “mystical” aspect of human existence as “experienced reference to Mystery”—that is the very heart of mysticism—is found in every person’s primordial experience of God. Moreover, mysticism’s goal is “loving surrender to Mystery and its loving acceptance by this Mystery” (Egan 1980, 153). Hence, Jesus Christ is “the paradigm of mysticism’s radical meaning: total self-surrender to loving Mystery so that one no longer belongs to self but to God” (Ibid., 147–48). In this view, mysticism and mystical experience are tacitly found in all human acts, and especially in the reality of ordinary experience of life that Rahner calls *a mysticism of everyday life*: for example, a perseverance in surrender to and acceptance of God the Mystery in silent faith, trust, love, unselfish service, and the like. As sober type of spirituality, it is nothing other than the *experience of faith*. This theology, I believe, makes good sense of the mystical aspect of Cardinal Kim’s spirituality, especially his praxis of prayer.

Life of Deep Prayer: Kim was compelled to surrender to the Mystery in prayer, especially in the *prayer of silence* (*ch'immuk kido*) that he began to seriously practice in the long retreat of 1979.⁴¹ He lamented over a lack of any special or dramatic experience of God in prayer. Yet he seems to have had a deep, if not rich, prayer life.⁴² Moreover, he endeavored to assure others of the efficacy of an ordinary way of prayer, and to guide them in it. He did this with a deep conviction born out of his personal experience of an ordinary and yet real encounter with God in prayer. He used to liken prayer to going through a desert. He thus strove to stick to faith, that is, a faith in the presence of God and God's love for him (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 516). He was aware of the difference that a habitual practice of prayer brought about in his person, such as openness to others, a forgiving heart, and so forth (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 493–94). In this way, he knew that God is, and worked silently in him (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 452, 474).⁴³ For him, prayer was above all a time of a “waste of self” (*chagi somo*), and that the ultimate goal of prayer was “to dissolve into God” (*Hanŭnim soke yonghaedoenŭn kŏt*) (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 500), which, he knew, was a gift that had no end. Thus, Kim's praxis of the prayer of silence seems worthy of being called mystical praxis in the Rahnerian sense, not because it earned for him extraordinary experiences, but because it involved such a deep conviction and commitment of faith so as to soar into the hidden realm of the Mystery of God.

Poverty at the Core of Spirituality: This brings us to the theme of *poverty* (actual and spiritual) at the core of Kim's spirituality. It was very close to Cardinal Kim's being and heart, due to its relation to his personal experiences and its being the central theme and reality of political/liberation spirituality. Kim appropriated rich theological and spiritual reflections on poverty in the Christian tradition so as to develop his own thoughts on it, which touch upon classical themes of Christian spirituality and mysticism.

As Kim saw, it was *evangelical poverty* (*pogŭmjŏk kanan*) along with *evangelical spirit of service* that was the core religious value and the key reality uniting the two constitutive dimensions of Christian existence (the mystical and the social). The central problem within the Church today, according to Kim's diagnosis, was a lack of “evangelical spirituality” (*pogŭmjŏk yŏngsŏng*), that is, a lack of “spirituality joining one's life to the life of Christ” (*Chŏnjip*, 10: 4–5). Kim states: “Jesus Christ is everything to me. He came in the form of one poor,

and showed God's love to the poor, the marginalized, and the afflicted, and then shed his blood on the cross" (*Iyagi*, 432). Yet, Kim's meditation goes deeper.⁴⁴ For him, the Christian practice of (evangelical) poverty is ultimately founded upon the nature of the Being of God, the poverty of God (*Hanŭnim ūi kanaanham*), that the poverty of Jesus manifests. The person of Jesus Christ, in which there is unity of being, word, and act, is rooted in, and therefore reflects, the very poverty of God so that it responds to the needs of people with the totality of his person addressing the totality of people (material and spiritual). Likewise, through evangelical spirituality, he believed, Christians would open their hearts to the world and to the people around them, so as to open their being to the most urgent needs and sufferings of people that demand a total response of love. If *love* is the essence of Jesus's message and presence, Kim suggests, *poverty* is the cornerstone and foundation of his presence and message (*Chŏnjip*, 6: 429). In accordance with his thought, Kim, within the constraints of his life as the prelate of the Church, aspired to actually live out and practice evangelical poverty that entails an evangelical spirit of service.⁴⁵

Kim's meditation on poverty leads to the innermost secret, depth and aspiration of Kim's spirituality. In Kim's various meditations, poverty as a profound spiritual reality is essentially one with the kenosis (self-emptying), surrender, humility, and dying of Christ upon the cross (Philippians 2:5–8) for the sake of making others rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). The supreme sacramental embodiment of poverty as the kenotic love of Christ was the Eucharist. "We have expressions in Asia such as "no-self" (*mua*) and "selfless love" (*morajŏk sarang*). Here in the Eucharist, it seems, these words find their meaning," he notes (*Chŏnjip*, 9: 243). Kim aspired to live that love. Hence, his pastoral motto as bishop *pro vobis et pro multis* was taken from the Canon of Mass: "The Lord humbled himself and emptied himself to the degree of becoming food (*pab*) for us. I chose those words because I too wanted to offer up everything like Christ so as to become food (*pab*) for all people" (*Iyagi*, 190). Furthermore, poverty as humility (*kyŏmson*) is a total surrender to God so as to bring forth life like good soil (*humus*) for others.⁴⁶ This humility is, then, the paschal mystery of Christ Jesus. It is in dying on the cross that one is transposed with Christ to the realm of the eternal life (Galatians 2:19–20). In this way, poverty as a profound spiritual reality requires the total annihilation or kenotic emptying

of the egoistic self. Kim called it “poverty of no-self” (*mua ŭi ch’ōngbin*), and “state of zero point” (*yōngjōm ŭi sangt’ae*) where the divine life flows down (*Nōhūiwa*, 20, 57). This self-emptying (*chagi pium*), a form of martyrdom (*Nōhūiwa*, 49), takes place for Kim especially in the prayer of silence, a privileged time for both ascesis and reception of *poverty*. This explains why he came to feel the urgency of the practice of contemplative prayer and also, in his teaching, to put so much emphasis on the necessity of prayer (*Chōnjip*, 14: 251).⁴⁷

Kim’s meditations on poverty testify to his deepest spiritual concerns and innermost spiritual aspirations. Such deep and life-long meditations with sincere aspirations in Kim’s heart and soul must have had certain repercussions on his personal character and mode of life. People came to perceive, I believe, the very manifestation of Kim’s “poverty of spirit” or “spirituality of poverty,” more than anywhere else in a remarkably humble and natural way that Kim’s personality came across to them despite his high-ranking position as Cardinal.⁴⁸ Again, perhaps he was no more than a mystic of the everyday life in terms of religious experience. However, the depth of his spirituality was in touch with the great mystical spirituality of the Western Christian tradition, especially the German-Flemish mysticism of poverty.

Instructive here are two emblems expressive of Kim’s religious ideal and spirituality: his episcopal pastoral motto *pro vobis et pro multis*, and his pen name Onggi. The first emblem was a public one, encapsulating his religious ideal to become bread for all people. This ideal animated his Christian life in its twofold structure (the mystical and the social). Moreover, it necessitated poverty, kenosis (self-emptying), humility, surrender, and dying. This ideal was also expressed in Onggi, which he secretly harbored in his heart throughout his life. It symbolizes synthetically core features of his spirituality such as the faith-dedication of martyrs, poverty, fragility, the power of God within, and simplicity.

Conclusion

This study is offered as a first attempt to understand the overall shape and character of the spirituality of the late Cardinal Sou-hwan Kim, the preeminent

Korean Catholic Christian and pastor of contemporary Korea. It has sought to understand his inner religious world and the religious motivations that enabled his influential life and public activity in Korean society. It has done so in part by placing his spirituality in the historical and theological context of contemporary Catholicism since Vatican II, and it has found that Kim's spirituality was thoroughly Christian in its inspiration, vision, praxis, and experience. It has also hinted at the fact that Kim's Christian spirituality was informed by resources of Korean culture, especially Confucianism. In short, Kim's was an incarnational spirituality, self-consciously informed by the spirit of Vatican II and the culture and history of modern Korea.

Notes

- 1 The percentage of Catholics in relation to the overall population of South Korea was around 2.5 percent in 1970 (two years after Kim's promotion to the archbishop of Seoul) and 3.5 percent in 1980. Statistics on the South Korean population and the number of Catholics are respectively taken from Korean Statistical Information Service (<http://kosis.kr/>) and *Hanguk ch'önjugyohoe ch'ongnam 2004–2012* (Seoul: Han'guk ch'önjugyo chungang hyöpüihoe, 2013), 377–408.
- 2 There exists a collection of studies related to some individual aspects of Cardinal Kim's life and thought. Kat'olik taehakkyō Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng yōn'guso, *Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng yōn'gu I* (Puch'ön: Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng yōn'guso, 2014).
- 3 Kim's autobiographical oral narrative is edited as a book. Kim Suhwan [Sou-hwan Kim], *Ch'ugigyōng Kim Suhwan iyagi (chūngbop'an)*, ed. P'yōnghwa sinmun (Seoul: PBC Press, 2009). References to this book will be given as follows: (*Iyagi*, page number). There is a helpful critical biography in Korean: Ku Chungso, *Saranghago tto saranghago yongsō haseyo (Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng p'yōngjōn)* (Seoul: Chaek mandūn chip, 2009). References to the work will be given as follows: (Ku, *Saranghago*, page number). All translations are my own.
- 4 Kim Suhwan [Sou-hwan Kim], *Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng chōnjip*, ed. Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng chōnjip p'yōnch'an wiwōnhoe, 18 vols. (Seoul: Kat'olik ch'ulp'ansa, 2001). References to this work will be given as follows: (*Chōnjip*, volume number: page number). References are originally in Korean (whose English translations are

my own), unless otherwise noted. I also consulted an anthology of Cardinal Kim's writings, *Nōhūiwa modūn irūl wihayō* (*Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng ūi sinang kobaek*), ed. Sin Ch'igu (Seoul: Tosō ch'ulp'an saram kwa saram, 1999). References to this work will be given as: (*Nōhūiwa*, page number), with all translations my own.

- 5 I consulted two reliable and valuable collections by Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng yōn'guso (Stephen Cardinal Kim Institute) of some people's remembrances of Cardinal Kim, which were originally either talks given or interviews conducted in 2012–2014. Kat'olik taehakkyō Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng yōn'guso, *Kūriun Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng* (Puch'ōn: Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng yōn'guso, 2013); *Kūriun Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng II* (Puch'ōn: Kim Suhwan ch'ugigyōng yōn'guso, 2014). References to these collections will be given as follows: (*Kūriun*, page number); (*Kūriun II*, page number).
- 6 For the relationship between “Christian spirituality” and its specific historical forms, see Vandenbroucke (1965, 45–60), Galilea (1988, 3–7, 19–46).
- 7 For the notion of Karl Rahner, see Metz (1998, 93).
- 8 On the contextual nature of Christian spirituality in history and the necessity of contextual studies, see Sheldrake (2007, 4–11) and Galilea (1988, 11–17).
- 9 For Kim's explanation of his secret pen name, see *Iyagi*, 437–38. As for the occasion of Kim's divulgence of his pen name, see *Kūriun* (22). In 2002, Cardinal Kim took the initiative to establish the Onggi Scholarship (Onggi changhakhoe) for the formation of priests dedicated to the evangelization of North Korea.
- 10 Quotations are from his tribute in English to Joseph Höfner. And *Centesimus Annus* is a 1991 encyclical by Pope John Paul II, which is part of Catholic social teaching.
- 11 See his lecture (March 1980) “Nae iusūl pōryō tul kōsin'ga?” (Shall I Abandon My Neighbors?) in *Chōnjip* (6: 7–18).
- 12 In *Chōnjip* 9: 51–63, there is an article by Kim as bishop of Masan, “Kongūihoenūn wae issōssnūn'ga?” (Why did the Council come about?), originally published in the journal *Samok* (vol. 2, August 1967). In his testimony (*Kūriun*, 153), Tubong (René Dupont), the first bishop of Andong diocese, says: “Cardinal Kim was truly an exemplary bishop who thoroughly understood the spirit of Vatican II and really lived in accordance with it.”
- 13 See his speech (August 1979), “Kyohoe ūi sahoe ch'amyō, kū kūnwōnūl ch'ajasō” (Social involvement of the Church: in search of its roots) in *Chōnjip* (13: 49–56).
- 14 For his ordination as bishop (1966), Kim took a literal translation of *pro vobis et pro multis*: “for you and for many.” But as he was promoted to the archbishop of Seoul

- (1968), he changed it into “for you and for all.” This may be an indication of his deepened and widened sense of his religious ideal. See *Iyagi*, 189, 210.
- 15 For this estimation, see the view of a well-known historian of the Korean Catholic Church, Cho Gwang, in *Kūrium* (278–79). See also Ku (*Saranghago*, 60).
 - 16 The message is in Ku (*Saranghago*, 74–84).
 - 17 For this aspect of Confucian thought, see Sung Hae Kim (2005).
 - 18 See also *Chōnjip* (5: 286–92). We have these testimonies: “[Cardinal Kim] could not remain silent when the human being was not treated as it ought to be, precisely as the human being” (*Kūrium*, 49); “Throughout his life, he thought and judged everything according to the measure that is for him the human being. That is indeed extremely difficult” (*Kūrium II*, 136).
 - 19 For bishop Yun Konghūi’s testimony, see *Kūrium II* (28).
 - 20 For his agonizing thoughts over both criticisms against him and the division within the Church, see *Iyagi* (242–43, 269–72, 282–83, 289–90).
 - 21 The reference is from a 1986 interview, but Kim must have held it throughout his career as the expressed view is informed by the social teachings of the Catholic Church.
 - 22 Interestingly, sister Son Insook offers this insight into what Cardinal Kim essentially did for the poor: “Cardinal Kim did not give the poor money but endeavored to boost their self-respect” (*Kūrium*, 57).
 - 23 For similar perspectives by others, see *Kūrium* (161–63, 282); *Kūrium II* (42–44, 182–85, 206–07). See also Kim Wōnsōk (2011, 6). According to Kim Wōnsōk, Cardinal Kim was neither “progressive” nor “conservative.” This was because he was a leader and so had to find “balance” between sides to the effect that he appeared to others as rather “conservative.” What made Cardinal Kim different from other leaders, Kim Wōnsōk maintains, was the fact that he not only always cherished in his heart the values of justice and love, but also had the courage to live and act according to them.
 - 24 See also Ku (*Saranghago*, 7–8, 24–25, 30).
 - 25 His early meditation (1965) on Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21), who had to take up Jesus’s own cross on his shoulder, smacks of autobiography. See *Chōnjip* (17: 7–8).
 - 26 For an insight into the consequence of Kim’s pastoral sensibility and activity on his evolving ecclesiastical career, see Ku (*Saranghago*, 43).
 - 27 For liberation theology and spirituality, see Oliveros (1993); Goizueta (2004); Sobrino (1988; 1996); and Galilea (1985).
 - 28 For Metz’s political theology, see Ashley (2004); Metz (1978; 1980).

- 29 The English text is in *Chŏnjip* (9: 200–07).
- 30 Kim divided the period of his archbishopric of Seoul (1968–1998) into two phases in accordance with two defining socio-economic and political realities of Korean society at the time, which demanded correspondingly different responses from the Church: (I) 1970s–1980s: the period of the Church’s active social involvement for the promotion of justice and the defense of human rights; (II) 1990s: the period of new challenges to the Church due to economic growth in the aftermath of democratization. See the English text of an interview in *Avvenire* (13 May 1997), “The Korean Catholic Church” in *Chŏnjip* (16: 316–26), and the speech (1999), “Han’guk ŭi pogŭm sŏn’gyo” (Evangelization of Korea) in *Chŏnjip* (12: 223–42).
- 31 For a discussion of continuity and discontinuity between Rahner’s theology and these two contextual theologies, see Martinez (2001, viii–ix, 21–24, 216–17).
- 32 See Metz (1980, 177–78; 1978, 42–44; 1998, 162–63); Boff (1980–81, 369–76, 372–73); and Martinez (2001, 248).
- 33 In *Chŏnjip* (17: 417–83).
- 34 His retreat talks given in 1979, 1987, 1991, 1993, and 1997 are found in *Chŏnjip* (4: 378–98; 9: 181–91, 227–44; 14: 187–93, 194–228, 229–63).
- 35 For the meaning of the virtue *kyŏng*, see Berry (2003, 39–45, 47).
- 36 For some testimonies, see *Kŭrium* (23–25, 208–09, 259).
- 37 For the Neo-Confucian moral metaphysics of *sŏng*, see a commentary on the *Doctrine of the Mean*, a central work of the Confucian tradition in Wei-ming Tu (1989).
- 38 For a testimony to this aspect of Kim’s spirituality, see *Kŭrium* (60).
- 39 In a meeting in June 1999, I had a chance to hear Cardinal Kim discuss his prayer life and his understanding of personal vocation. He talked about his lack of remarkable religious experiences of encounters with God, his difficulty in prayer, and his sincere desire even then (at age 77) to learn more about how to pray. He then shared his faith-experience that, in spite of lack of his longed-for God-experience, he had been all along called to serve as a pastor, and his realization that there was in fact no other way of salvation for him than to follow the way of being a pastor, which he believed was set out by God.
- 40 See Egan (1980, 139–68; 1998, 55–79).
- 41 Kim learned such prayer through Anthony Bloom’s *Kido ŭi ch’ehŏm*, one of his favorite books, and Louis Evelyn’s *Öttöke kidohal kŏtin’ga*. His practice of a three-hour prayer of silence during the 30-day retreat of 1979 (*Chŏnjip*, 17: 417, 418, 420) derives from Louis Evelyn’s suggestion (1973, 12).

- 42 For some close personal testimonies of Kim's prayer practice and impressions of his prayer life, see *Kūriun* (25–26, 60, 260); *Kūriun II* (101).
- 43 For the idea, he was indebted to Louis Evelyn (1973, 10).
- 44 For Kim's deep meditations on poverty, see two similar pieces: a 1979 meditation "Yesukkesōnūn kananhan Hanūnimūl tūrōnaesinda" (Jesus Reveals to Us a Poor God) in *Chōnjip* (6: 439–48), and a 1984 meditation, "Kananhan idūrūl pogūm-hwahasinūn Yesunim" (Jesus Who Evangelizes the Poor) in *Chōnjip* (4: 245–53).
- 45 For testimonies with concrete examples to Kim's practice of evangelical poverty, see *Kūriun* (25, 29–32): "Cardinal Kim lived the poverty of Jesus" (31); *Kūriun* (41–63); *Kūriun II* (97–100, 277): "That he truly lived evangelical life seems to have been deeply ingrained in our skin" (277).
- 46 Kim frequently referred to Anthony Bloom's meditation on humility in relation to earth (Bloom 1974, 56–59).
- 47 Kim says: "Prayer, as it is a life-and-death matter, has to do with the totality of the person, the whole of human existence. It is not at all just one of many tasks of everyday life."
- 48 For testimonies of the way Kim's humility with unpretentious simplicity left a lasting impression, see *Kūriun* (113, 172); *Kūriun II* (136, 163–71).

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