

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

**Bernadette Rigal-Cellard**



JDTREA 2022,1(2): 61-87

**Original Articles**

Bernadette Rigal-Cellard is Professor in North-American Studies and Religious Studies at the Université Bordeaux Montaigne (France). A specialist of minority religions and of their interaction with their surrounding culture, she has edited several volumes on the transformations of religions in the context of globalization and several monographies such as *La religion des mormons* (2012); *Les Douze Tribus en France* (The Twelve Tribes) (2019). In the last few years she has written several articles on Korean and Taiwanese new religions.

Correspondence to

**Bernadette Rigal-Cellard**

Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France

**brcellard@gmail.com**



*Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia* Vol. 1. Issue 2 (March 2022): 61–87  
© 2022 by the Daesoon Academy of Sciences, Daejin University, Korea

<https://doi.org/10.25050/JDTREA.2022.1.2.61>

**Day of submission:** 2021. 11. 28.

**Completion of review:** 2022. 02. 15.

**Final decision for acceptance:** 2022. 03. 20.

P-ISSN: 2799-3949

E-ISSN: 2799-4252

## Abstract

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

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

## Introduction

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

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

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

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

## **Part One: Incarnation**

### **1. The terrestrial life of Kang Jeongsan**

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

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

### **2. A Typology of Divine Incarnations**

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

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

## Ascending Incarnations

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

## Descending Incarnations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3. Kang as the Human Incarnation of Sangje

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

incarnation in an authentic human body.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 1. Sangje, a Confucian God between Daoism and Maitreyaism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. Sangje as a God of Monotheism

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

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

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

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

### 3. The Introduction of Monotheism in Korea

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

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

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



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

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

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

#### **4. Probable impact of Christianity on Daeseon**

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



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

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

## 5. Differences between the Christian God and Sangje

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Conclusion

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

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

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

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

## Conflict of Interest

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

## Note

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

## References

- Baker, Donald L. 2002 “Hananim, Hanünim, Hanullim, and Hanöllim: The Construction of Terminology for Korean Monotheism”. *The Review of Korean Studies*. 5:1. 105–131.
- 2003 “Modernization and Monotheism: How Urbanization and Westernization Have Transformed the Religious Landscape of Korea.” In Sang-Oak Lee, Gregory K. Iverson ‘eds. *Pathways into Korean Language and Culture: Essays in Honor of Young-key Kim-Renaud*. Seoul: Pajigong Press. 471–507.
- 2007 “The Korean God Is Not the Christian God: Taejonggyo’s Challenge to Foreign Religions”. In Robert E. Buswell, Jr. ed. *Religions of Korea in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 464–475.
- 2008 *Korean Spirituality*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press
- 2012 “Finding God in the Classics: The Theistic Confucianism of Dasan JEONG Yagyong.” *Dao* (2013) 12:41–55. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-012-9303-0>.
- 2016a “The Impact of Christianity on Modern Korea: An Overview”. *Acta Koreana*. 19:1 (June) 45–67. <https://doi.org/10.18399/acta.2016.19.1.002>
- 2016b “Daesoon Sasang: A Quintessential Korean Philosophy.” *Daesoon Jinrihoe: A New Religion Emerging from Traditional East Asian Philosophy*, edited by Daesoon Academy of Sciences. Yeosu-si: Daesoon Jinrihoe Press. 1–17.
- Buswell, Robert E., Jr. (ed.). 2007 *Religions of Korea in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Buswell, Robert E. & Timothy S. Lee 2007 *Christianity in Korea*. University of Hawaii Press.

- Cha, Seon-Keun. 2010. "Comparative Study of Jeong-Yeok Thought and Daeseon Thought." *Religious Studies* 60, 35–59. (cité par david kim, son livre 2019 page 250, 251, 332) <https://doi.org/10.21457/kars..60.201009.35> [Korean Language Text] 차선근, 「정역사상과 대순사상의 비교 연구」, 『종교연구』 60, 2010.
2014. "An Introduction to the Study of the Outlook on the Highest Ruling Entity in Daeseon Jinrihoe (2) - Focusing on 15 Godship and Yang-wui Sangje (Sangje in two Godship)." *The Journal of Daeseon Academy of Sciences* 23: 241–292. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2014.23.0.241> [Korean Language Text] 차선근, 「대순진리회 상제관 연구 서설 (Ⅱ) -15 신위와 양위상제를 중심으로」, 『대순사상논총』 23, 2014.
2018. "A Comparative Study on Daeseon (大巡) Thought and Dangun (檀君)." *The Journal of Daeseon Academy of Sciences* 31: 199–235. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2018.31.0.199> [Korean Language Text] 차선근, 「대순사상과 단군사상 비교연구-서사구조와 모티프 분석을 중심으로-」, 『대순사상논총』 31, 2018.
2019. "The Problem of Theodicy in Daeseon Jinrihoe." *Journal of the Academy of Daeseon Sciences* 33:257–286. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2019.33.0.257> [Korean Language Text] 차선근, 「대순진리회에서 신정론 문제」, 『대순사상논총』 33, 2019.
- Chai Shin Yu (ed.). 1996. *Korea and Christianity*. Seoul, Berkeley, Toronto: Korean Scholar Press.
- Chao Shin-yi 2011. *Daoist Ritual, State Religion, and Popular Practices: Zhenwu Worship from Song to Ming (960–1644)*. London: Routledge.
- Choi, Chi-Bong 2017. "A Study of the Concept of God in Daeseon Thought: Focusing on the Concept of God, Divine Beings, and the Divine Dao as Depicted in the I Ching." *The Journal of Daeseon Academy of Sciences* 28: 267–302. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2017.28.0.267> [Korean Language Text] 최치봉, 「대순사상의 신 개념에 관한 연구-『주역』의 신·신명·신도 개념을 중심으로-」, 『대순사상논총』 28, 2018.

- Choi, Wonhyuk  
2016 “Similarities between Neo-Confucianism and Islam through Maitreya Egypt-Isis, Christianity, Yin Yang Wuxing and I-ching in Daeseonjinrihoe”. A paper presented at the 2016 Cesnur International Conference, Pocheon City, Republic of Korea, 5–10 July.
- Chung, David.  
2001 *Syncretism: The Religious Context of Christian Beginnings in Korea*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Daeseon Institute for  
Religion and Culture  
(DIRC) 1994 *Life and Thought of Jeongsan*. Seoul: Press of Daeseon Jinrihoe. [Korean Language Text] 대순종교문화연구소, 『증산의 생애와 사상』, 서울: 대순진리회 출판부, 1994.
- 2016 “The History and Theology of Daeseonjinrihoe.” In *Daeseon Jinrihoe: A New Religion Emerging from Traditional East Asian Philosophy*, edited by The Daeseon Academy of Sciences, 199–216. Yeosu: Daeseon Jinrihoe Press.
- 2020 *The Canonical Scripture*, Yeosu: Daeseon Jinrihoe Press. <http://dirc.kr/dictionary/app/dt/scripture/dic.php?idx=2#e>
- The Religious Affairs and  
Edification Department of  
Daeseon Jinrihoe  
(AADDJ) 2017 *Daeseon Jinrihoe: The Fellowship of Daeseon Truth*. Yeosu: Daeseon Jinrihoe Press.
- De la Grasserie, Raoul  
1908 *Des phénomènes religieux dits Mystères (Triades ou dédoublements divins, anthroposes ou incarnations, apothysioses ou rédemptions par sacrifice avec leur aboutissement dans le culte)*. Observés au point de vue psychologique & subjectif. Ernest Leroux, Libraire-Éditeur, 28 rue Bonaparte, Paris.
- Daryl, Philippe  
1885 *Le Monde chinois*. Paris: J. Hetzel et Cie, éditeurs, 18 rue Jacob.
- Dallet, Charles Claude  
1874 *Histoire de l'Église de Corée*. Précédée d'une Introduction sur l'histoire, les institutions, la langue, les mœurs et coutumes coréennes avec carte et planches. Tome Premier. Paris: Librairie Victor Palmé, éditeur, rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain.

- Flaherty, Robert Pearson  
2004 “JeungSanDo and the Great Opening of the later Heaven: Millenarism, Syncretism, and the Religion of Gang Il-sun.” *Nova Religio*. 7:3. 26–44. <https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2004.7.3.26>.
- Goossaert, Vincent and David Palmer  
2011 *The Religious Question in Modern China*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Goossaert, Vincent  
2016 “Bureaucracy and Salvation: Chinese Ways to Divinization”. Lecture. Center for Chinese Studies (March 16). Berkeley Center for the Study of Religion.
- 2017 *Bureaucratie et salut : Devenir un dieu en Chine*. Paris: Labor et Fides.
- Han, Gang Hyen  
2017 “A Prophet Like Moses in Korea? The Rise and Future of a Korean New Religious Movement.” (Victory Altar) A paper presented at the 2017 Cesnur International Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, 2–6 July.
- Introvigne, Massimo  
2018 “Daeseon Jinrihoe: An Introduction.” *The Journal of Cesnur*. 2:5 (September-October). 26–48. Special issue Daeseon Jinrihoe. <https://doi.org/10.26338/tjoc.2018.2.5.4>
- Kim, Andrew Eungi  
2000 “Korea’s Religious Culture and its Affinity to Christianity: The Rise of Protestant Christianity in South Korea” *Sociology of Religion* 61(2) (summer 2000), pp. 117–133. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3712281>
- 2002 “Characteristics of Religious Life in South Korea: a Sociological Survey.” *Review of Religious Research*. 43:4,291–310. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3512000>.
- 2005 “Nation-Building and Korean Civil Religion: the Making of National Community, Culture and Identity. *Acta Koreana*. 8:2. July. 117–137.
- Kim, Chongsuh  
2014 “The Viewpoints of Church History and the Concept of 'New Religion' in Korea.” A paper presented at the 2014 Cesnur International Conference, Waco, Texas, 4–7 June.



- Kim, David W.  
2014 “Daesoon Jinrihoe in Korean New Religious Movements.” *The Journal of the Daesoon Academy of Sciences* 24, 1, 167–208.
- 2015 “Sangje and Samkye: The Cosmology of Daesoon Jinrihoe in East Asian New Religions.” *The Journal of Daesoon Academy of Sciences* 25:1. 189–229.
- 2020 *Daesoon Jinrihoe in Modern Korea Society: Emergence, Transformation and Transmission of a New Religious Movement*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Kim, Taesoo  
2017 “The Meaning of 'Haewon-sangsaeng' and the Sacred Place in Daesoon Jinrihoe: Focusing on its Religious Hierophany in relation to 'Sinin-jowha'.” A paper presented at the 2017 Cesnur International Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, 2–6 July.
- Ko, Nam-Sik  
2014 “A Study on the Meanings of Daesoonjinrihoe Gangseong Sangje’s Divinity.” *The Journal of Daesoon Academy of Sciences* 22:1–32. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2014.22.0.1> [Korean Language Text] 고남식, 「대순진리회 강성상제의 신격과 그 의미-강성(姜聖)의 의미를 중심으로-」, 『대순사상논총』 22, 2014.
- 2016 “Study on the Relations between Kang Jeungsan and Cho Jeongsan Decribed in the Chapter 2 of *Passing on of the Teachings, Jeon-gyeong*.” A paper presented at the 2016 Cesnur International Conference, Pocheon City. 5–10 July.
- Kohn, Livia  
1999 *God of the Dao: Lord Lao in History and Myth*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Chinese Studies.
- Lancaster, Lewis  
2016 “Maitreya in Korea”. In Sponberg, Alan & Hardacre, Helen (eds.). *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press. 135–153.
- Larchet, Jean-Claude  
1988 “La divinisation comme projet et modèle chrétien du perfectionnement et de l’augmentation de l’homme.” *Revue d’éthique et de théologie morale* 4 : 286, p. 181–197.

- Lee, Bong-Ho 2015 “The Meaning of ‘Maitreya(彌勒)’ in Jeon-gyeong.” *The Journal of Daesoon Academy of Sciences* 26:45–75. <https://doi.org/0.25050/jdaos.2016.26.0.45> [Korean Language Text] 이봉호, 「『전경』에 나타난 ‘미륵’의 성격」, 『대순사상논총』 26, 2016.
- Lee, Gyungwon 2016 *An Introduction to New Korean Religions*. Translated by Key Ray Chong. Seoul: Moonsachul Publishing.
- Lee, Sang-Ho 1965 *Daesoon Jeongyeong 6<sup>th</sup> ed.* Gimje: Dongdogyo Jeungsangyohoe Headquarters. [Korean Language Text] 이상호, 『대순전경』, 6판, 김제: 동도교 증산교회본부, 1965.
- Moon, Sun Myung 2001 *The Life and Mission of Jesus Christ*. The Holy Spirit association for Unification of World Christianity.
- Palmer, Spencer J. 1986 *Korea and Christianity: The Problem of Identification with Tradition*. Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch. Foreword by Joseph R. Levenson.
- Park, In-gyu 2018 “A Study of the Soteriology of Daesoon Thought.” *The Journal of Daesoon Academy of Sciences*. 30: 95–130. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2018.30.0.95> [Korean Language Text] 박인규, 「대순사상의 구원론 연구」, 『대순사상논총』 30, 2018.
- Park, Jae-Hyun 2012 “Dialectical understanding of ‘Ultimate Reality’ in Religious Pluralism: Focused on theism in comparison of Christianity, Donghak and Daesoon Thoughts.” A paper presented at the 2012 Cesnur International Conference, El Jadida, Morocco, 20–22 September.
- Park, Jong-chun 2018 “The Historical Development of Beliefs in the Thunder God and their Magico-ritual Techniques as Viewed from the Perspective of Korean National Religious History.” *The Journal of Daesoon Academy of Sciences*. 31:49–92. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2018.31.0.49> [Korean Language Text] 박종천, 「한국의 뇌신(雷神) 신앙과 슬법의 역사적 양상과 민족 종교적 의미」, 『대순사상논총』 31, 2018.

- Park, Yong-cheol  
2017 “A Study on the Divinity of ‘the Supreme God and Celestial Worthy of the Ninth Heaven Who Spreads the Sound of the Thunder Corresponding to Primordial Origin’: Focusing on the Relationship between the Divine Qualities of Being ‘the Celestial Worthy of Universal Transformation’ and ‘the Lord God of Great Creation in the Ninth Heaven’.” *The Journal of Daeseon Academy of Sciences*. 29:71–100. [Korean Language Text] 박용철, 「구천응원뇌성보화천존상제 신격 연구—‘보화천존’과 ‘구천대원조화주신’의 관계를 중심으로—」, 『대순사상논총』 29, 2017.
- Pokorny, Lukas  
2018 “Korean New Religious Movements: An Introduction.” In Lukas Pokorny and Franz Winter (eds.). *Handbook of East Asian New Religious Movements*. Lukas Leiden: Brill. 231–254.
- Roberts, Jeremy  
2010 *Chinese Mythology A to Z*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Römer, Thomas. L  
2014 *L'invention de Dieu*. Paris, Le Seuil.
- Ryu, Sung-Min  
2014 “A Study on the Religious-Ethical Meaning of ‘Reorganizing the order of Heaven and Earth’ in the Scripture of Daeseonjinrihoe.” *The Journal of Daeseon Academy of Sciences* 23:1–36. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2014.23.0.1> [Korean Language Text] 류성민, 「천지공사’의 종교윤리적 의미에 대한 연구」, 『대순사상논총』 23, 2014.
- Shin, Sangmi  
2018 “The Origin of the thought of Thunder God and the Development into a Korean new religion (Daeseon Jinrihoe).” A paper presented at the 2018 Censur International Conference, Nantou County, Taiwan, 17–23 June.
- Yoon, Yong-Bok  
2013 “The perception of gods in Daeseonjinrihoe.” *The Journal of Daeseon Academy of Sciences* 21:1–28. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2013.21.0.1>. [Korean Language Text] 윤용복, 「대순진리회 신관념(神觀念)의 특성」, 『대순사상논총』 21, 2013.