

**MÜNSTER AND MINJUNG:  
RE-READING THE ANABAPTIST MÜNSTER KINGDOM  
FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF KOREAN MINJUNG  
(COMMON PEOPLE) THEOLOGY**

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I, the undersigned, hereby solemnly declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have previously submitted in its entirety or in part submitted at any academic institution or university

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date March 2018



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## ABSTRACT

The main interest of this research is to reinterpret the sixteenth-century radical Reformation in general and the event of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster in particular, through the lens of the twentieth-century Korean Minjung Theology. This revisits not only to the radical Reformation as the place where the suffering/crucified minjung and Messiah are meeting together and the place where the liberated/resurrected minjung and Messiah are encountering together. It also re-invites the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as the place of hybridity, wherein the radical Reformers and the common people are dialectically driven to participate and contribute to the Reformation both as *guru* and *avatar*; victimizers and victims; and sinners and sinned-against. This helps looking anew the rank-and-file minjung as being-in-the Messiah; both as the protagonists (*guru*), who have achieved their liberation by themselves, and the psalmists (*avatar*), who have received their salvation by the Messiah. By connecting this *perichoresis* to the contemporary suffering context as the epitome of *ecclesia semper reformanda*, the research results are being portrayed as follows;

### Chapter 1: Introduction

The premise of the researcher is that history is not an objective, external historical reality. Rather historians play a pivotal role in constructing history. The researcher has made use of the constructive theological methodology in order to make Korean Minjung Theology –Minjung-hermeneutics, the dialectic of *han-dan* –and Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as an open conversation. The researcher enquires to what extent Korean Minjung Theology stands in the tradition of the sixteenth-century Radical Reformation rather than the Magisterial Reformation.

### Chapter 2: Re-Reading the Reformation From Below

In this chapter history from below is being used as methodology to challenge the traditional historiography. The chapter therefore gives more attention to the Christian masses –the voiceless, the ordinary faithful. A rewriting of this history concentrates on the Reformation of the common men –the way they reacted and contributed to the Reformation. In this sense, the radical Reformation and the Anabaptist movements shed new light against the Magisterial Reformation by directing the centre of interest away from the princes and theologians to the peasants and

ordinary folks. This chapter, however, presupposes that both are not contradictory, but complementary in their dialectic and dynamic tensions.

### **Chapter 3: Re-Reading the Radical Reformers as Being-in-the-Common Men**

This chapter provides a historical and diachronic reading of Münster Anabaptism, centring on so-called the “bastard line” (*sic*) of radical Reformers, namely, Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525), Hans Hut (1490–1527), Melchior Hoffman (1495–1543), and John Bockelson (John of Leiden) (1509?-1536). Although each of them, in their chain of connections, left an indelible imprint on the rise of Münster Anabaptism, this chapter more focuses on the *avatar*-hood than the *guru*-ship in presenting their significant contributions. Each of radical Reformers inexorably sets them up in a certain way of being-in-the-common men, which is,

- (1) Thomas Müntzer, the radical reformer, as being-in-the-retributive common men,
- (2) Hans Hut, the radical reformer, as being-in-the-restorative common men,
- (3) Melchior Hoffman, the radical reformer, as being-in-the-revelatory common men, and
- (4) John Bockelson, the radical reformer, as being-in-the-rhetorical common men.

In this light, the Münster event is also seen as the being-in-the-Communal Reformation under the dialectic of *guru-avatar*; radical Reformer-common men as a whole.

### **Chapter 4: Re-Reading Korean Minjung Theology as Being-in-the-Korean Minjung**

This is an attempt to read the radical Reformers from the perspective of Korean minjung, the suffering common people. The rationale for applying this minjung hermeneutics into the interpretation of radicals is three-fold; (1) its dynamic and changing concept, (2) its solidarity with Jesus (and the Jesus-event), and (3) its messianic role through suffering. The dialectic of *han-dan* is also suggested to elaborate and enlarge, without diminishing and distorting, the dialectic of *guru-avatar* as its dynamic equivalence. By delving into the viewpoints of four selected minjung theologians, namely,

- (1) Suh, Nam-Dong’ Spirit of *Missio-Dei*,
- (2) Ahn, Byung-Mu’s socio-biblical analysis of *ochlos*,
- (3) Kim, Young-Bok’s Messianic Politics, and
- (4) Hyun, Young-Hak’s Korean mask dance

This chapter attempts to construct the critical and creative synthesis of the double-mirror reading, that is, the radical Reformers, seen from Korean Minjung Theology, in terms of one way of being in the *avatar*-hood for the common men (*minjung*). This creates a new portrait of the radical Reformers in Münster as follows:

- (1) Thomas Müntzer seen from Suh, Nam-Dong weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the retributive *minjung* in the Spirit,
- (2) Hans Hut seen from Ahn, Byung-Mu weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the restorative *minjung* in the *ochlos*,
- (3) Melchior Hoffman seen from Kim, Yong-Bock weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the revelatory *minjung* in the Messianic Politics, and
- (4) John Bockelson seen from Hyun, Young-Hak weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the rhetorical *minjung* in the Korean mask dance.

### **Chapter 5: Re-Reading the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster from Korean Minjung Theology**

The purpose of this chapter is to apply a diachronic-synchronic reading of the history. This includes the necessity of posting Münster Anabaptism as the place of hybridity, depending on its dynamic interconnection between the *avatar*-hood of the radical Reformers and the *guru*-ship of the common men, or the prophetic practice of the radical Reformers and the messianic practice of the common men:

- (1) John Matthijsson as being-in-the-immigrant Melchiorite prophets, the radicals,
- (2) Bernhard Rothmann as being-in-the-native civic reformers, the reactionary,
- (3) John Bockelson as being-in-the-eclectic between the two power structures, and
- (4) Münster *minjung*, beyond the radical, the reactionary, and the eclectic.

The chapter offers a possibility that the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster can be seen not as the husk but as the kernel of the Communal Reformation, wherein two parties were dialectically driven to maintain both as *guru* and *avatar*.

### **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

In conclusion, Münster Anabaptism seen from Korean Minjung Theology can be a good example of both analepsis and prolepsis of the Jesus-event, where *Minjung Reformer* forms *Christo*

*Reformator* and *Christo Reformator* reforms *Minjung Reformator* as *Minjung-Messiah Transformator*, not as an once-and-for-all, but as a continuing and recurring historical event for the realization of *Minjung* as being-in-the-Messiah.

## OPSOMMING

Die navorsing stel ten doel om die sestiende-eeuse radikale hervorming in die algemeen en die Anabaptistiese Koninkryk van Münster in die besonder deur die lens van die twintigste eeuse Koreaanse Minjung Teologie te herinterpreteer. Die navorsing re-evalueer nie slegs die Radikale Hervorming as die plek waar die lydende/gekruisigde minjung en Messias omtmoet nie, maar dui ook die Anabaptistiese Koninkryk van Münster aan as ‘n plek van hibriditeit, waar beide die Radikale Hervormers en die massas dialekties gedryf word om beide as 'n *guru* en *avatar* gehandhaaf te word. Dit navorsing kyk na die minjung beide as die protagoniste (goeroe), wat hul bevryding deur hulself bereik het, en die psalmist (*avatar*), wat hul verlossing deur die Messias ontvang het. Hierdie *perichoresis* word in die navorsing aan die hedendaagse lydingskonteks as die epitome van *ecclesia semper reformanda* verbind. Die navorsingresultate soos volg in die dissertasie aangedui:

### Hoofstuk 1

Die navorser se uitgangspunt is dat geskiedenis nie 'n objektiewe, eksterne historiese werklikheid is nie. Historici speel eerder 'n sleutelrol in die konstruering van geskiedenis. Die navorser het van die konstruktiewe teologiese metodologie gebruik gemaak om die Koreaanse Minjungteologie, die Minjung-hermeneutiek en die dialek van Han en Dan asook die Anabaptistiese Koninkryk van Münster te interpreteer. Die studie ondersoek in hoeverre die Koreaanse Minjung Teologie in die tradisie van die 16de-eeuse Radikale Hervorming eerder as die Magisteriële Hervorming staan.

### Hoofstuk 2: Herlees van die Hervorming van benede

In hierdie hoofstuk word geskiedskrywing van benede gebruik om die tradisionele geskiedenis skrywing uit te daag. Die hoofstuk gee daarom meer aandag aan die Christelike massas –die stemlose, die gewone gelowige. Die herskryf van die geskiedenis van die Hervorming konsentreer op die hervorming van die massas en die wyse waarop hul op die Reformasie gereageer het asook die bydraes wat hul gelewer het. In hierdie sin staan die Radikale Hervorming en die Anabaptistiese Beweging teenoor die Reformasie deurdat dit die sentrum van belangstelling vanaf prinse en teoloë na die boere en massas lei. **Hoofstuk 2** veronderstel egter dat beide Radikale Hervorming en die Anabaptistiese asook die Reformasie nie teenstrydig met mekaar staan nie, maar dat hul eerder in ‘n komplimentêre dinamiese relasies met mekaar staan.

### Hoofstuk 3: Herlees die Radikale Hervormers

Die hoofstuk bied 'n historiese en diachroniese lees van Münster Anabaptism en sentreer op die sogenaamde “Baster lyn” van Radikale Hervormers, naamlik Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525), Hans Hut (1490-1527), Melchior Hoffman (1495-1543), en John Mickelson (John van Leiden) (1509? -1536). Alhoewel elkeen van hulle 'n invloed op die opkoms van die Münster Anabaptisme gehad het, lê hierdie hoofstuk meer klem op die *avatar* as die *goeroe*. Die Radikale Hervormers stel hul soos volg voor:

- (1) Thomas Müntzer, die radikale hervormer, synde as in-die -vergeldende mens,
- (2) Hans Hut, die radikale hervormer, synde as in-die-herstellende mens,
- (3) Melchior Hoffman, die radikale hervormer, synde as in-die-openbarende mens,
- (4) John Bockelson, die radikale hervormer, synde as in-die-retoriese mens.

In hierdie lig word die Münster ook gesien as in-die-gemeenskaplike Hervorming onder die *goeroe-avatar* wisselwerking as 'n geheel.

**Hoofstuk 4** is ‘n poging om die Radikale Hervormers vanuit die perspektief van die Minjung, die lyding van die massas te lees. Die rasionaal vir die toepassing van Minjung hermeneutiek in die interpretasie van Radikale Hervorming is drievoudig; (1) die dinamiese en veranderende konsep, (2) die solidariteit met Jesus (en die Jesus-gebeurtenis), en (3) die messiaanse rol deur lyding. Die dialektiek van *han* en *dan* word aangedui om uit te brei en te vergroot, sonder om die dialek van die *goeroe-avatar* as sy dinamiese gelykwaardige te verminder of te verdraai. Daar word ondermeer verwys na die standpunte van vier minjung teoloë, naamlik:

- (1) Suh, Nam-Dong’ *Missio-Dei*,
- (2) Ahn, Byung-Mu’s sosio-bybelse analyses van die *ochlos*,
- (3) Kim, Young-Bok’s Messiaanse Politiek, en
- (4) Hyun, Young-Hak’s Koreaanse gemaskerde dans,

Die hoofstuk poog om ‘n kritiese en kreatiewe sintese van ‘n dubbel-spieeltesing te bou, dat wil sê, die radikale hervormers beskou vanuit die Koreaanse Minjung-teologie met betrekking tot die *avatar* vir die gewone massa (minjung). Dit skep ‘n nuwe beeld van die radikale hervormers in Münster:

- (1) Thomas Müntzer se avatarskap gesien in die lig van Suh, Nam-Dong se beskouinge het te doen met die vergeldende minjung in die Gees,
- (2) Hans Hut se avatarskap gesien in die lig van Ahn, Byung-Mu se beskouinge het te doen met die herstellende minjung in die *ochlos*,
- (3) Melchior Hoffman se avatarskap gesien in die lig van Kim, Yong-Bock se beskouinge het te doen met die openbarende minjung in die Messiaanse Politiek, en
- (4) John Bockelson se avatarskap gesien in die lig van Hyun, Young-Hak se beskouinge het te doen met die retoriese minjung in die Koreaanse maskerdans.

**Hoofstuk 5** stel ten die herlees van die Anabaptiste Koninkryk van Münster vanuit die Koreaanse Minjung teologie ten doel. Die diachroniese-synchroniese lees van geskiedenis word in die hoofstuk in die praktyk toe gepas. Dit noodsaak die plaas van die Münster Anabaptism as 'n plek van hybriditeit, afhanklik van die dinamiese verband tussen die avatarskap van die radikale hervormers en die goeroeskap van die gewone massas:

- (1) John Matthijsson as synde-in-die-immigrant Melchioriet Profete, die radikales,
- (2) Bernhard Rothmann as synde-in-die-inheemse burgerlike hervormers die reaksioneres,
- (3) John Bockelson as synde-in- die eklektiese tussen de mag structure, en
- (4) die Münster minjung, teenoor die radikales, die reaksionerse en die eklektiese.

Die hoofstuk bied 'n moontlikheid dat die Anabaptist Koninkryk van Münster as die kern van die gemeenskaplike Reformasie, waarin twee partye dialekties gedrewe word om beide goeroe en *avatar* te handhaaf, gesien sal kan word.

**Hoofstuk 6:** Gesien vanuit die Koreaanse Minjung Teologie kan die Münster Anabaptisme 'n goeie voorbeeld wees van sowel analepsis en prolepsis van die Jesus-gebeyre, waar die Minjung Reformator die *Christo Reformator* vorm en die *Christo Reformator* die als *Minjung-Messiah Transformator*, former as 'n voortgaande en terugkerende historiese gebeure vir de realisasie van die minjung as-in-die-Messias synde.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

Recently many church historians<sup>1</sup> –if not all –prefer to define church not as “the hierarchical-institutional-bureaucratic corporation,” but as “the laity and the ordinary faithful people” (Janz 2007: xiii). Nonetheless, it seems evident that church history, or the history of Christianity, has for too long given greater concern to one small segment of “the great deeds of great men” than the vast majority of the simple folk (Janz 2007: xiii). This, despite its need and worth for studying, has restricted the study of church history almost exclusively to the religion of elites, whether spiritual, intellectual, or power elites. Its result is the prevalence of one-sided approach to theology, dogma, and institution, centred on a few great men. What has always been left out of it is, therefore, the mass ordinary faithful. Against it, there is an increasingly loud call for self-reflection about this conventional pattern of church history. The elitism of historical investigation has greeted growing scholarly questions and critics, especially in terms of a balanced history of Christianity and it even requires a new approach, the so-called history from below, or grassroots history, that aims at “rescuing the [ordinary] Christian people from their historic anonymity” (Janz 2007: xv). By acknowledging it, the research sets out to establish key figures and events in the Protestant Reformation, with the Peasants’ War as central in the rising of the Anabaptist movement, which was open challenge to both the ruling elites and so-called the Reformers of the Magisterial Reformation.

This new quest has become the great challenge to the sixteenth-century Reformation historiography in particular, where the great men, like Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, had played an important role as the champion of the times. The crucial point here is whether this new approach, a people’s history of Christianity, can offer something decidedly different from the old one, even to the extent of transforming its centre of gravity from the great men to the common people. Indeed, if the common people’s role can be relocated at the centre stage, not merely playing second fiddle to the great men, this may lead to a new and more balanced version of the history of Christianity –one that provides a more adequate and healthy perspective that is redressing an unnecessary imbalance.

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<sup>1</sup> Among them are R. Horsley, V. Burrus, D. Krueger, D. D. E. Bornstein, P. Matheson, A. Porterfield, and M. F. Bednarowski, whose works are well represented the seven volume series “A People’s History of Christianity.”

This, on the one sense, raises a critical question among many church historians; “Whose Reformation was it?” (Matheson 2007:2). Does not a balanced perspective require that the Reformation could have stirred the blood of the ordinary people as well as the great men? It seems less convincing that the majority simple folks sit down passively when the vast religious upheaval was dawning before their very eyes. As for plausible, they had felt a sense of urgency to jump on the bandwagon of the Reformation for their own rights and freedom. What part then did the ordinary people have in shaping the Reformation? Did they really dare to blaze a new trail in the course of the Reformation? (Matheson 2007:4-5). In this light, a way of looking at Christianity’s past from the vantage point of a people’s perspective may alert one to a different path that the common people themselves did actively participate in the Reformation and contribute to it as the leading agent of their own history.

On the other hand, history from below opens up a new portrayal of “the troublemakers, the excluded, and the heretics, those who defined by conventional history as the losers” (Janz 2007: xiv-xv). This notion in fact throws new light on the left wing of the Reformation in general and the Anabaptists in particular, who had been bitterly persecuted and discriminated by those on the official, or magisterial Reformers. On the surface, it seems contradictory to a people’s history of Christianity on the basis of the majority of ordinary people, to deal with these mavericks. For the radicals of the Reformation were actually a minority group, despite their wide variety of clusters. It was rather the official Reformers who held a majority in the whole course of the Reformation. What has then the small army of radicals of the Reformation to do with the Christian masses? Their close connection with the Peasants’ War of 1525 could be a hint as to this thorny question. Undeniable is that there was the dynamic interplay between the majority of the simple folks (peasants) and the minority of the radicals in the sixteenth-century Reformation context. Both of them had a great impact on each other; both were advised, counseled, and encouraged by each other when they had spearheaded the revolt against the existing ungodly authority. In this mutual protest, these two saw “Christ as their captain, as the Christ of the poor, and they denounced the oppressive princes, bishops, and magistrates” as the anti-Christ (Matheson 2007:7). Thus is created by a new interpretation of the Peasants’ War of 1521 as the culmination of the Communal Reformation between the simple folks and the radicals. Its implicit is that one can understand the (radical) Reformation best, viewing not only from the centres, but also from the margins: the radicals (Matheson 2007:11).

The new scholarly appreciation for the dynamic interplay between the Peasants’ War and the radical

Reformation<sup>2</sup> as the Communal Reformation has greeted the results. Thanks to this work, the importance of what the common folk thought and believed is beginning to be recognized. Alongside with its religious appeal, the concept of divine justice was seen as a focal point for the aspirations of the peasants; it not only inspired and informed them, but also motivated and legitimated their revolts. To the simple peasants, there was a thin line between divine and social justice. In fact, they understood divine justice as social justice and vice versa (Matheson 2007:9, Stayer 2007:191). The sermons and tracts of the radical Reformers made the peasants wise enough to recognize injustice and exploitation of their day-to-day life. This awareness was mingled with the dynamics of apocalyptic thought of the times and soon turned into the divine justice which brought with them new hopes for the establishment of a New Jerusalem, wherein they would be liberated from current oppression and corruption (Matheson 207:260). The more they had struggled for a better church and society, the further they had strengthened their belief; if Christian gospel mirrors God's will for justice, it must go together with concrete socioeconomic and political issues. Such demands and aspirations of the peasants were best preserved in the *Twelve Articles*, the most widespread statement during the Peasants' War (Blickle 1981:195-96). The basis of all these articles was "to hear the gospel and live accordingly." This peasant struggle for justice, therefore, negates the conventional interpretations at least in two ways. First, it frees the peasants from the problematic image as the crusading rebels who were only interested in social outcomes without passionately engaging with faith in God, that is, the underpinning of the historical-materialist analysis of the Marxists. Second, it no longer regards the common people as the passive recipients of orders from on high. It rather gives equal emphasis to how these ordinary people actively reshaped the new order as the willing participants in the (radical) Reformation.

The struggle for divine justice by the peasants, however, ended in failure and it turned upside down the whole course of the Reformation. The central axis of doing justice had been rapidly moving from the simple peasants to the princes and theologians; the nobility had become greater and greater, whereas the common people had become less and less. Characteristics of the post-Peasants' War was

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<sup>2</sup> Within Christian history, there is scholarly debates how to categorize and name the sixteenth-century radical wings of the Reformation, centring particularly in Anabaptism. Among them, G. H. Williams has proposed radical reformation as "a collective designation for all those groups of religious innovators who remained in neither the Roman Catholic nor mainline Protestant churches in the sixteenth-century Reformation context" (Williams and Mergal 1957:19-38). While Roland H. Bainton has preferred call radical reformation a tendency; "It was so amorphous, varied and vague that it can better be described as a tendency than as a movement" (Bainton 1965:123), Timothy George has considered it as a tremendous movement of spiritual and ecclesial renewal that "posed a thoroughgoing critique of the *corpus christianum* in both its mainline Protestant and Tridentine Catholic mutations" (George 1988:252). Here, the researcher is in general agreement that to speak of radical reformation does not mean that Protestantism became radicalized but rather a radicalism inevitably became Protestant at the time of Reformation, reminding etymological origin of "radical" as "driving strongly toward root" rather than "pushing out the periphery" (Eller 1967:1391).

then the open espousal of power elites over the common people (Blickle 1981:185). From it, the Reformation had been hijacked by the powerful so as to make them the subject and thereby lost the support of commoners. As a result, it soon quickened the birth of the Magisterial Reformation (Stayer 2007:192). Nonetheless, a bottom-up struggle for justice died hard; it had continued to express itself in the radicals of the Reformation after the Peasants' War. In fact, nowhere was this clearer than in the Anabaptists who just began to appear in 1525. Since it was the Anabaptists who rekindled its flickering anti-elitist notion of justice after the Peasants' War, a people's history of Christianity needs to lend special interest to these nonconformist sects in the wake of the Reformation historiography.

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher main concern is how traditions might have influenced one another over time. Since the researcher is interested in reinterpretation of the radical Reformation in the light of the Korean Minjung Theology,<sup>3</sup> the research enquires to what extent Korean Minjung Theology stands in the tradition of the sixteenth-century radical Reformation rather than the magisterial Reformation. In order to answer this question, the researcher attends to the following sub-questions, namely:

- a. To what extent should Christian history give the ordinary people their voice?
- b. Who are the ordinary faithful indeed? Is it applicable to the radicals of the Reformation, who were condemned by the magisterial Reformers as mavericks, dissidents, outsiders and rebels, and even the minjung in the 20<sup>th</sup> century theological movement in Korea?
- c. Can a perspective from below become a catalyst to let the Anabaptists free from the yoke of the violent *Schwärmers* (enthusiasts)?
- d. Is the Münster a unique phenomenon, or a paradigm for the minjung and their reformation?
- e. Is the Münster a tombstone (*han*), or a birth place (*dan*) for the minjung and their Jesus-event?
- f. How does a people's perspective offer a comprehensive and responsible alternative to the 16<sup>th</sup> century radical Reformation and the 20<sup>th</sup> century theological movement in Korea?
- g. Can such a people's perspective enable one to express and find a more adequate version of Christianity from the 16<sup>th</sup> century radical Reformation and the 20<sup>th</sup> century theological movement in Korea?

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<sup>3</sup> Minjung Theology is a Koran contextual theology which was born in the 1970s. It is a theology of the minjung whose identity grew out of Christian experiences in the political struggle for justice and human rights. Thus, Korean Minjung Theology has attended to a political hermeneutics of the Gospel, based on the Korean reality and provided a relevant theology in Asia as well as Korea. Details, including the meaning of minjung and its unique characteristics, will be discussed in later parts.

The answers to these questions may vary, but it may well be the impending task for a more accurate and balanced interpretation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century radical Reformation and the 20<sup>th</sup> century theological movement in Korean Christianity. Significance is best to be clarified by showing how these answers complement each other in altering and rehabilitating –without destroying –the one-sided picture of the radical Reformation, particularly the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, which had long been taken for granted as a mutated aberration of the Reformation in its historiography.

### **1.3 JUSTIFICATION**

#### **1.3.1 The Revisionist Interpretations on the Radical Reformation and Anabaptism**

The scholarly willingness to discuss the mutual influence of revolutionaries and non-resistant in the radical Reformation indicates that the Swiss origins of Anabaptism need to be reexamined. Rather it puts the spotlight in the heterogeneity of Anabaptism; there is not a mono-genesis but a poly-genesis of Anabaptism, including the Swiss, the South-German and the Dutch (Stayer, Packull and Depperman 1975:83-121). This plural character of Anabaptism is framed by the new interpretations, which see the Peasants' War of 1525 as a pivotal movement, leading to both religious and political reform. From it comes to the close connection between the Reformation, the Peasants' War and Anabaptism as a whole, holding a communal, anticlerical, and radical characteristic as their common denominator. This merits special attention to the revisionist views, presented particularly by Peter Blickle, Han-Jürgen Gortz, James M. Stayer and Karl-Heinz Kirchhoff, whose concerns and interpretations range over such issues.

First, Peter Blickle challenges the traditional view of the Reformation in terms of its absolutizing the role of the elite groups, who held most of the ecclesiastical and political power already. Rather he has drawn needed attention to the crucial role played by the common men, the neglected agent of the Reformation. In Blickle's view, the religious beliefs of the leading Reformers, especially Martin Luther, were certainly a factor in the Reformation, but a growing awareness of natural law and communal rights were even stronger forces for the rise of Protestantism (Blickle 1992:153). Thus, Blickle asserts that in its most original and undistorted form, the Reformation was a communal event that the common men of both urban and rural areas turned the theological ideas of a few Reformers into a vast social movement (Blickle 1992: xiv). Blickle calls this authentic Reformation of the commoners the "Communal Reformation" and this term provides him a keyhole insight into the whole process of the Reformation. By demonstrating the principle of communalism as an ideological and political reality for both city and countryside, Blickle has constructed the transformation of the Peasants' War of 1521 into the revolution of the common men as the kernel of the Communal Reformation.

Second, it is Hans-Jürgen Goertz who poses a critical question over whether a purely theological reading satisfactorily captures all aspects in the Reformation and the Anabaptist movement in particular. By observing a great gap separating theology from everyday life, Goertz argues that the primary animator of what became the Reformation was “anticlericalism” (Goertz 1994:499-520). Furthermore, he connects this Reformation anticlericalism to the apparent diversity of Anabaptism as the important social and religious nexus. In Goertz’s claim, Anabaptism actually participated in and contributed to this anticlericalism (Goertz 1996:36-67). The term anticlericalism then has a special meaning for Goertz as the Communal Reformation for Blickle. It serves him as an essential touchstone for Anabaptist interpretation. From it derives Goertz’s three-fold revisionist outlook on Anabaptism, which is antithetical to the previous dominant viewpoint; (1) the rejecting the notion of Anabaptist single origins; (2) of its universal characteristic of non-violence; and (3) of its unified leadership, programme or theology (Goertz 1996:4). Goertz rather draws attention to variations and diversity in Anabaptism, while maintaining social-protest penchant as its underlying commonality among them. By emphasizing anticlericalism as a major motivational force that fueled the early Anabaptist protest, Goertz turns a pure normative model of Anabaptism, having perpetuated in the traditions of the mainline Reformation scholarship, on its head.

Third, James M. Stayer also counters the prevailing Anabaptist historiography with a challenging question; was there a unified, pacifist non-resistance among the sixteenth-century Anabaptists? Stayer’s significant contribution on this topic lies in its demonstration of the degree of disagreement. Starting with the early Protestant teaching on the sword, Stayer uncovers the variety of Anabaptist responses to it, demonstrating four basic positions; (1) the “crusader” (Müntzer and Hans Hut and the Melchiorites<sup>4</sup>), (2) the “realpolitician” (Zwingli and Hubmaier), (3) the “apolitical moderate” (Luther and Sattler), and (4) the “apolitical radical” (The Swiss Brethren and finally Anabaptism as a whole). (Stayer 1972:25-90). This typology comes with his clear recognition of the great diversity of thought on the sword in early Anabaptism (Stayer 1972:335). Thus, Stayer’s final conclusion is that there was no uniform doctrine on the sword among the early Anabaptists, even though they all eventually “arrived at the same kind of radical apoliticism” (Stayer 1972:34). Although this encompasses the fact that there were both non-resistant and violent Anabaptists, Stayer’s view much weighs its concern toward the latter case. Here Stayer shows that even the Swiss Brethren were not firmly committed to non-resistance until “Schleitheim” settled the matter; Hans’ Hut view of the sword was an interim ethic,

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<sup>4</sup> The term is used for the followers of Melchior Hoffman.

a temporal non-resistance, presupposing the use of the sword on the Day of Judgment. In Münster, needless to say, readiness to participate in violence was widespread to the extent that “the revolutionary group was in the majority, while the non-resistant were the dissenters” (Stayer 1972:91-282). In this attempt, Stayer makes corrections in the direction of the essential qualities of the early Anabaptist teaching on the sword by an explicit recognition of diverse and sophisticated spectrum from apoliticism to radicalism; from non-resistance to violence.

Without a doubt, these revisionist views of three scholars have established the critical overview of the previous interpretation on the sixteenth-century radical Reformation, and particularly Anabaptism. This opens the mind to new and fruitful perspectives that Anabaptist research must be pursued in a particular fashion: it can hardly be history of theological ideas as propounded by a few eminent leaders. It rather needs to be social history, or social biography of the common people. Thus is created by a new outlook to rediscover the close relationship between the Peasants’ War of 1525 and the Anabaptist movement. Here, Anabaptism was seen as a continuation of the social revolution of the peasant uprising for political, social, economic and finally military goals, sanctioned and consolidated after 1525 by believer’s baptism. In this light, the sixteenth century Anabaptism, seen from the revisionist views, demands a different approach which entails the exposition of the life and faith not only of the leaders, but also of the rank-and-file common people who have rendered the Reformation communal, anticlerical and radical as a whole.

These revisionist views, perhaps apart from its original plan, sketch a new and impressive picture of the Anabaptist Kingdom in Münster. In fact, Anabaptist theocracy that arose in Münster in the years of 1534-35 exhibits much of these characteristics. At first, Münster had initiated a fairly typical form of local reformation; burghers and evangelical preachers had combined traditions of urban communalism with anticlerical sentiments and the demand for a biblically based religion in which the common people could play an active role (Moller 1972:90-103, Ozment 1980). Münster’s reformation was then greeted with radical religious ideas, promoted by the immigrant Dutch Melchiorites, primarily belong to the suffering lower classes (Mellink 1953:1-19 quoted by Stayer 1975:115). Anabaptist political takeover of Münster in 1534 spurred them to undertake radical changes to both city’s political order and religious life under the spell of the apocalyptic excitement. In this process, the militant Melchiorite influence in Münster became legitimated, even though such revolutionary mood threw Anabaptism into the most dangerous crisis of its history. At any rate, the revisionist views give the impression that Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster was a vast melting pot where the communal, anticlerical and radical Anabaptism were intermingled as a separate-but-integrated whole.

Another interesting interpretation emerges from K. H. Kirchhoff who regards Münster Anabaptism not as “the Protestantism of the poor” but as a broad popular movement of all classes (Kirchhoff 1973:93-226 quoted by Stayer 1986:281). This significant revision came from his systematic study on the records of Anabaptist property which was confiscated following the Bishop’s conquest of the city (Kirchhoff 1973:2-13 quoted by Stayer 1986:282). Kirchhoff’s perspective, in this regards, stands closer to W. J. Kühler than Karel Vos and A. F. Mellink; for the former saw the Melchiorites as the apocalyptic enthusiasts, but not as the social revolutionaries and that assumed the existence of peaceful Anabaptists in Münster (Kühler 1932:97-101, Grosheide 1938:75-81 both quoted by Deppermann 1975:115), while the latter saw them as the suffering lower classes, so that Münster owed nothing to an earlier peaceful Anabaptism (Vos 1980:85-91, Mellink 1953:327 quoted by Stayer 1986:263). By analysing the social structure of the native Münsteraners who had participated in Münster Anabaptism, Kirchhoff proposes that there was a peaceful Anabaptist congregation before, during and after the Münster revolt (Kirchhoff 1970:357-70, 1973:42 quoted by Deppermann 1975:116). His careful study even led him to a more sympathetic view to the Münster Anabaptists and their leaders. Thus Anabaptist rule in Münster was seen as an ad hoc response in the emergency conditions of a defensive war and its violence as a self-defence to protect themselves in worsening conflicts with the violent prince-bishop’s troops (Kirchhoff 1962:77-170, 1970:360).<sup>5</sup> Kirchhoff’s view was direct challenge to the standard polemical history of Münster, started from Hermann von Kerssenbrock, a partial eyewitness to the Anabaptist takeover of Münster (Kirchhoff 1970:358). Indeed, his revisionist view helps to weaken the larger assumptions about the violence in Münster, while rehabilitating the Münster’s Anabaptists from diabolical monsters to simply ordinary sixteenth-century men and women who found themselves in extraordinarily dangerous circumstances.

These revisionist views, in this sense, are not without significance. They has rendered the very concept of revolution richly ambiguous by illuminating religious and socio-political dynamics of Münster in the 1530s. They, too, put Melchior Hoffman in an ambiguous light as a source of both peaceful and revolutionary Anabaptism. But, most of all, these views are helpful in reorienting overall stories of Anabaptist Münster and the political and military battles around it. Its subsequent effect has been to reduce a lurid light on Münster Anabaptism by integrating it into the general history of Anabaptism, and of the Reformation. This also gives rise to the intriguing question of whether Münster Anabaptism

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<sup>5</sup> This view that considers the Münster’s resistance as an act of self-defence had actually been suggested by Robert Stupperich before Kirchhoff presented. It was Stupperich who had already acknowledged it and elaborated this line of interpretation in advance (Stupperich 1958:12).

was a more extensive and subtle Reformation of the common men, including both the revolutionary and the peaceful; the upper and the lower; and the native and the immigrant.

A number of scholars, however, have taken issue with these revisionist views, arguing that they seem to stretch or overstep the bounds of critical scholarship. On the one sense, critics oppose that these revisionists overstate the importance of the Communal Reformation in Blickle's case, anticlericalism in Goertz's, and the radical apoliticism in Stayer's, as if they found the single key to interpret the Reformation and the Anabaptist proper. To them, this one-size-fits-all solution is fundamentally wrong and why all three are flawed. On the other sense, they also argue that these overriding concerns lead the revisionists into overgeneralization, or oversimplification of the case. Thus, Blickle is criticized for magnifying the Swiss and South German example in his hasty generalization. Similarly, Goertz is to blame for overly reducing theology to sociology; he, according to them, fails to enlarge the Anabaptist interpretation by moving from mono-thematic to poly-thematic understanding, despite he succeeds in propagating a poly-genesis of Anabaptism. Also, Stayer's typology on the sword is guilty of having contributed to the un-connectedness of many Anabaptist sects, giving far more favourable portrait of the violent Anabaptists. In this light, critics insist that these revisionist views are hardly shared by them all, but instead more tentativeness about their biased perspectives should be placed. In succinct, to their eyes, the sieve that the revisionists chose to use is too small and narrow to appreciate Anabaptist dynamics. In the similar vein, Kirchhoff's view is also under attack by other scholars. A main weakness of Kirchhoff's work is attributed to its simplicity of the scope; critics argue then that his study is conceived too exclusively a piece of local history of Münster. To them, Kirchhoff's presentation of continuing importance of social hierarchy among Anabaptist in post-Anabaptist Münster bears no correspondence to other critical scholarship. Thus, they complain that Kirchhoff's revision just adds a new key beside the existing ones, that is, the Communal Reformation, anticlericalism, and radical apoliticism.

Given this fact, the revisionist views on the radical Reformation and Anabaptism, particularly the Münster event, needs to be discussed in light of a more comprehensive and holistic way. In other words, the challenge of revisionist views, ironically, gives it an opportunity for being renewed and reformulated by another revisionist views. As *ecclesia semper reformanda*, so *ecclesia interpretationae semper reformanda*. Korean Minjung Theology, in this sense, becomes a welcome

collaboration of it. Its understanding of *han* and *dan*,<sup>6</sup> in particular, sheds new light on shortcomings in the revisionist views. In fact, this revision of history seems to silence the potential problems of an one-sidedly socio-political interpretation that cloak the religious aspect. It too easily resorts to the Communal Reformation, anticlericalism and radical apoliticism to push the common people the necessity to build a more appropriate social history approach. In response, this unwittingly may give support to an exclusively religious reading of the radical Reformation, the very one it has undermined. Then the cycle of either-or distinction can be perpetuated through the operation of the charged anomaly of the religion and science, theology and social theory in general and the reformers and the radicals, the peasants and the princes in particular.

The dialectic of *han* and *dan* in Korean Minjung Theology, however, suggests that it is easier to talk about magisterial and radical Reformation (Reformers); the great and common men; the legitimate and bastard (*sic*) line of the Reformers; and the peaceful and revolutionary Anabaptists together, because both of them are the perpetrators as well as the victims of *han*. Here, *han* represents a productive force derived primarily from the victims. This awareness of accumulative collective oppression by the victims produces the righteous indignation against the perpetrators of *han*. But, if *han* is left unchecked, once power is taken by the oppressed, it can be used to oppress others. In this sense, they become not merely the victims acted upon, but the perpetrators who repeats an unhealthy cycle of oppression behind *han*. This is why *dan*, or cutting-off, is necessary. It holds *han* in check so that the victims of *han* do not fall short of the perpetrators of *han*. Thus, it challenges the revisionist views to focus on the mutual interdependence between the two parties, both as victims and perpetrators, bound by the dialectic tension between *han* and *dan*.

This alerts one to the need for a shift of angle from *either-or* dualism to *both-and* chiasm, in which each party –the victims and the perpetrators –is inseparably joined together. For both stand in a direct connection not as contradictory but as complementary. Instead of seeing them in a binary fashion, the dialectic of *han* and *dan* illuminates that both parties have their own particularly distinctive contributions to play in transforming of self, community and society as a whole. Here, Korean Minjung Theology poses a fundamental challenge that the revisionist views need to be supplemented by the dialectic of *han* and *dan*, rooted in the inner dynamics between the elites and the common men; the

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<sup>6</sup> The Korean word *han* and *dan* has its thick meanings, although the former simply refers to “a deep resentment against unjustifiable suffering” (Lee 1994:99), while the latter to “cutting-off” The idea of *han* and *dan* is decisive to understand Korean Minjung Theology so that this will be discussed in later part with details.

peaceful and the radical; and the sinners and “the sinned-against.”<sup>7</sup> In this way, the sixteenth-century radical Reformation and Anabaptist ethos of Christianity not be lost but honoured and explicitly incorporated. This is a creative synthesis to reinterpret the radical Reformation from the perspective of Korean Minjung Theology. The Anabaptist revisionist views, seen from Korean Minjung Theology, in this light, serves as the point of departure for looking at the radical Reformation –especially Münster Anabaptism –anew.

### 1.3.2 The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster and Korean Minjung Theology

Münster Anabaptism represents one of the most violent and extreme events of the Reformation. Why, then, should such the bizarre event be chosen? There are at least two reasons for this. One reason is ironically attributed to its shame of the scarlet letter as an abomination of the Reformation. Notably, the Anabaptists, from its inception, were not the welcome guests to the mainline Christianity. There was no law of excluded-middle in them for they were “neither Catholics nor Protestants” (Klaassen 1981). The Münster uprising made their position even more precarious; as neither non-violent nor non-resistant. This double-negation, then, advocates the tragic end of Münster in the name of retributive justice; the Münster Anabaptists were perishing by their own karma. In this regard, the Kingdom of Münster remained as the Kingdom of Monster where the problems of sin had reached its saturation point. Yet, in Minjung Theology, the Münster episode, despite or because of, its fiasco, can be seen as a microcosm of the radical Reformation as the praxis of *dan*: resolving *han* of the common people by and with the radicals as the priest of *han*. Of course, it is too naïve to attribute of everything in the Anabaptist takeover of Münstr to the radicals, having their root in the so-called “bastard line” (*sic*) that is, from Müntzer, Hut, and Hoffman to Bockelson (Stayer 1972). Indeed, the picture was not merely one-sided. The real portrait of Münster was rather quite varied and dynamic, even to the extent that its characteristics much stood closer to the Communal Reformation, its reforming initiatives were intertwined between the two parties (Blickle 1998:178-88). This then includes a necessity for the critical and complementary interplay between the radical and the reactionary; the townspeople and the peasants; the common folks and the leading reformers; and the sinners and the sinned-against, to be the key for understanding and interpreting of the Münster event.

However, it would be equally inadequate to deny the central role of these bastard line (*sic*) of Reformers. Although the way of their radical Reformation is questionable, their impacts on the mental

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<sup>7</sup> The term “sinned-against” is found in the works of Raymond Fung (1980:162-69, 1989:18-9), a Baptist Christian leader of Hong Kong. Fung once mentioned that the poor are not only sinners; most often they are also the “sinned-against” (1989:162-69). More detailed discussion on it will be developed in later parts.

outlook and actual lives of the common people in Münster is undeniable. Furthermore, these radicals, being simultaneously both as sinners and sinned-against, had involved in this Communal Reformation as one of the leading agents. In this way they left an indelible imprint on the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster both positively and negatively. This implies then that in Münster, they were the reactionary as well as the radicals; the common men as well as the great men; and the sinned-against as well as the sinners, who strove to bring *dan* into the *han*-ridden city. Here, a case in point is Münster Anabaptism which is clearly historically situated as evidenced by its communal praxis. Thus, Münster Anabaptism, seen from Korean Minjung Theology, is stressed as the microcosm of the Communal Reformation, which is dynamically interacting with the whole relational matrix, with its rich diversity.

## 1.4 METHODOLOGY

### 1.4.1. Historical Constructive Theological Approach

“Münster and Minjung: Re-Reading the Anabaptist Münster Kingdom from a Perspective of Korean Minjung (Common People) Theology” is a historical constructive theological research. Its aims are to bring the two historical events, which is, the 16<sup>th</sup> century radical Reformation and the 20<sup>th</sup> century theological movement in Korea, in conversation with each other. In this sense, it differs from a historical analysis which places two historical movements in comparative perspective. It is rather interdisciplinary in its approach which seeks to make positive connection between the two. There is therefore a focus in this approach on specifying the historical interpretation as conceived from a theological vantage point. By shifting the emphasis from product to process, or conclusion to conversation, this method is intended to offer a new way of talking about history which encourages engagement and conversation with theology. In this way, the research can generate an alternative history, or “counter-history,”<sup>8</sup> which means, history being constructive. To put it differently, this approach endeavours to replace an *either-or* (either history or theology; product or process) with a *both-and*.

As such, historical constructive theological approach allows for no completeness and no essence. Yet, this disseration, as a historical research, is concerned with the complete, the essential. How then does this method sit within the histoical research? From it emerges the hermeneutics of constructive reading that is both self-critical and self-renewing as it dialogues with history. In other words, this calls to generate a constructiv counter-history builds solidly on constructive theology, drawing particularly

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<sup>8</sup> This term is taken from David Biale. According to him, “counter-history is a type of revisionist historiography, but where the revisionist proposes a new theory or finds new facts, the counter-historian transvalues old ones. He does not deny that his predecessors’ interpretation of history is correct, as does the revisionist, but he rejects the completeness of that interpretation” (Biale 1982:7).

heavily from the Workgroup in Constructive Christian Theology, composed of many of the well-known and influential Christian theologians. Hence, it is necessary to understand the history of the Workgroup in Constructive Christian Theology.

Constructive theology was born in 1975 at Vanderbilt University in the United States by a number of various group of theologians (Wyman 2017:312-3).<sup>9</sup> Calling themselves the Workgroup in Constructive Christian Theology, they have committed to constructive theology as the best pedagogical approach to the today's Christian leaders and readers (Wyman 2017:313-4). In general, the history of constructive theology can be divided into three periods in its development, roughly based on the textbooks, written by the Workgroup (Wyman 2017:322). Indeed, the Workgroup have propagated constructive theology through the publication of (1) *Christian Today* (1982) and *Readings in Christian Theology* (1984), (2) *Reconstructing Christian Theology* (1994), and (3) *Constructive Theology* (2005). While the first two-volume set was "critically liberal," the third volume offered a more postmodern and contextual perspective with particular attention to the liberation theology. The fourth textbook affirms that the Workgroup continues to be liberal and liberationist in its agenda, holding to critique of the tradition (Wyman 2017:322-23).

Despite their diverse responses to the shift, the main thrust of the consecutive generations of the Workgroup is that "constructive theology is permanently in the mode of agenda-setting" (Wyman 2017:316). Since constructive Christian theology "acknowledges the constructive discursive role theologians play in constructive Christianity, rather than supposing that theology describes an objective, external religious reality" (Wyman 2017:312), its most important contribution is the idea of theology being "constructive" (Wyman 2017:316): it is to be sure a work in progress, a composition in the making. The Workgroup in this light accepts "the essential diversity of theological claims and opinion as strength rather than as a fatal flaw or heresy" (Wyman 2017:324). This results in making constructive theology thoroughly steeped in its openness to "contemporary relevance, interdisciplinarity, and practical application" (Wyman 2017:323). It affirms then that "ultimate theology is a constructive, discourse-building discipline with real-life ramifications for people living in the present" (Wyman 2017:324).

Here, constructive theology is to harbor a critical impulse: the impulse to do historical research

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<sup>9</sup> They are particularly Walter Harrelson, Sallie McFague, Peter C. Hodgson, Robert H. King, Walter Lowe, Julian Hartt, Schubert Ogden and Gordon Kaufman (Wyman 2017:313).

differently. Though a historical research purports to construe historical reality from an observer's point of view, there is nonetheless a demand to let particulars be themselves. Hence, a historical research is situated in constructive theology. In essence, historical constructive theological approach embraces the fullness of historical research, while using the diversity of constructive theology to free historical interpretations from being dominated by one voice; for no one voice has a monopoly on its historical interpretation. It engages in constructive thought and conversation by using the method of constructive theology and thereby refuses any pretense that suggests historical research is to describe exclusively an objective, external historical truth. What becomes clear in this approach is that the historical research as propositional statements are often not the best reading and certainly not the only reading of history.

History as product mostly –if not always –comes with historical writings whose nature is interpretive. A primary form of this interpretation is narration (White 1990:21). In this sense, history is never dead, and it is not even past, but has power that interprets the present as well as the past. However, at issue here is who has the power to claim history. For “a historical narrative is not a transparent representation or copy of a sequence of past events. Narration irreducibly entails selecting the events to be included in its exposition as well as filling in links that are not available in the evidential record. The historian does not find or discover her narrative; she constructs it. This process of construction involves distortion” (Carroll 1990:134). In this light, history is not neutral. Rather, history in the dissertative mode involves a “paradigm choice,” “the choice of an ideological perspective” (White 1978:51-80). This proves that history is not objective. It is inevitably dominated by the choice of a particular interpretation which is inherently being constructive as process. Here history can be seen as both product and process. Thus, a responsible engagement with historical research may not avoid this essential dimension. Whether this dialectic of product-process leads to genuine historical reality remains a matter of dispute.

Yet, this does not mean that historical research that purports to offer objective and universal events cannot be truthful product. It rather stresses that historical research is on the other hand perpetually ongoing. It is essentially an interpretation as a process; each of hermeneutical circle (process) is affected by and seeks to affect the historical event (product). In this connection, interpreting history as process stands together interpreting history as product. There is a correspondence, though never a perfect one, between the two. By connecting these together, historical constructive theological approach generates an alternative history, or counter-history, which prevents one from grasping too firmly any single interpretative framework for ultimate historical reality. Rather it provides a way to

move from a tradition's account of reality toward reality itself constructed by a plethora of perspectives. Historical constructive theological approach, understood as a counter-history, can better challenge the variety of latent professional and ecclesial assumptions that historical interpretations are somehow neutral—arguments designed to ensure that history remains untainted even if they are often dominated by those who know how to play the game of power well. Thus there is strong ground for applying such method to the two historical movements, namely, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Münster Anabaptism and the 20<sup>th</sup> century Korean Minjung Theology, in conversation as both product and process.

By acknowledging this dialectic of product-process in history, the research sets up a constructive dialogue *en route* to a more responsible and balanced historical hermeneutics for Münster Anabaptism through Korean Minjung Theology. Methodologically, the paper therefore forgoes *magnum opus*, but rather opts for an “open-ended, fallible, revisable imaginative constructions” in order to “set the agenda” for critical and creative discussion (Wyman 2017:313, 316). From this vantage point, the research purposefully challenges an objectivistic interpretation that pretends to be complete and authoritative. Rather it gives more attention to a discursive construction that “values the collage of different faces, voices, styles, questions, and constructs” (Chopp and Taylor 1994:4). To put it another way, engaging Korean Minjung Theology as a conversation partner, the research participates in the critique and reconstruction of Münster Anabaptism. This includes the necessity of critical responses by showing how the traditional interpretations are challenged and transformed under this methodology. Indeed, prioritizing and centring conversation between the two historical movements is the most important contribution to the idea of Münster Anabaptism being constructive as both product and process.

Historical constructive theological approach also calls for the importance of a people's history: a view from below. By emphasizing imaginative dynamism, which primarily comes from the common people, namely, “minjung,”<sup>10</sup> this approaches Münster Anabaptism from below, in a grounded and down-to-earth way. The research indeed highlights the role of the common masses by uncovering the voices of the downtrodden. Here, Korean Minjung Theology is well plugged into it in a cooperative fashion; for this alerts one to the necessity of looking at Münster Anabaptism “from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled—in short, from the perspective of those who suffer” (Bonhoeffer 1972:17). Such is an attempt not only to delve into

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<sup>10</sup> Minjung is a Korean word, composed of two Chinese characters. As “min” means “people,” and “jung,” “the mass,” combining these two words can simply be translated into English as “the mass of people” (Moon 1985:1). Yet, minjung theologians reject any simple definition of minjung. Rather they prefer to see the minjung as a living reality, in which their stories and their biography can only be an effective way of expressing (Kim 1981:185).

Münster Anabaptism's deep and wide variety, to truly engage in analysis and evaluation of those rich diversities. It is also to bring Münster's history from below "as hope-filled responses to 'crises' of suffering" (Chopp and Taylor 1994: ix).<sup>11</sup> Thus is created by the new portrait of Münster Anabaptism in the concept of "hybridity,"<sup>12</sup> which provides a new paradigm that is communal and open. In so doing, the research, rather than repeating the previous and predominant interpretations, is trying to reconstruct Münster Anabaptism as another Communal Reformation, where the great men and the common men, the victimizers and victims, and the sinners and the sinned-against, are inexorably intertwined for healing and liberation on both sides.

From this vantage point, the research suggests a possibility of representing Korean Minjung Theology as one important resources for developing a more relatively adequate and balanced interpretation, on the basis of historical constructive theological approach. In other word, the research adopts Korean Minjung Theology as a useful way of making contact with Münster Anabaptism for its critical and creative reconstruction. This then offers a two-fold outlook; (1) the radical Reformation as the Communal Reformation between the common men and the radical Reformers; and (2) the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as the extensive version of the Communal Reformation that holds the inner dynamics –including tensions and contradictions –not as a complete story, but as an open-ended conversation, reflecting a view from below continually and cooperatively. Thus is constituted by a significant mile maker in the journey toward the reconstruction of counter-history, in which the history is lifted up not only for what it has contributed to the past, but also what it might contribute to the future.

#### **1.4.1.1 Blickle's Communal Reformation**

For the first outlook, this research is primarily in line with Peter Blickle's thoughtful and stimulating interpretation of the Reformation. Blickel argues that the key to the early success of the Reformation was the adoption of "the gospel" by the "common men" in both rural and town areas (Blickle 1992:

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<sup>11</sup> This strongly suggests the reason for the rediscovery of the minjung as the continuing task of the church. Vischer's insight, in this sense, is note quoting; "The history of the Church is the Gospel actually experienced. The experience of poor and oppressed people is especially important. Since it was to them that Jesus himself turned especially, we have here in a real sense the key to the correct interpretation of church history. The task of the historian is to trace out the history of the Gospel in relation to the poor and oppressed" (Vischer 1981:107), namely, the history of the suffering minjung.

<sup>12</sup> The term "hybridity," originating from biology, provides a nuanced understanding of the nature of ambiguity. Here it prefers its meaning as suggested by Considine. Referring to Homi Bhabha and Wonhee Ann Joh, he approvingly describes hybridity as "an indeterminate space, created by the asymmetrical and ambiguous coalescence, collision, and confrontation of diverse discourses of knowledge. This indeterminate space then has a destabilizing effect on set power structures as something new emerges" (Considine 2014:49-73, especially 68 –note 9).

xiv). Bickle's *Die revolution von 1525* was published in 1977. The research however wants to state quite clearly that Brickle's work does not go without contestation. *Die revolution von 1525* was translated by Thomas A. Brady, Jr., and H. C. Erik Midelfort in 1981, namely, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants' War from a New Perspective*. Peter Blicke's revisionist interpretation of the German Peasants' War is indeed a major historical work. In 2004 a broadened and bibliographically extended edition was published. Other books also published by Brickle are; "Economic, Social and Political Background of the Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants of 1525," 1976, "Peasant Revolts in the German Empire in the late Middle Ages," 1979, *Religion, Politics, and Social Protest: Three Studies on Early Modern Germany*, 1984, "The Criminalization of Peasant Resistance in the Holy Roman Empire: Toward a History of the Emergence of High Treason in Germany," 1986, "Communalism, Parliamentarism, Republicanism." *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 1986, "Communal Reformation and Peasant Piety: The Peasant Reformation and Its Late Medieval Origins," 1987, *Communal Reformation: The Quest for Salvation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, 1992, "The Popular Reformation," 1995, *Obedient Germans? A Rebuttal: A New View of German History*, 1997, "Resistance, Representation, and Community," 1997, *From the Communal Reformation to the Revolution of the Common Man*, 1998, "Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland," 2002, "Communal Reformation: Zwingli, Luther, and the south of the Holy Roman Empire," 2008.

The translated version of the German edition, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants' War from a New Perspective* (edition published in 1981), is being utilized in this dissertation. The notion "Communal Reformation"<sup>13</sup> developed by Blicke is an effort to put that vision of the relation of the gospel to society into practice. This leads Blicke to define the Peasants' War of 1525 as an "unfolding of the Reformation itself," motivated by the communal thought and religious propaganda under the collaboration of townsmen and villagers (Blicke 1992:179). In Blicke's perception, not only the rural peasants, but also the urban burghers made the uprising a revolution of the common men as a whole. To him, the defeat of the peasants in 1525 was therefore fatal to the Communal Reformation. In its wake, the association between the state and religion had been strengthened and substantiated. Furthermore, the Reformers, especially Luther, advocated reform from above as the only answer and rejected violence from below. Herein communalism was effectively lost with confessional Christianity taking its place. The upshot was epitomized by a princely takeover of the Communal Reformation.

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<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the term "Communal Reformation" (*Gemeinde reformation*) has a special meaning for Blicke. He, in his work, delineates it more specifically; "theologically and ethically, communal reformation was the demand to hear the pure Gospel preached and to live accordingly; organizationally it was the desire to establish the church on the basis of the community; politically it was the wish to link the legitimacy of authority to the gospel and the community" (Blicke 1992:100).

After 1525, the Reformation took an entirely different direction; a “folk-reformation” was superseded by a “princes-reformation” (Blickle 1998:149-61). From then on, the Reformation had to abandon its community basis and hid itself in separatist Anabaptist conventicles (Stayer 1988:99-139).

Blickle’s revisionist interpretation offers two significant contributions to this research; (1) the re-adoption of the Communal Reformation into the radical Reformation in general and the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster in particular; (2) the rediscovery of the common men as the historical co-agent of the (radial) Reformation. On the one sense, Blickle gives spotlight to the Communal Reformation (Blickle 1992: xiv). Although he does not deny the role of the Reformers, such as Zwingli and Luther, as catalysts in the remarkable changes in society, more important, in his view, was a new concern for communal rights stimulated by the common man in both town and country. This bold theory of the Communal Reformation becomes an entry point for engaging radical Anabaptism in Münster, where the different social class and groups –the immigrant radical prophets and the native reactionary reformers –were intertwined as the dynamic corpus, both being independent and, at the same time, being interdependent for each other. Furthermore, Blickle’s transformation of the Peasant Revolution of 1525 into the revolution of the common men gives the Münster Revolution new dignity –a “silent revolution”<sup>14</sup>; a “revolution” in a sense that it started from below, and proved to have been as important to the ultimate course of the radical Reformation history as any other revolution; and “silent” in that it was at first based primarily on “tacit agreements” between the radical Reformers and the common men and became explicit only after a time (Moor 2008:179). The research, thus, takes Blickle’s Communal Reformation seriously in order to develop it such an extent that it could call the Münster event an Anabaptist version of the Communal Reformation.

On the other hand, Blickle provides a creative and challenging image of the common men and how they themselves did contribute to and modify the (radical) Reformation. Blickle views the common people as the most significant group of “potential recipients of reformation ideas” (Blickle 1992:11). To him, it was such a wide range of common people who actually “introduced” the Reformation by translating the reformers’ theology into a communal movement (Blickle 1992:184). Thus, a shift can occur from the great theologians and great politicians, usually attributed with the most important roles in the Reformation, to the common people as the union of aggrieved residents of both rural areas and town. This overturns the two-fold offensive stereotype of the common men, attached particularly to the peasants, not only as a passive and servile subject, but also as a rude and reckless daredevil. Rather

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<sup>14</sup> The idea of a “silent revolution” is indebted to Tine De Moor (2008:179-212).

Blickle proposes a liberating view of the common men who played a creative and critical role in the Reformation; they were able not merely to voice grievances but also to translate them into legislation, or more precisely, the transformation of the Reformation theology into a political theology. A respect for Blickle's perspective then spurs the research to take a close look at the Münster event from a different angle, focusing on the common men as the initiative of the movement, with a vision of social and religious hybridity that held potential for realizing the new and more representative egalitarian form of society, here and now.

However, the main thrust of Blickle's interpretation is not without limitation as aforementioned; his insistence on the Communal Reformation is subject to the Swiss and South German example only; his elevation of the common men is prone to romanticizing them; his emphasis on 1525 and defeat of the common men is so overrated. But, these signs of partiality aside, the weakness in Blickle's view is that he simply sees the Anabaptist movement as "the dialectical reversal of the Communal Reformation," without offering its dynamic interconnection (Blickle 1992:104). He regards the transition of the Communal Reformation into Anabaptism in somewhat a negative sense. To Blickle, the reformation of the Anabaptists is seen as merely the downgrade version of the Communal Reformation (Blickle 1992:104). This is the reason why Blickle's terms, the Communal Reformation and the common men, remain to deliver a provocative, but provisional balance on a very issue of the research –in this case, the character of the radical Anabaptism in Münster as the Communal Reformation where the two movements were intertwined both as competing and complementary ways.

Furthermore, Blickle is not as much successful in discussing the relationship between the common men and the great men as in underscoring the initiatives of anonymous common men in the Reformation event. In Blickle's theory, the great men, or the Reformers, played an ambiguous role both as catalyst and deterrent; they made their theological message popular by unconsciously appealing to an already existing communal movement (Blickle 1992:184), but were ultimately disposable –even a hindrance –for this movement (Blickle 1992:199). Whereas the common men were "more creative and courageous" as an impetus to this Reformation (Blickle 1992:108). This implies that there has a vacuum between the common men and Reformers in Blickle's interpretation. From it emerges Korean Minjung Theology as a new discourse for the second outlook. It plays a key role in bridging the gap between the two and thus helps reinterpret the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as a continuation of the Communal Reformation, which took both the common men and the great men, the immigrant radicals and the native reformers, the violent and non-resistant Anabaptists, seriously as the historical co-agent of the Reformation.

In addition, source documents on the Anabaptist movement are mainly written in German. The literary analysis in this dissertation is based on academic literature that deals with translations of the original German texts. The research amplifies literature on the Anabaptist movement available for English readers for example Peter Blickle's magisterial work, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants War from a New Perspective* (1981), T. A. Brady's *Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg 1520-1555* (1978), L. H. Zuck's *Christianity and Revolution: Radical Christian Testimonies, 1520-1650* (1975), J. K. Zeman's *The Anabaptists and the Czech Brethren in Moravia 1526-1628* (1969), J. H. Yoder's *The Hermeneutics of the Anabaptists* (1966), Wolf, E. R. *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (1969), G. H. Williams and M. M. Angel's *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation* (1957), K. Von Greyerz's *Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800*, (1984), H. J. Hillerbrand's *The Reformation and the German Peasants War* (1972), W. Klaassen's *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources* (1981), C. P. Clasen's *Anabaptism; a Social History, 1525-1618* (1972), H. J. Goertz's *Karlstadt, Müntzer and the Reformation of the Commoners, 1521-1525* (2006), D. J. Grieser's *Seducers of the Simple Folk: the Polemical War against Anabaptism 1525-1540* (1993), L. Harder's *Sources of Swiss Anabaptism* (1985), F. Engels, *The German revolutions: The Peasant War in Germany, and Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (1967), etc.

#### **1.4.1.2 Korean Minjung Theology**

By acknowledging that there are some dubious factors in Blickle's thesis, such as a *Völkisch* aspect – a romantic focus on the simple folk, the research begins to reconstruct the event of the radical Reformation, particularly Anabaptism in Münster, by putting a collaboration of the common men with the Reformers in the spotlight. At this point, Korean Minjung Theology can be a connecting thread between the two. Korean Minjung Theology is a Korean contextual theology emerging from the struggle for social and political justice in Korea. It began in the 1970s against the backdrop of the political oppression and developed during the political dictatorship of the 1980s. This Korean contextual theology defines minjung as the social, political, and economic suffering people, or simply, “the underdogs” as opposed to the rich and powerful (Kim 1987:252). It also shows infinite affection toward minjung as the real subject and motivating force of history (Suh 1983:183). In Minjung Theology, *a priori* is to see God as the God of the minjung and *a posteriori* is to interpret His salvation history in the present situation of the suffering minjung (Suh 1981:18). In this light, *han* has a special meaning for Minjung Theology. By defining *han* as “a deep resentment against unjustifiable suffering” (Lee 1994:99), minjung theologians hold that it is to be the main task of Minjung Theology to resolve

and overcome the vicious circle of the minjung's *han*. *Dan*, cutting-off, is the answer that Minjung Theology has found and it, as a remedy for *han*, has been dealt creatively by many minjung theologians with different methodologies in order for undertaking a Korean style of doing theology.

A key concept in Minjung Theology, despite its epistemological privilege of the minjung, is the remarkable solidarity between Jesus and the *ochlos*-minjung.<sup>15</sup> This implies a non-dual relationship, or a radical sense of interdependence and interpenetration between the two. Such a reciprocal relation is too strong even to the extent of identifying Jesus with the *ochlos*-minjung (Ahn 1983:138-54). In Minjung Theology, Jesus' incarnation is, therefore, caught up in the *ochlos*-minjung's deification<sup>16</sup> so that Jesus is minjung and vice-versa (Ahn 2004:138). Taking into consideration this mutual interaction, Minjung Theology extends it as a reference to testify to its convergence with the relationality between minjung and minjung theologians. This hermeneutics of solidarity and sharing offers a special contribution to the character of Münster event. Beyond Blickle's *Völkisch*-prone aspect, there is a certain kind of dynamic interplay between the minjung and minjung theologians. The minjung theologians have consciously involved in minjung's life and destiny, while the minjung are more sensitive and sensible in encouraging the minjung theologians to participate in the Jesus-event. In sharing and infusing this relationship with that of the common men and the Reformer in the Münster event, the enduring stigma of radical Anabaptism, "the Protestantism of the poor," can also be explored and developed within Korean Minjung Theology toward a place of hybridity, or silent revolution, wherein both the common men and the reformers; the radicals and the reactionary; the victimizers and the victims; the sinners and the sinned-against, have had co-existed and co-participated, together and apart, for the sake of healing, liberation and salvation on both sides. At this juncture, the research takes such insight of mutual interdependence seriously to prevent the Münster episode from romanticizing the radical Anabaptists under the pretext of self-glorification and righteousness of the common men.

Taking cue from this dynamic interplay of both sides, the research re-invites the bastard line (*sic*) of radical Reformers in relation to the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, which is, Thomas Müntzer, Hans Hut, Melchior Hoffman, and John Bockelson. In applying the principle of mutual interdependence to

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<sup>15</sup> In his study of the Gospel of Mark, Ahn, Byung-Mu, one of the founders of Korean Minjung Theology, finds that the word *ochlos* (ὄχλος) is used to refer to the crowd around Jesus, those who were religiously forsaken, economically alienated, and politically oppressed (Ahn 1983:138-54). Ahn, in the end, interprets this biblical term *ochlos* as the Korean word minjung.

<sup>16</sup> The idea of deification, or *theosis*, is common in the East as another concept of salvation. It generally refers to an ongoing process of transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Since *theosis* intends to "begin here and now in the present life" in a cooperation between God and the human beings, the latter's voluntary participation is inseparable from the former's saving action (Ware 1993:236, 1996:34).

them, it helps understand how the Münster uprising of 1535 was created by a series of symbiosis between the radical Reformers and the common men in substantial ways. This implies then that these bastard line (*sic*) of radicals can be conceived of only in their relationship with the common men and vice-versa. In their mutual correlations, both are no longer bound to the dualistic principle of the law of excluded middle; the radical Reformers and the common men are not two, but they are not one either. The research, thus, attends to Korean Minjung Theology not only for reminding its insight of a non-dual relationship between Jesus and minjung; minjung and minjung theologians, but also for infusing them with that of the radical Reformers and the common men in Münster through the bastard line (*sic*) of four forerunners.

#### 1.4.1.3 The Dialectic of *Guru-Avatar*

Yet, in order to plug in this dynamic interrelation into the Münster event in success, it requires a new connecting thread: the dialectical unification of *guru-avatar*. This includes a necessity of positing a principle of double transformation. The term entails that when a concept is employed in theological translation, its meaning always undergoes transform (Brinkman 2007:1). In this double-edged process, the Hindu concept of *guru-avatar* is changed in some crucial aspects when it is applied to the Christian frame of reference and particularly, in this case, enmeshed in the interplay of radical Reformers and common men in Münster. Here, the interaction of *guru-avatar* “becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies [that of the reformers-commoner], transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new [dynamic interrelationship]” (Shorter 1988:11).

Seen from the perspective that the *gurus*, despite its plural meanings,<sup>17</sup> at their core must by definition be religious teachers (Aravamudan 2006) and their messages are tailor-made to particular times and circumstances in order to develop a following of disciple (Forsthoefel and Humes 2005:7), no one is more suitable than the bastard line (*sic*) of Reformers. For they have taken active and influential leadership role not only in shaping their radical messages –“the gospel of social unrest” (Oberman 1979:39-51), but also in expanding their ardent disciples –the common men, to a new frontier beyond the geographical borders. Indeed, their fundamental Reformation concept of freedom and justice of God highlighted the existing injustice and thereby provided the common people a rationale for abolishing the current inequality (Oberman 1976:110). Yet, what is unique about these radical Reformers is to be seen not in their *guru*-ship, but in their *avatar*-hood, that is, the incarnation of the common men. As the Reformers who not only ministered to the common men, particularly poor, on a

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<sup>17</sup> The term “*guru*” has multifarious meanings; a Hindu spiritual teacher; each of the first ten leaders of the Sikh religion; and an influential teacher or expert (Copeman and Ikegame 2012:1).

day-to-day basis but also eye-witnessed the oppressive conditions of their lives, they could not neatly separate the religious world from the secular one (Matheson 2007:4). This rather took them with utmost seriousness the need for reformation to begin with the experience of the suffering common men. They then engaged the lived reality by becoming the *avatars* (literally decent), as well as the *gurus*, of the common men in its organic solidarity, or identification, with them.

Furthermore, according to the process of double transformation, this alteration does not take place only in one direction (Brinkman 2007:1). It rather brings forth new meaning in both. So, the same is true for the relationship between the two; the common men, too, were changed by the radical Reformers in a significant and innovative way. Indeed, the ordinary people were “becoming visible,” or “wising up” through this encounter (Matheson 2007:260). Here, the common men were finding their own voices, helped not only by the preaching of the Reformers –both moderate and radical –but also by the cheap and accessible pamphlets, the woodcuts and broadsheets, which were drawn from their own simple language (Matheson 2007:260). These empowered the common men, enabling them to articulate their own concerns and to challenge previous “top-down” interpretation (Matheson 2007:264-66). Now a much wider group of simple folk from both town and countryside began to make the Reformation their own. In this way, the common men came to the forefront in the Reformation. They, in Blickle’s term, “introduced” the Reformation as the actual protagonists. This means, in other sense, the common men critically and creatively accommodated their own self to the Reformation as the *avatars* of the radical Reformers. The word *avatar* is, in this light, viewed in a new light. Whereas *avatar*, in its original meaning, is manifestative, instrumental and thus ultimately functional relations in *guru*, this relation between the radical Reformers and the common men actually transcends the purely functional aspect. It even dismisses *avatar* as being passive and subordinate in respect to its nature and relationship with *guru*.

This new relationship, then, affirms and connects the *guru-avatar* interplay to an inclusive *yin-yang* thinking;<sup>18</sup> the radical Reformers as the *avatars* of the common men and the common men as the *guru* of the radical Reformers. Denying Aristotelian logic of the excluded middle, or either-or distinction, the dialectic of *guru-avatar* involves the organic and relational view of both-and, that is, “non-

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<sup>18</sup> In Chinese thought, the two poles of cosmic energy are *yang* (positive) and *yin* (negative). The key to the relationship between *yin* and *yang* is mutual arising or inseparability; there can be no *yang* without *yin* and vice-versa. In the *yin-yang* view, therefore, everything and everybody are in mutual sequence, which is in opposition to Western dualistic thinking (Lee 1979, 1980).

duality”<sup>19</sup> (Lee 1979:3-9). To be more concrete, the pair of *guru-avatar* includes contradictions and opposites in it, but it corresponds and is interconnected with each other as a coherent whole. Like the Möbius strip,<sup>20</sup> the *guru* and *avatar* are not juxtaposed, nor is the one absorbed by the other, but rather remains in a reciprocal and dynamic relation. Therefore, depicting the radical Reformers as the *avatars* of the common men does not diminish their practical *guru*-ship, or characterizing the common men as the *guru* of the radical Reformers does not dispense with their potential *avatar*-hood. Rather, the principle of *guru-avatar* underlines the mutual interpenetration and interdependence of two agents who must paradoxically be regarded together as the focal point in Münster Anabaptism.

As such, discovering the dialectic of *avatar-guru* to be a helpful methodological presupposition in developing the relationship between the common men and the radical Reformers in Münster, the research describes these bastard line (*sic*) of radical Reformers as the *avatar*, or the incarnation, of the common men and vice-versa. This means, Thomas Müntzer, Hans Hut, Melchior Hoffman, and John Bockelson (John of Leiden) are a whole that, to put it in a simplistic way, consist of a *guru*-ship element and an *avatar*-hood element, but more attention in this research is paid to the *avatar*-hood element; that these bastard line (*sic*) of radical Reformers are more than *guru* of the common men, that they are the *avatars* of the common men. The research, in so doing, challenges to the previous interpretations to attend as thoroughly to these radical Reformers’ *avatar*-hood for the common men as to their *guru*-ship for the common men.

## 1.5 DELIMITATIONS

The research is delimited in its findings in the following ways. First, the research recognizes the limitation of resources in light of language issue, knowing that main research materials about the sixteenth-century Reformation are firmly grounded in the primary German, Dutch, and Latin sources. In this research, however, most relevant primary materials are from the texts, written in English. The research, in other words, owes much to the literary resources in English translations. According to library index of the University of Stellenbosch only a German version of Blickle’s *Die revolution von 1525* is available. Neither the original nor the English versions of other revisionist works are fully

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<sup>19</sup> The term “non-duality,” literally not two, is equivalent to the Hindu notion of *advaita*. In this way of thinking, all things are in non-dual relation, including the world and even God. Panikkar, a Spanish Roman Catholic priest and scholar, tries to apply this *advaitic* principle to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (Panikkar 1973).

<sup>20</sup> The Möbius strip is originally used in mathematical term. It “is a one-sided non-orientable surface obtained by cutting a closed band into a single strip, giving one of the two ends thus produced a half twist, and then reattaching the two ends” (Gray 1997:322-23). Here the researcher uses this term to explain a paradoxical co-relation, or co-existence between the radical Reformers and the common men as both the *guru* and *avatar*. Both seem to be opposite and even contradictory, but actually complementary, like a relation of *yin-yang*.

accessible at the University of Stellenbosch library. The researcher utilized of texts translated in English in order to construct the historical realities of the sixteenth-century Reformation and Anabaptist movement.

The research opportunity in Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven) in Belgium is in this sense beneficial for the researcher to offset such limitation significantly, if not completely, with considerable reflection and insight which challenges him to further thinking on the related topics. During the research period, the researcher has utilized in KU Leuven's specialized library, including inter-library loan, attended a few conferences and established new research contacts with professors from the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven and with a professor from the Protestant Theological Faculty of the University of Münster, Germany. This helps the researcher compensate considerably for the limitation of getting important and authentic sources, even though most of them are translations of the original texts. Special contributions are made by such reading of the relevant historical works, concerning the radical Reformation in general, and the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster in particular, whose original authorship is attributed to European writers. The researcher is however willing to state quite clearly that these revisionist perspectives do not go without contestation. There are some weak links in the chain of their argument as aforementioned. Nonetheless, many revisionists and their translated works on the Reformation, particularly Münster Anabaptism, are being utilized in this dissertation as useful sources for developing the research topic.

Second, the research is conducted under the specific methodology, the so-called, the *avatar-guru* interplay and the double-mirror reading. These are designed and selected for enriching and elaborating the relationship between minjung and the radical Reformers on the one sense, and minjung and Messiah (Jesus) on the other. These methodological hypotheses, depending on "a logical supposition, a reasonable guess, and an educated conjecture" (Leedy 2015:5), attempt to contribute to a critical and creative synthesis by looking at the sixteenth-century radical Reformation, particularly Münster Anabaptism anew, through the lens of the twentieth-century Korean Minjung Theology. But, this aims primarily at theological fusion of horizons rather than direct historical linkage between the two. This presupposes then that there have in effect more theological affinities and parallels than historical in this approach.

Third, the research is attentive to the common men's perspective on history rather than the great men's. This is based on the assumption that if the history was written by one with the power in particular, it often involves the attempt to manage and even to govern history on their behalf. The danger of this

historical interpretation is that it too often and quickly becomes ideological. If the other side cannot gain proper recognition, but just to be silenced more by force than by will, its historical judgement must remain open to the possibility of revision. With this in mind, the research approaches the sixteenth-century radical Reformation and Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster from below. Yet, it is not a perspective from below is chosen for the final cut while a perspective from above is abandoned, but rather this pinpoints that the former shows the way for the latter to the final cut. This, in other words, helps to remain the portrayal of the Münster common people ambiguous; both as objects and subjects; victims and victimizers; and sinner and sinned-against in its inner dynamics, including contradictions and conflicts. Indeed, this is an attempt to rewrite the sixteenth-century Münsterite Anabaptists, seen from the twentieth-century Korean Minjung Theology, in order to create new and more balanced version of people's history of Christianity, rather than to make an exclusive and final conclusion.

Finally, the research has some limitations in terms of its treatment of Korean Minjung Theology. It deliberately sifts through a great deal of its contents and perspectives with just one guild of minjung theologians in mind. This means, in other words, the researcher traces and analyses the line and direction from the first generation of minjung theologians, particularly Suh, Nam-Dong, Anh, Byung-Mu, Kim, Yong-Bok, and Hyun, Young-Hak. It does not mean that the research has not acknowledged the development of its own scholarship, nor ignored the creative work of a new generation of Korean Minjung theologians. Rather, the researcher is in agreement that Korean Minjung Theology has drunk from its own wells. Indeed, this contextual theology of minjung has continued to carry out its own scholarship in ever changing context without losing its theological significance. In so doing, it has brought Korean voices back into the international conversation. Nevertheless the research, for the purpose of this study, will focus particularly to gather up the early harvest of the first generation of Minjung Theology in the 1970s. This is partly because of their stress on a combination of Jesus and *ochlos-minjung* in favour of Christian social responsibility. The first generation of minjung theologians had evidently advocated a theology of witness. They did identify themselves with minjung by participating in sufferings with them. In this solidarity with the suffering minjung, they, too, became the suffering minjung. This led Minjung Theology to a legitimate place in the life of the Korean minjung (Back 1984:13-28). By connecting this self-giving identity to the dialectic of *guru-avatar*, the research makes it a priority to engage the characteristics of the first generation of minjung theologians in significance.

## 1.6 POTENTIAL IMPACT

The research approaches the history of the sixteenth-century Reformation, particularly, Münster Anabaptism, from below. This is a people's history of Christianity built on, among other things, but first and foremost the ordinary simple folks whose name themselves are largely lost to history. From this perspective, the central focus is the common people and its impending task is to rehabilitate them as another leading protagonist of Christian history. Even if this bold approach is quite suggestive, it, in many cases, remains not so much a history 'of' the common men as a history 'for' the common men. Putting too much a premium on the common men, this outlook seems to overlook that there are at all times cases in which one falls victim to oneself. The sad irony is that, as a result, such a history re-writing from below is readily caught up in the dialectical reversal of from above. It unwittingly sidesteps of the impending problem of *Völkisch* which could be used to suppress others, especially the previous victors. In this sense, a reading Münster Anabaptism from the minjung hermeneutics offers significant contribution so as to recast this bizarre event into a silent revolution, or hybridity that hold potential for healing, liberation, and salvation on both sides, based on the dynamic interplay of both the great men and common men/the victimizers and victims/sinners and sinned-against, being in the dialectic of *guru-avatar* and *han-dan*. Here, it was the rank-and-file minjung as well as the radical Reformers who had played important roles in the history of Münster Anabaptism as the extensive Reformation of the common men.

Nonetheless, it is significant to remind that the strategy of these re-reading is rather like that of a jigsaw puzzle, in which each piece, incomplete in itself, contributes to the design of the whole. This effort is, needless to say, a preliminary sketch, which, if successful, can only produce a profile, not a complete portrait. Seen from a long-term perspective, however, the total of these relatively small, dim, and seemingly insignificant pictures takes shape as part of broader historical trends. Further in-depth studies are thus welcomed in a great number of areas to take a balanced assessment on this matter.

## CHAPTER 2

### RE-READING THE REFORMATION FROM BELOW

#### 2.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ANABAPTIST KINGDOM OF MÜNSTER

The sixteenth-century Anabaptists, who emerged as the reformers after Luther and Müntzer chronologically, had shared the negative worldview and thus the need for reformation (Oberman 1989:41). The Anabaptists were not content to merely point out socio-political and religious discontents, but determined to work out toward the pursuit of radical social alternatives (Brady 1988:30). This led to the widespread persecution of Anabaptists by both Catholic and Protestant authorities who were alert to another Peasants' War (Lindberg 1996). But, such persecution produced an apocalyptic fervor among the Anabaptist movement (Cohn 1961). Their calls to construct an alternative society began to be associated with chiliastic thought, especially in areas influenced by Hans Hut in South Germany (Oyer 1960:219-48, 1961:5-37, Goertz 1996:17) and by Melchior Hoffman in North Germany, Flanders and the Netherlands (Verheyden 1961:15, Finger 2004:35-6). Münster's tolerance and the level of accommodation to the religious dissenters attracted a large number of chiliastically-minded Anabaptists to the city in 1532-33 (Eichler 1981:46). A native Münster preacher, Bernhard Rothmann's fierce anticlerical sermons became a catalyst for switching the city's allegiance from Catholicism to Lutheranism (Klötzer 2007:226). Coupled with the prolonged political unrest and economic inflation within Münster, his emergence in particular inspired many of the lower class citizens (Bax 1903:119). Thus was followed by new evangelical reforms in Münster centring on Rothmann (Hsia 1984:3).

Yet, Münster's religious developments took a more radical turn when Rothmann aligned himself with Anabaptism, openly questioning a number of Lutheran belief, including infant baptism and Eucharist (Baaker 2009:99-100). Rothman's open espousal of Anabaptism led to the significant popular support. In addition, through conversion and mass immigration, the Anabaptists in Münster had grown enough to bring an Anabaptist council to power in 1534 (Haude 2000:4, 46-47). The radical Protestants quickly used this favourable circumstance as a chance to seize power formally. Toward the end of 1533, John Matthijsson, the former baker, who had recently replaced Melchior Hofmann's leadership among Dutch Anabaptists, sent out apostles to Münster to proclaim the city as New Jerusalem (Stayer 1995:269). The reaction was immediate and heated; within a week about 1,400 citizens of Münster were re-baptized and thousands of Dutch Anabaptists from neighbouring cities sought to immigrate to the city (Estep 1975:155-56, Littell 1958:30-1). By declaring himself the prophet Enoch, Matthijsson

assumed the real leadership in Münster, superseding the formal authority structure with its city council and elected mayors (Williamson 2000:29-9). All evangelicals and Catholics in the city were forced to either leave or accept rebaptism (Klötze 2007:234). Anabaptist political, as well as religious, takeover of the city alarmed the Prince-Bishop of Münster, Franz von Waldeck, so as to initiate a blockade of the city (Eichler 1981:46). This threat rather bound the Münsterites together under Matthijsson's leadership. Yet, Matthijsson's exercise of the unchecked power in Münster was brief. After a little over a month in the city, Matthijsson was killed while, by divine revelation, leading only a few men on a failed sortie against the Prince-Bishop's besieging army (Goertz 1984:30-1).

Matthijsson's death gave Münster a new leadership under John Bockelson, a second-in-command (Eichler 1981:47). Taking cue from his predecessor's failure, Bockelson established strict role of conduct and behaviour in the city in order to cement his authority (Klötze 2007:241-42). At Bockelson's behest, Münster city council and guilds were superseded by twelve elders; polygamy and forceful form of community of goods were instituted; and finally self-coronation was ordered to have himself crowned King of the whole world (Haude 2000:13, Snyder 1995:219). But, all these collective efforts failed. As the Prince-Bishop had increased pressure on the city and famine had intensified, the Anabaptist Kingdom was betrayed by its own (Klötze 2007:243, Haude 2000:15). The bishop's forces entered the city and the Münsterites were too weak to fight. In 1535 the city fell and Bockelson, together with his lieutenants, was executed (Haude 2000:16, Snyder 1995:221). Their bodies were put on permanent display as a warning to future rebellion (Cameron 1991:324-25). This short-lived (23 February 1534-24 June 1535) Anabaptist reign in Münster then became a byword for total aberration of the Reformation, while John Bockelson was portrayed as *Führer* (tyrannical leader), intended as an opprobrious epithet, who led his followers into a disastrous political-religious adventure.

Even though the sixteenth-century Anabaptism has now begun to shake off the stigma of a "stepchildren of the Reformation,"<sup>21</sup> the enduring dark image is far from disappearing (Bender 1944:8). Indeed, the Anabaptist rule in Münster (1534-35) has made a significant contribution to this opprobrious attention. To be sure, the short-lived period of Anabaptist takeover of Münster has displayed the worst example of the radical Reformation in the sixteenth-century (Haude 2000:20). Thus, the tragic episode of Münster is still a curse on the Anabaptists in general and the radicals in particular (Baring-Gould 1891, Hudson-Reed 1989:89). This is the strain of interpretation that the scholarship today is repeating; out from the Anabaptist Münster, like a myth of Pandora's Box, flew

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<sup>21</sup> The term is coined by Leonard Vurduin, especially in his book, *Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (1964).

every trouble and problem, such as reign of terror and totalitarianism, cruel and fanatical violence, the introduction of forceful communism and sexual deviance –polygamy. This makes Münster a monster whose task is to let release all the evils upon the world! (Rowland 2004:1-18) The Anabaptist madness in Münster therefore deserved the bloody repression as Sodom and Gomorrah (Kerssenbrock 2007:181). From this viewpoint, “a long line of polemical histories of Anabaptist rule appeared” (Driedger 2016). The mainline scholarship has placed a taboo on any attempt to rehabilitate the depravity of Münster Anabaptism. Yet, the question now arises whether Anabaptism in Münster really opened the lid of Pandora’s Box, which contained a source of trouble, that is, odious deviations from the Reformation, so that its demise was the natural outcome of false and rebellious enthusiasm.<sup>22</sup> This merits special attention to forces leading to this bizarre event as a central theme that penetrates the entire thesis.

## 2.2 HISTORY FROM THE GREAT AND THE COMMON MEN

Recently, the dominant religious history, mainly inspired by the great men, has been challenged by historians whose perspectives are critical to the official history. In linking interpretations of historical events and ideas with the imprint of the interpreter, they argue that history can be tailor-made to the taste of those in power. Hence the problem comes. If the history was written by one with the power in particular, it often attempts to manage and govern history on its behalf. And its aftermath is that history is produced, depending upon the vote of one party –the more powerful and the more prevalent voice. This immediately provokes scepticism in its ideological fashion. If the other side cannot gain proper recognition and are to be silenced more by force than by will, its historical judgement deserves to be rejected. For in history to be victorious is not necessarily meant to be righteous. Thus it calls for the perpetual revision of history; “every generation must rewrite the history in its own way” (Collingwood 1946:248) to stop promoting justice backed by the powerful alone.

To the dismay of Christians, ecclesiastical history has not found it difficult to take the similar course. Many historian in the past have tended to focus on doctrine and religious concepts of elites and intellectuals and still regard them as the privileged if not exclusive object of historical interpretation.

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<sup>22</sup> Two of the most significant of Münster Anabaptist histories were composed by both Hermann von Kerssenbrock and Heinrich Gresbeck, who were both eyewitnesses to the event. The former wrote the Anabaptist takeover of Münster with a vivid and long historical account. The sources were narrated several decades after the demise of Anabaptist Kingdom, but first published in 1730. Within it, he, as a Catholic, showed a highly anti-Anabaptist viewpoint. The latter, as one of the Anabaptist soldiers who betrayed, described the event, with less detailed accounts than the former. He was rather particularly interested in the Prince-Bishop’s forced and the condition after the fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom. Most recently, Christopher Mackay has translated both primary sources into English, under the title of *Narrative of the Anabaptist Madness: The Overthrow of Münster, the Famous Metropolis of Westphalia* (2007) and *False Prophets and Preachers: Henry Gresbeck's Account of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster* (2016) respectively.

Its consequences is the exclusion of voices of the ordinary faithful from history, or if they are admitted at all, they are relegated to secondary status. An even more deleterious corollary of it is the simplistic association of religious or political dissenters, who have been sensitive to the power, with bad Christians. The task of these historians is, therefore, to get them right in service of the intellectual elite and powerful class. This blind generalizations, which force every deviators from the larger Christian community into the despised heretics, would surely impoverish Christian history.<sup>23</sup> For it may serve as an act of self-defence on the one hand, but may also serve as an act of self-destruction on the other. If the origins of Christianity is rooted in a movement of oppressed people, the original message of salvation for the oppressed has been interrupted when Christianity became a religion solely suitable to the interest of the ruling powers. “Christianity brooked no rivals in religion, just as state power tolerated no rivals in politics” (Frey 1984:22). Such a totalitarian inner coherence, as a result, permits no room for heterodoxy, while the memories of its oppositional origins remained alive only in heretical movement (Vogler 1984:178-79). This does not mean that there cannot be any heresy, but that word heresy conveys immediately the vision of a flaming stake, invented and ignited by the leaders of the church (Klaassen 1981:290).<sup>24</sup> Be that as it may, this is obviously a value judgment, based on theological penchant and thus constitutes a red flag; “to burn heretics is to recognize Christ in appearance, but to deny him in reality” (Hubmaier 1524 quoted by Klaassen 1981:30-33).

A warning bell, then, must begin to ring when the singular orthodoxy has held the ideological monopoly in interpreting the entire church history. One, therefore, is to be more careful that there might be much truth in the dictum; “one generation’s heresy is frequently the next generation’s orthodoxy” (Kurtz 1986:5). Indeed, Jesus was condemned as a heretic to contemporary people. As only few belief have been held “always and everywhere and by all,” the other side of Christian history needs to receive

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<sup>23</sup> Here, Walter Bauer’s claim (1971) calls special attention, despite his is not strange to controversy. As against the classical view that heresy was originally an offshoot from orthodoxy, Bauer has set out and tried to establish the principle of the coexistence of heresy with orthodoxy. To him, there was no clear-cut between the two; both arose simultaneously within the Church itself. This is epitomized by his two principle theses, defining the relationship between orthodoxy and heresy in the first two Christian centuries. Bauer agrees in stressing the diversity and the fluidity of early Christian thought. Christianity, according to him, from the outset was a congeries of different groups, having profoundly different interpretations of Jesus. This explains that the heresies were not illegitimate deviations from an originally unified and orthodox mainstream as orthodox writers since Eusebius would have insisted. This leads Bauer to conclude that as formal orthodoxy began as a splinter or minority movement under episcopal leadership and only slowly reached a dominant influence in the life of the Church, heresies even attained a greater degree of importance for a long period than orthodoxy in such places –like Edessa, Egypt, and Asia Minor –until the orthodox victory became decisive and nearly universal in the course of the third century. Bauer’s giving credence to the Church of Rome as hero is another distinction in this regards.

<sup>24</sup> Some scholars even propose that heresy is a product of the inner dynamics of orthodoxy, which is systematically produced by great “axial religions” (Eisenstadt 1999, Gauchet 1997).

new light.<sup>25</sup> It thus encourages Christians to see that in every ecclesiastical battle there is another side and sometimes, there are more people on the other side. It, of course, does not necessarily mean that one should glorify or absolutize the outsiders for they suffer under their historical predicaments. It should be remembered that, in traditional historical and theological terms, they might also be under sin and in a state of sin.

What would emerge is rather the reworking the history's plot with the common men as the central narrative, or put it simply, the re-reading history from below; those who "have never had a say; have always played a minor role; have left no records" (Mollat 1986:29). At issue here is, therefore, the questions of "whose experiences?" and "whose interpretations?" which challenges the customary views of granting the religion of great men the monopoly of being objects of historical interpretation. Yet, this new path is not without limitation. Even though a guild of historians have made efforts to include studies of the conditions and reactions of the poor and the oppressed, the primary focus, to a large degree, has been on perspectives of the non-poor toward the poor, the oppressive toward the oppressed, and the great men toward the common men. This, conversely, affirms the necessity of the re-reading of history from below, –not the optimistic, evolutionary history of the victors, but the forgotten history of the victims (Metz 1999:95). Therefore, it should not be used to belittle the sources available, which are mostly stemming from the great men. It is necessary and useful, and it may produce a real, important, and true history despite it is conditioned by the preferences and proclivities of the powerful voice. But by itself it is important to make all voices become heeded to seriously, whether learned or unlearned, academic or popular, high or low. No voice is granted a special status merely because of its privileged position and affiliation. This rather suggests both the re-reading of history from below and from above are to be seen not as contradictory but as complementary.

### **2.3 REFORMATION FROM THE GREAT AND THE COMMON MEN**

The re-reading of history from below, in this light, includes the necessity of re-reading of the Reformation: Was there a Reformation for the common people? It is so obvious that experts in the Reformation history have concentrated on what is familiar to them; the formation, growth, and

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<sup>25</sup> There had been some early Christian theologians and church leaders who were rejected and questioned by Christian orthodoxy because of their different teachings in relation to heresy. Origen (185-254 CE) puts it like this; "All heretics at first are believers; then later they swerve from the rule of faith (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 3); Tertullian (155-240 CE), a father of Latin Christianity, speaks similarly at the end of *Prescription against Heretics* 36 through his analogy of the wild live tree (heresy) which springs from a cultivated seed (orthodox doctrine) (quoted from Bauer 1971: xxiii). cf. One of the recurrent devices in the struggle against heresy is seen as frustrated ambition; it derives the one in question out of the church and causes him/her to become a heresiarch. Tertullian already says this of Valentinus (*Against Valentinus* 4; cf. *Prescription against Heretics* 30). Epiphanius (310-320-403 CE) also reports a similar story about Marcion (*Her.* 42.1).

functioning of the leadership office, centring on Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other major Reformers. As a consequence, history of the Reformation becomes a tale of heroic figures, the history of great men. The problem is not in this approach itself. For there is always a need for an account of institutional reform from high. Problematic instead is its willful ignorance about the majority of the simple folks. In it, such great majority of people are considered merely a silent background to the Reformation. They were simply swept along by the leading without any contribution to it. Thus, the re-reading of the Reformation from below intends to challenge this customary practice of reading of the Reformation on the assumption that all previous presuppositions based on the saga of great Reformers need to be comprehensively revisited. It recognizes that the history of the common people (*der gemeine Mann*) –their “stories of joy and suffering, hope and despair, love and hatred, freedom and oppression, stories not recorded in history books written by victors but kept alive in the ‘dangerous memory’ of the ‘underside of history’” –becomes primary resources of the Reformation (Phan 2006:16). This encourages one to see not only how the Reformation did affect the common people, but also how they themselves, in return, did contribute to and modify the Reformation. Thus this enquires the nature of the Reformation in order to rediscover the role the common people who have played, not as bad Christians but as radical Christians.<sup>26</sup>

As such, a group of historians begin to propose that the Reformation was, from its inception, radical and plural or polycentral (Stayer 1993:39-47, Goertz 2002:29-42). Others have claimed the long age of Reformation, over three centuries from the 1300s to the 1600s,<sup>27</sup> on the premise that there was not a single Reformation, but a variety of “Reformations” (Lindberg 1996, Payton 2010).<sup>28</sup> From it emerges the term second Reformation. One group of historians tends to distinguish between “two

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<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note that Luther’s ideas were, in a sense, not original, but were essentially the republication of older heresies, namely, the bad Christians. Luther was a Hussite in his theology of contrition, a Wycliffite in his doctrine of confession, and a Manichaeist in his theology of grace and free will. Here, “the Reformation represented a reappearance of older heresies” (McGrath 1987:29).

<sup>27</sup> Here the researcher agrees with recent historiographical tendencies which have especially placed its emphasis on the blurring of traditional dividing lines between the later Middle Ages and the Reformation. Under this outlook, the idea of the Reformation as a violent interruption with the Middle Ages is no longer compelling. Rather this views the Reformation as one long and interrelated “era of reforms” that lasted centuries between the fourteenth and sixteenth century (Schilling 1975:5-31, quoted by Wriedt 1996:182-3).

<sup>28</sup> On this matter, a general consensus among the scholars and historians is that there might be no one monolithic experience of Reformation in Europe during the long period. The century and a half between the fourteenth and sixteenth century can be divided into at least three distinctive parts; (1) a series of radical challenges to the established Church throughout the close of the Middle Ages; (2) a successful evangelical assault in about the second quarter of the sixteenth century; and (3) a later phase of what used to be called ‘Second’ or ‘Counter-Reformation,’ which is more generally referred to as Lutheran, Calvinist, or Catholic confessionalization (Kümin 1996:3). These confessional churches, albeit with marked variations in degrees, allied with the states and thus became state-churches, *vis-a-vis*, smaller-but-numerous sects, their rivals.

Reformations in the sixteenth century,” either the first one was the minor Reformation by Luther and Calvin, the second one the major Reformation of late humanism (Gelder 1961), or the first one as “Reformation by the princes,” the second one as “Reformation by people” (Dickens 1976). Others, especially Czech church historians, have called the fifteenth-century Hussite movement “first Reformation,” while Lutheranism was the “second Reformation” (Molnar 1980:322 quoted by Klueting 2004:41). According to them, although the second Reformation “partially joined and continued the struggles” of the first Reformation, its first priority on the Pauline epistles prevented it from putting the law of the Gospel in the spotlight than grace and freedom (Enns and Seiling 2015:439). Furthermore, while the first Reformation was closely related to the multitude of poor and simple people, the second Reformation was by and large connected with the middle stratum and therefore was more conservative (Enns and Seiling 2015:439). Therefore, the scholarly concern for the relation between the first Reformation and the radical Reformation comes into being, centring on the common people both urban inhabitants and rural peasants.

It is now very old news that even in the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation, there was not one Reformation, but many Reformations, such as humanist, Catholic, communal, Zwinglian, Calvinist, and radical (Matheson 2007:8). This idea of multi-voiced Reformation (Wiesner-Hanks 1998:111-12) indicates that there was the obvious “wild profusion” in the “Long Age of Reformations” (Watt 2006). Therefore, diversity and heterogeneity were the key elements in the early years of the Reformation.<sup>29</sup> Yet, such context of great religious –also social, political and intellectual –struggles of the time had spared no middle-ground as it went through. This means one could not avoid taking a stand for or against the Reformations or, to particular the Reformers. As a result contending solutions came into the forefront; some were irenic, but others were belligerent. Soon what had been a juxtaposition of views became a tension. Diversity turned into opposition. As this disagreement became heightened, a group of so-called the radical Reformers<sup>30</sup> had boldly, often confrontationally, confessed their criticism against the major Reformers, including Luther (1483-1546), Zwingli (1484-1531), and Calvin (1509-1564). There had at least three major disputes between the two Reformers; the completion of reform;

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<sup>29</sup> Thus is noteworthy to quote that “conventional social theory errs in supposing that historical change is caused by changes in basic social, economic, and political conditions alone. There is, in fact, no such thing as social, economic and political conditions (or forces) alone; they are always part of a context of perception and feeling. Nor are there values, ideas, beliefs alone; as a social matter, they are always interconnected with ‘material interests.’ Power is also an idea; justice is also a force. Neither causes the other, in the physical-science sense of that world” (Berman 1983:403).

<sup>30</sup> For the complex typology of the radical Reformers, G. H. Williams’ tripartite classification seems to be most helpful, which is, (1) the Anabaptists, (2) the Spiritualists, and (3) the Evangelical Rationalists (Williams 2000: xxix). But this is also to be considered with caution that such a line of demarcation is, to a greater measure, not clear and fine, but rather fluid and even chaotic from its early stage.

the scope of reform; and the subject of reform.

First, the radical Reformers sought to reform Christian life and the church in a way which constituted an alternative to the existing Christendom. The reform, therefore, should be continued to the extent of going beyond the status quo. Yet, as far as they were concerned, the completion of reform had been stalled and suffered major setbacks due to the magisterial Reformers' complacency and compliance with the *Obrigkeit*, the political authorities. Second, against the major Reformers, who were simply inclined to confine their reform to the ecclesiastical realm, the radical Reformers strove to extend its scope into the political and social change by taking the common people's context seriously. Third, one of the major flash points between the radical and the official Reformers was whether or not the political power was necessary for the religious reform. The former disregarded it as the resurgence of the Constantinian compromise,<sup>31</sup> which is, "an expansion of secular authorities at the expense of ecclesiastical autonomy" (Hsia 1994:731-2). They thus eschewed it as an unholy alliance, or, a sort of cartels, justified by its cheerful advocacy of developing political power. The latter, on the contrary, considered this church-state coalition as positive and thus espoused it as a new propaganda.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The concept of a fallen or corrupted Christendom had been a recurrent theme among the radicals, including Anabaptists. Yet, its perspective varied considerably among themselves when this fall did occur. From Polish Anabaptism, for example, came to the record of the dating of the fall of Christendom "with the death of Simeon, the last of the grand old men who had known Jesus and the Twelve," in A.D. 111 on the basis of Eusebius (Eusebius 32, quoted by Littell 1955:62). Sebastian Franck, however, wrote in 1531 concerning an alteration of "the outward church of Christ," which occurred "right after the death of the apostles," or fourteen hundreds of years before, i.e., A.D. 131 (Williams 1957:149). Franck's view seems to have influenced John Campanus, and through Campanus, it seems to have been transmitted even to the Wassenberger preachers and Bernhard Rothmann of Münster (Littell 1955:40, 73). Thomas Müntzer, one of the leading radical Reformers, affirmed that the Christian church "did not remain a virgin any longer than up to the time of the death of the disciples of the apostles and soon thereafter became an adulteress" (Williams 1957:51). Nonetheless, more common among radical writers is the dating of the fall of the true church in the fourth century, in which the union of church and state began to be forged by Constantin and concluded by Theodosius. This interpretation occurs in one passage in the Hutterite Chronicle, according to which "the cross was conquered and forged to the sword...through the slyness of the Old Serpent" (Littell 1955:63). Michael Servetus (1511-1553) also dated the fall of true Christianity in the fourth century at the Council of Nicea (325) with its dogmatic formulation of Trinitarian doctrine (Bainton 1951:77). Menno Simons (1496-1561) held that the fall was a process, beginning in early Christian times, increasing under Constantine, and culminating in Innocent I's edict enforcing infant baptism (407) (Krahn 1936:136, quoted in Littell 1955:63). Interestingly enough, Martin Luther also shared this view with the radical Reformers but with different date. Luther had pinpointed the fall of the church in the eighth century when the bishops of Rome became great temporal rulers after the Donation of Pepin (55). cf. For this line of interpretation, the research is largely taken from Garret's article (1958:111-27).

<sup>32</sup> Here, the basic distinction between the "Reformer" and the "Radical" is beneficial. The "Reformer" is one who sees the system as fundamentally sound and only in need of being made workable. Its presuppositions are still valid, but have been overgrown with secondary developments and need to be pruned back to the essentials. On the contrary, for the "Radicals," the system is false and needs to be overthrown and replaced by a new system founded on fundamentally different presuppositions. The same is true of the sixteenth-century "Reformers" and "Radicals" in this regards. On the one hand, the former, from Luther to Calvin, accepted key presuppositions in common, especially about the necessity of an established church, binding on all citizens, as the sole church body recognized by the state, and the territorial parish as the local unit of this civic church. They therefore believed that a certain renewal of theology, a certain naturalization, a certain amount of structural reorganization would be sufficient to renew the church and reveal the lineaments of its original meaning. On the other hand, there were the "Radicals," including Anabaptists, who were convinced that the very concept of a church as a social body allied with the political order was fundamentally incorrect and represented the betrayal of the

Given these circumstances, the radical Reformers first threw the gauntlet to the official Reformers; the former refused every attempt to cooperate and compromise with the secular authorities by criticizing the latter, who once had supported the simple folks' demands but now turned against them for securing their own interest and status. These hard-liners had acutely accused the major Reformers of following in the footsteps of the Constantinian framework, which had turned Christianity from being a religion of the oppressed into a religion of the oppressors; of the common men into the great men.<sup>33</sup> Although the radical Reformers' resistance was not a decisive blow to the major Reformers, the former, at any rate, became a thorn in the side of the latter. The situation had played against the radical Reformers when the German Peasants' War of 1525 occurred. The major Reformers intended to use this revolution of the common men as a pretext for muzzling their rivals, who took side in the violent peasants. In the long run, what the Peasants' War produced was a winner and a loser. The major Reformers received the halo of righteousness, the good Christians, while the radical Reformers the stigma of heresy, the bad Christians. As the head of victors, Luther and his followers had stridently denounced all who disagreed with them.<sup>34</sup> The upshot was the immediate condemnation of the radical Reformers as the *Schwärmer*,<sup>35</sup> no other than heretical, schismatic and seditious dissenters.<sup>36</sup> From then onward,

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authentic nature of the Christian community. Hence there could be no talk of reform, but only of a rebirth of the church as a counter-community representing a new humanity into which one can enter only by departing from the fallen society of "the world" (Ruether 1969:271-72).

<sup>33</sup> In this Constantinian framework, H-J. Goertz finds the logic of the radical Reformation as anti-clericalism. By attending to Thomas Müntzer's life and theology, Goertz traces the "radicalization of the logic of anti-clericalism from the common Reformation rejection of the mediatory role of Roman priests to denunciation of the similarly elitist claims of humanist biblical scholars, to thundering against Wittenberg theologians, and finally to the rulers who extended them protection." According to him, this, in its final stage, leads to the rejection of the world and transformation of the world with its utopian theme (Goertz 1993 quoted by Stayer 1997:147). Furthermore, under the Reformation context, anti-clericalism and apocalypticism went together and this provided a breeding ground for the radical Reformation (Lindberg 2000:265).

<sup>34</sup> Little is known that Luther, prior to the Peasants' War, was concerned about reform in society as well as in the church, or that he did sympathize with the aspirations and goals propounded by the simple folks. Yet, later, Luther clearly appealed to those in authority rather than the common man to accomplish it (Hillerbrand 1972:106-36).

<sup>35</sup> This is Luther's preferred term against the radicals, which "brings to mind the uncontrollable buzzing of bees around a hive, and which the German Reformers, following him, applied indiscriminately to a wide host of adversaries" (George 1988:257). The Anabaptists were, at that time, a general designation used for all religious dissenters and cultists, so being condemned as the first *Schwärmer*. Interestingly enough, Luther declared that both the papists and the *Schwärmer* erred on "the left side and the right," by ironically reversing the modern positioning, placing the Catholics on the left and the radicals on the right (George 1988:257). cf. Gordon Rupp once translated this term as "too many bees chasing too few bonnets" (Rupp 1957:147).

<sup>36</sup> With regard to this, much of the condemnation was particularly laid at the head of Anabaptists, namely, "re-baptizers," who advocated of believers' baptism and thus attacked on infant baptism. "Since infant baptism typically served as the cornerstone of the church-state Christendom amalgam, whereby the child was enrolled in the census and granted citizenship, marriage privileges, and inheritance rights, most magistrates [and the magisterial Reformers] found the abolition of this practice quite threatening to civil [and ecclesiastical] stability and wished to punish "re-baptizers." For both of them (the

continuity and unity had outweighed change and diversity. When the major Reformers chose the path of negotiation and compromise with the *Obrigkeit*, the Reformation was doomed to keep in the status quo (Blickle 1992).<sup>37</sup> Soon, the hierarchical concentration of power had directed the whole process of reform as an effective tool for enlarging, solidifying, and perpetuating their dominion (Strauss 1978:258).<sup>38</sup> As a result, more power began to concentrate on fewer elites and more politically centralized body cemented more ecclesiastically conservative and moderate Reformation.<sup>39</sup>

However, once this political and religious uniformity was set up, its move was never moderate and conservative. In dealing with the outsiders, the magisterial Reformers showed no mercy. Indeed, the radical Reformers, together with the common people, were relentlessly muted and ousted (Strauss 1978:30). Furthermore, they had forbidden the radical Reformers to call for the Reformation under the “pure gospel,”<sup>40</sup> the main slogan of the common people, for it could invoke for the social and political new order.<sup>41</sup> This resulted in justifying the monopoly of the gospel by those who were already blessed

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magistrates and the magisterial Reformers), there was the high affinity between re-baptism and treason (MacGregor 2006:144). For more details on this relation, see also Cairns’ book (1996).

<sup>37</sup> This reminds of Lewis A. Coser’s classical theory that conflict with opposing force can strengthen internal cohesion and increase centralization, make members more conscious of their group bonds, increase their participation, and reaffirm the group’s value system (1956:87-90). The victory of major Reformers over against radicals probably accelerated this process more easily and more effectively.

<sup>38</sup> It is quite certain that none of major Reformers withdrew their hostile stance against radicals and the common men in a substantial way. Since they believed that what the gospel demanded was the preservation of the religious and political status quo, it was of the devil when radicals and the following masses had arbitrarily used the gospel for their own sake. Therefore, they stuck to their initial position; “as theologians the [official] Reformers did not stoop to joining [radicals and the simple folks] when it came to interpreting the gospel...As intellectuals, the [official] Reformers did not stoop to the political aspirations of the radicals and the simple folks” (Blickle 1992:199).

<sup>39</sup> Many –if not all –scholars have agreed that there was the fundamental change of attitude in Luther in this regard. This transition of Luther’s stance itself is interesting topic but the following examples would suffice to show how Luther changed his viewpoint on the impending issue. It can be traced against his view of political authority, against his later pamphlets, directed against insurrection or rebellion, against his attitude in the Peasants’ War and against his later approval for the established of the *Landeskirchen* (territorial church) (Krey 1983:1-69).

<sup>40</sup> In fact, the term “pure gospel” has a special meaning for the common people. From their perspective, the Reformation was always a voluntary movement to implement the “pure gospel,” without any additions of human doctrine. All demands of the common people in this sense were based on the aspiration “to hear the gospel and live accordingly.” Since gospel mirrors God’s will for justice, the Reformation should take both religio-theological and socio-political factors seriously which were closely intermingled with their concrete life situation (Blickle 1992:100, 153). In this light, the common people saw that the Reformation was stalled and suffered both religio-ecclesiastically and socio-politically when the magisterial Reformers began to take the lead.

<sup>41</sup> Yet, it is much the oppression of the gospel from above, which triggered radical resistance from below. In this sense, Luther’s sharp criticism against the rebellious peasants can be heard as self-accusation. Luther argued that “the Christian name, the Christian name, I say, leave it alone and do not abuse it as a cover for your impatient, un-peaceful, unchristian understanding; I do not want to allow or accept it, but tear it all from you, by words and writings, to the best of my ability, as long as there is one vein in my body.” Here Luther insisted then that whoever told the peasants to draw secular conclusion from the gospel was a “false prophet,” even a “murderous prophet” (quoted by Blickle 1998:67).

and privileged. Soon the Reformation became good news to the powerful, but bad news to the powerless. To be more specific, the right of Reformation (*ius reformandi*) was reduced from the common people to the political and religious bigwigs in general, and to the city fathers in Zwingli's case and the territorial princes in Luther's case in particular (Yoder 1984:23, Brady 2008:24). This *volte-face* of the Reformation had culminated in the dictum of *cuius regio eius religio*.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the princely takeover reduced the Reformation to re-formation of the powerful; its original vigor was tamed and its pure message was diluted so as not to materialize the hoped-for Reformation from below. Yet, this does not mean that a bottom-up Reformation, inspired by the common men, was totally replaced by a top-down Reformation, sponsored by the great men. It rather marks a "caesura" for the coming of the new history of the radical Reformation (Reinhard 2001:313-20 quoted by Blickle 2008:76), which now needs to take a close look at.

## 2.4 THE RADICAL REFORMATION

### 2.4.1 From Theology to History

The concept of radical Reformation has constantly changed and evolved toward better redefinition since it was introduced by George Huntston Williams in 1962. From its introduction onward, it has served as an attractive alternative to Anabaptists, the voluntary groups organized under the banner of believer's baptism (Stayer 1995:249). Williams was prone to define the radical Reformation in a more theological category, centring on; "theological belief of believer's baptism, the sleep of the soul pending the resurrection, the separation of church and state, a commitment to missions," and insistence on free will against predestination (Stayer 1995:249). This, however, has come under harsh criticism because not a single one of these beliefs was actually held by all radicals. Lutheran church historians and theologians have also argued that if the theological innovation is an important criterion for the radical Reformation, then Luther is to be hailed as a champion of the radical Reformers in terms of his radical rupture with the tradition (Lindberg 1976). More problematic is that Williams' radical Reformation, in this light, stands closer to "the right wing of the Reformation" than the "left" due to its close affinity with the medieval traditions (Stayer 1995:249).

Aware of such controversy, the current scholarship has begun to reshape the concept of the radical Reformation from the intellectual and theological rupture of the immediate past to social and historical break with the society of the present (Goertz 1982:21, Laube 1988:9-23). They then begin to reconsider

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<sup>42</sup> This literally denotes "whose realm, his religion," meaning that the religion of the ruler was to dictate the religion of those ruled. This was the principle of the Augsburg Imperial Diet of 1555.

the substance of the radical Reformation as the social and historical movement, which was closely associated with the expectation of a fundamental change in church and society against the moderate Reformation, undertaken by the established Protestant churches (Goertz 1987). At issue here is the subject of the radical Reformation in all its facets –social, economic and political and religious –not just its intellectual content (Laube 1988:9-23). In so doing, they have pruned and refocused the notion of the radical Reformation “as history, as an event of the distant past, and as a complex network of historical relationships” (Moeller 1972:7).

As such, there have been emerging voices, attempting to achieve a historical rehabilitation of the once rejected figures of history of the sixteenth-century Reformation. The attention has been particularly paid to the radicals of the Reformation who changed themselves from co-workers of the major Reformers into critics of a “stalled” Reformation (Goertz 1982:9); the individuals, who were not only ostracized by the world of their own day, but also were condemned by the world of the future. A group of scholars, encouraged by this interpretation, begin to regard these despised and rejected figures as the forerunners of the early Reformation. Some examples for this new trend have to suffice. Since the pioneering works of Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), who explored a broad spectrum of these untamable figures from Müntzer (1489-1525) through the Anabaptists to Paracelsus (1493-1541), Ludwig Keller (1849-1915) tried to trace the origins of the Anabaptists back to the period of the primitive church by way of the Waldensians; Carl Adolf Cornelius (1819-1903) worked for a source-based presentation of the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster; and Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) searched for the forerunners of modern socialism among the radicals of the Reformation. The studies of Max Weber (1864-1920) and Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) in the area of sociology of religion in particular marked an important new departure. Troeltsch, especially, separated the peaceful Anabaptists from the revolutionary Müntzer and established the gifted Spiritualists as a distinct group (Troeltsch 1931:691-706). From it emerged the several types of the radicals as the objects of increasingly scholarly research. Yet, the most important expression of research appeared in Gorge H. Williams’ concept of the radical Reformation as an entity set over against the official Magisterial Reformation. Its most striking characteristic was the separation between church and temporal power (Williams 1962: xxiv).

Encouraged by Williams’ introduction of the radical Reformation, some progressive historians have developed more impressive detailed studies of the various personalities and movements. These new scholarship has suggested then that the lines between all of the groups of the sixteenth-century Reformation were extremely fluid and chaotic (Packull, Stayer and Deppermann 1975:83-121). Furthermore, they recognize that the term radical is itself ambiguous and relative notion (Laube

1988:15). In its various and fluctuating standards, it must always be specified in what context someone or something is radical. Luther was, for example, radical in 1517-18 as was Zwingli a bit later. Ten years later both were still radical in relation to Catholic thought, but now there were Reformers who had broken with both of them and therefore were radical, while Luther and Zwingli were not in relation to these radicals at all. Here, the term radical no longer can be defined as merely the antithetical counterpart of mainline or magisterial reform of the Protestant theologians, obscuring its own links to the radical reforming movements of various kinds.

The ambiguities in the word radical, therefore, require of the necessary condition for radicalness that it must never lose its connection with the social context (Goertz 1982:20). By this standard, any idea or action would be radical to the degree that it may shake the foundations of society. Seen in this way, “radicalness cannot simply be measured by the criterion of a rupture with the intellectual tradition of the immediate past, but only by the break with the society of the present” (Goertz 1982:21). This leads the new scholarship to render the radicals of the Reformation as those who undertake to alter the existing societal order on the basis of Scripture. The key element here is neither the attempt to alter society without an explicit theological point of reference, nor the mere opposition to the existing social order (Hillerbrand 1986:29-30). According to them, the most determining factor to make the radicals of the Reformation really radical was, in this regard, nothing but the will to change the societal order on the religious ground, particularly, the “pure Gospel.”<sup>43</sup>

This helps one draw the line between the radical and moderate Reformers in the sixteenth century Reformation. The former stood with the reformation model in which ecclesiastical and secular institutions should be reformed as a whole, while the latter strove to keep religious and worldly reforms strictly separate. In this new scholarship, the Reformation is no longer considered as originally moderate and then subjected to radicalization. Rather its reverse is true (Goertz 2004:70-85). It was Luther who made the Reformation not only radical through his rupture with tradition, but also moderate in his mixture with the secular authority (Stayer 1995:250). Here “Luther once broke the pope’s pitcher but still kept the pieces in his hands” (Zieglschmid 1943:43 quoted by Hillerbrand 1986:36). The original radical impulse was therefore kept alive by the radicals, the untamable spirits of the Reformation.

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<sup>43</sup> This renders the German Peasants’ War of 1525 a part of the radical Reformation. The peasants, through the *Twelve Articles*, affirmed that all of society must be changed on the basis of Scripture. To them, religious change was seen as prerequisite for fundamental social reform.

All such developed researches make it possible to bring the radicals into clearer focus; the neglected agent who had played a decisive role in initiating and maintaining the Reformation of the common men. It thus integrates both on the radicals and their reforming activities into part of history of the Reformation. However, this is not the whole point that the re-reading of the Reformation from below would like to address. It must go further to rediscover the common men who were at the core of the demands for change and thus became the “patron” of the Reformation (Schmidt 1986:332 quoted by Blickle 2008:79). Here the conventional reading of magisterial Reformation served as a lesson for the radical Reformation; “in becoming an encyclopedia of certain types of religious and theological phenomena it loses all sense of unified narratives” (Stayer 1995:250). Just as the Reformation should not be simply defined by ideas or theology of the major Reformers, so must not be the radical Reformation by that of the radicals. Rather it must be seen as a complex of social, political, economic and religious processes that necessarily include the ideas, aspiration and action of the common people (Scribner 1994:5). In this light, the restored picture of the radicals must be a mirror which reflects another picture behind them, namely, the common people. The objects to be investigated, thus, include the history of their struggle, life, reality, freedom and solidarity. This presupposes that the common people are primarily agents or doers –both as history-making and history-telling –within the continuum of past, present, and future (Phan 2006:14). This, then, calls for the re-reading of the radical Reformation from theology to history, or to be more specific, from theology of Reformers to history of the radicals on the one hand, and from history of the radicals to history of the common people on the other.

#### **2.4.2 From the Reformers to the Radicals**

Fluid and plural character of the early Reformation renders that the radicals are to be seen not as difference in kind but as difference in degree from the major Reformers. Indeed, the Reformation was a theologically “divided house,” characterized by a diversity of point of views, so as to produce “a breadth of ideas and a precarious lack of coherence” (Hillerbrand 2012:171). Implicit in it is that the distinction between the radical and magisterial Reformation did not go back into the process by which schisms developed in the Reformation camp. It rather took shape only gradually, sharper and clearer in some instances than in other. This again suggests that the division between a Reformation authorized by the magistracy and a Reformation free from the magistracy, cannot be the immediate cause of the schism between the two. Therefore, the question of “What then made them went their separate ways?” merits special attention.

### 2.4.2.1 Lutheran Background

It was October 1517 when the Augustinian friar Martin Luther launched so-called the Protestant Reformation by circulating his famous ninety-five theses (Hendrix 2008:3). This posed a serious challenge to the logical underpinnings of the universal church of the Middle Ages (Mackay 2007:4). Luther's major objection was manifested in the idea of total depravity; a human's inability to justify himself by his own actions without the grace of God, through Jesus Christ. This elevated faith that Jesus had redeemed him through his death by crucifixion, while at the same time, relegating the role of the Church which could secure the soul's release from purgatory through the institution of indulgences (Hendrix 2008:3). Luther's rejection, therefore, logically denied the medieval church's general claim that there were meritorious acts that earned the believer credit in heaven and the control of these works rested with the Church (Mackay 2007:4). Luther was, however, rather naïve of the consequences of his action. He simply expected a positive picture: the correctness of his rejection of indulgences enabled the pope and the Church hierarchy to recognize the error of their ways and to abandon the practice (Hendrix 2008:4). Not surprisingly, this did not and could not happen, for it pledged to demise the entire edifice of what was taken at the time to be the traditional practice of the universal church (Mackay 2007:5). Now Luther and the Church hierarchy were in a highly touch-and-go situation. Luther turned this crisis into opportunity to consolidate his conviction. As pressure was applied to make him recant, he rather turned his rejection of indulgences into a repudiation of papal authority (Hendrix 2008:13). A number of chance circumstances prevented Luther from being burned alive as an unrepentant heretic and finally found a staunch defender, Frederick III, the electoral duke of Saxony. This protection allowed Luther to disseminate his views effectively (Mackay 2007:5).

There were two major premises for Luther's attack on the traditional Church. The first was the idea of "solafideism" (faith-alone-ism) and the second was that of Scripture alone, namely, *sola scriptura* (Mackay 2007:6). The former represented Luther's view that the individual was incapable of achieving salvation through his own efforts, and the good works promoted by the Church were useless in terms of salvation. Whereas the latter did that the only guarantee of the validity of a religious practice as its attestation in the Scripture, especially the New Testament (Mackay 2007:6). This resulted in his translation of the Bible into vernacular language for further propagation of the evangelical message. Here for Luther, theology was to be the language of the Reformation (Stayer 1995:251) and theological positions were not to be taken to serve ulterior purposes. Luther would find, however, that some were willing to extend his ideas much further than he was. They were so-called the radicals of the Reformation.

### 2.4.2.2 Infant Baptism and Believer's Baptism

Luther's two major arsenals –solafideism and *solar scriptura* –sometimes backfired at himself. Despite his idea of solafideism was in itself extremely radical, to the extent of scandalizing the traditional ideas about good works and the entire papal hierarchy, Luther proved to be rather conservative in his acceptance of various medieval dogmas and practice that seemed to conflict with his advocacy of *solar scriptura* (Mackay 2007:6-7). Luther, for example, rejected iconoclasm so as to suppress an outbreak of it in Wittenberg under the leadership of Andreas of Karlstadt (1486-1541). Luther accepted a real physical presence of the blood and body of Christ in the wine and bread of the Eucharist; as for baptism, he followed the traditional practice of infant baptism (Mackay 2007:7).<sup>44</sup> All of these strange entanglements became reasons for Luther's more radical followers to oppose him. To their eyes, Luther in his early stage was radical in its entirety but as he became moderated, his initial impulse was essentially put aside. This made them to challenge and confront their theological predecessor who now lost the original impetus of the Reformation. During such a state of tension, the encounter between Luther and the so-called "Zwickau Prophets"<sup>45</sup> at the Wittenberg in 1521-22 hinted at a prelude for a birth of the radical Reformation, which disturbed the character and direction of the moderate Reformation (Preus 1974).

Both stood in stark contrast to the nature of baptism. Luther and other major Reformers had advocated the traditional position of infant baptism, or pedobaptism (from Greek *pais*, meaning child) as counterpart to circumcision in the Old Testament.<sup>46</sup> The radicals, however, had held believers' baptism, or credobaptism (from Latin *credo*, meaning I believe) as the act of a knowing adult, who personally confessed faith in Jesus and thereby an infant was literally incapable (Mackay 2007:7). Since there is a lack of biblical evidence for the practice of infant baptism, it is hard to explain that Luther had strictly adhered to it from his theological conviction only. In fact, the issue of infant baptism was more complicated; it "involved the most serious implications for the entire relationship between Church and

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<sup>44</sup> Luther maintains that some infants do possess faith by noting that "faith, so to speak, is imputed to the infant in baptism even though he is not aware of it. This is all the more a confirmation of God's gratuitous mercy since the infant is helpless to effect his own baptism" (George 1988:94-95).

<sup>45</sup> Their leaders was Nicholas Storch (pre-1500-1536), a layman and weaver, and with him were associated Mark Stübner, a former student of Melanchthon at Wittenberg, and Thomas Drechsel, a descendent of a priestly family (Rupp 1969:166). Characteristic of the Prophets' preaching was radical Biblicism; the spiritualistic interpretation of the Scriptures, emphasis on the inner illumination of the Spirit, abandonment of infant baptism, and belief in the Millennium (Oyer 1953:19-20). All were getting on Luther's nerve, in particularly connection with their emphasis on the freedom of the Spirit, as opposed to Luther's "solafideism."

<sup>46</sup> Luther had actually been quite positive in defense of infant baptism so as to marshal biblical, theological and historical arguments to cement his belief (Zietlow 1994:147-71).

state, a matter that was of the greatest concern in the attempt of the magisterial Reformers to set up an institutional framework for their new understanding of the Church” (Mackay 2007:7). At the outset, the major Reformers saw infant baptism as a way to incorporate newborn babies into the secular community so as to cement the link between church and state (White 1982:443). It was Luther and the magisterial Reformers’ conviction that civic order required cultic unity or uniformity; there was a close connection between religion and government, so that a rejection of the latter constituted a repudiation of the former (Clasen 1972:179-80). This might be the main reason why Luther and the magisterial Reformers were cling to the theologically doubtful instruments of infant baptism, which had its root in the medieval *corpus christianum* (Deppermann 1984:96). The radicals’ strong rejection to infant baptism, in this way, came a serious threat to them. This enabled them to see believers’ baptism as subversive of all order and thereby to justify the persecution of the radicals. In short, the *corpus christianum* was in effect determinative, for the magisterial Reformers *positively*, for the radicals *negatively* (Peachey 1977:11).

#### **2.4.2.3 Relationship between Church and State, and Magisterial Reformation**

Medieval ecclesiology have thought that church and state were one as a sacral society. But, since hierocracy has given supreme priority to Pope over emperor, “the Church determined the correct interpretation of God’s ordinance for human behaviour and the secular state implemented this” (Mackay 2007:8). Luther continued to assume the sacral assumptions of medieval society. He saw the Church as one great body of Christ that had in it both church and state. Which is supreme? Luther, in this light, subjected the church to the German nobility, so that his reforms resorted to only from above, that is, the princes who were in league with his religious movement (Holborn 1959:183-91). Luther indeed established a new religious hierarchy in territories controlled by princes who adhered to his doctrine. This position had underlying implications for the moderate, or magisterial Reformation. Luther, one-time radical reformer, had now narrowed his call for external reform initiative from an appeal to anticlerical laymen to one directed specifically at the magistracy, namely, ruling princes and city councils (Mackay 2007:8).

At any rate, to Luther and the major Reformers, this close relationship of ecclesiastical and secular authority had important implications for the nature of the church. They rejected Papal suzerainty, but, just as in the medieval conception, they held the sacral assumption; the universal church contained both the secular and spiritual authority as a whole. This gave them the legitimacy to practice infant baptism. Under the sacral assumption, every citizen of the state necessarily belonged to the new reformed church and infant baptism was seen as a way to signify that each member of society was a

member of the universal church (Mackay 2007:8-9). Indeed, infant baptism marked the infant as a citizen of the nation and a loyal to the subject of the reigning political order as much as it marked the infant as a Christian. All in all, while Luther and other mainstream Reformers once “rejected papal tradition and the Roman hierarchy, now they rejected neither parish organization and infant baptism, nor all ecclesiastical hierarchy” (Driedger 2007:512).

Ironically, this alliance of secular and religious power came to be cemented by the Peasants’ War of 1525, its economic grievances of the peasants were entangled with demands for religious reform (Blickle 1981). Luther, especially, reacted to this attempt with sharp denunciation. Partly because, he saw it as a serious challenge to the blueprints of his reform, which was established in cooperation with the secular authority and under its auspice. This fear of disunity and anarchy prevented him from seeing the event of the Peasants’ War of 1525 with a balanced viewpoint. Furthermore, Thomas Müntzer, his radical religious opponent, who lent his support to the peasant revolt as the mastermind behind the scene, must also be serving as a factor hardening Luther’s attitude towards this mass protest from below (Mackay 2007:8). However, in the crisis of the Peasants’ War, prominent radicals, like Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525) and Balthasar Hubmaier (1480-1528), joined the rebels, as did the future Anabaptists Hans Hut (1490-1527) and Melchior Rink (1494-1545). This turned the Reformation from above and *in behalf of*, and *for* the common men on its head, for it was the Reformation *by* the common men and *of* the common men.

## **2.4.3 From the Radicals to the Common People**

### **2.4.3.1 The German Peasants’ War and the Reformation**

The German Peasants’ War of 1525 represents both as the last great medieval peasant revolt and the first modern revolution (Scribner and Benecke 1979:1),<sup>47</sup> “which extended across all of Europe, from Italy to the Low Countries and from southern France to Bohemia” (Oberman 1979:39). Yet, among historians, it has always been the subject of controversy. A more recent debate has been between Marxist and non-Marxist interpretations. While the former, first developed by Friedrich Engels, saw the German Peasants’ War as an “early bourgeois revolution,” based on socio-economic conflict (Engels 1967, Steinmetz 1965:9-10 quoted by Blickle 2008:89), the latter, embodied by Günther

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<sup>47</sup> Contemporary historians unanimously agree that in its scope, the Peasants’ War was, on the one hand, comparable to the medieval peasant rebellions in Italy (1304-7), Flanders (1323-8), France (1356), England (1381), Northern Spain (1437), Hungary (1514), and Hussite movement in Bohemian (1419-34), which involved a highly developed but simplified commodity production within the framework of the feudal order. On the other hand, it was a component of the early bourgeois revolution its characteristics depended on the development of manufacturing capitalism, especially the rise of mining production (Lindberg 1996:158-59, Engels 1933).

Franz's argument, regarded it as a political movement, seeking to revive older principle of right and just (Buszello 1969 quoted by Scott 1979:694, Oberman 1979:39-51). Succinctly, where Marxists saw the revolt of 1525 as a revolutionary movement, non-Marxists viewed it as conservative, even reactionary (Scribner and Benecke 1979:4).<sup>48</sup> However, recently there have been some stimulating attempts not only to bridge its gap between political and socio-economic interpretations, but also to consider it as many-sided affairs, in which religious, economic, social and political factors determined causes as much as effects (Blickle 1981). Here the German Peasants' War began to be seen as a people's movement, motivated by a mix of religious zeal and social and economic grievances.

These new and revisionist interpretations enable the contemporary scholarship to further recognize a fundamental link between the Peasants' War and the Reformation (Cohn 1979:3-31). Taking a cue from the new Peasants' War historiography,<sup>49</sup> they elaborated the characteristic of the peasants' revolt of 1525 as the popular movement economically and socially motivated on the one hand; the peasants were being tyrannized and that it called for resistance. It also supported and even provoked by the rhetoric of the Reformation on the other; "to hear the Gospel and to live accordingly." This was well supported in the demands made by the peasants in their rebellion, which is, the *Twelve Articles*. In it, the peasants "demanded justice, relief, freedom from oppression by landlords, the right to choose their pastor and the restoration to the village of the land once common" (Chadwick 1964). Indeed, the deep-rooted hatred against the nobility and clergy, under whom the rural population suffered particularly, was stirred further by the Reformation sermons, which depicted the monks who collected the small tithe as socially worthless and un-Christian (Stayer 1977:89-99). Here the Reformation served as a motivating force to express their grievances and thus provided some strength to their arguments. In fact, the peasants' arguments came from economic and social beginning but were bound up in the rhetoric of Reformation and appeal to Scripture as a useful tool of authority (MacCulluch 2003).

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<sup>48</sup> In fact, the conservative fear of Ranke and the revolutionary disappointment of Engels both found expression in their treatment of the Peasants' War. Since two historians saw the spectacle of the Peasants' War, more or less, an exaggerated threat to the old and promise of a new social order respectively, the shadow of such views lies heavily over present interpretations (Stalnaker 1979:24-5).

<sup>49</sup> According to this interpretation, the term Peasants' War of 1525 cannot do justice to the phenomenon as a whole. Its reason was at least, twofold; first, the conflict of 1525 opposed not only peasants and lords but subjects and rulers in general. In other words, from the social structure of the movement, it was supported by peasants, burghers and miners as the whole body of subjects (Blickle 1998:117). Second, it was, from the beginning, not the war but the brutal massacre. The peasants were at a disadvantage in term of their little or no military training; their poor coordination, which prevented themselves from properly communicating with other revolting groups and thus forming one cohesive group, and their conventional weapons, such as scythes, axes, flails, and other farming tools. The prince army, on the other hand, was at an advantage by all their advanced weapons, including cannons and armed horsemen. This one-sided game, therefore, resulted in a holocaust, killing about 100,000 peasants and sympathizers (Blickle 1981).

To be more specific, in their efforts to seek justification in Scripture, the peasants could both universalize their appeal and radicalize their demands. They first found in the Bible evidence that they were freemen (Rothkrug 1984:33). They also saw the doctrines of the Reformation an opportunity to improve their own legal and economic position against the temporal authority (Blickle 1981:275-80). The principle of the priesthood of all believers, for example, proved to be the view that Christ had shed His blood for “the lowliest shepherd as well as the greatest lords” (Cohn 1979:15). Implicit in it is that the aim of the poor common men were not to do away with the old order but to reconstruct it on the basis of the holy Gospel. The revolution had therefore a definite aim, which remained to harmonize economic, social and political demands with the divine Word (Blickle 1979:142). The way is clear for recognizing then that the Peasants’ War was the expression of the common people’s fight for their Reformation (Stayer 1991:6). The revolt of 1525 was, in this light, a prelude to the Reformation of the common men whose aim was to construct a just and egalitarian society –the invocation of Christian commonweal and brotherly love (Scott 1979:710).

However, it must be noted that the peasants were not mere rebels who were utilizing the violence as a sole means to express their grievances. Rather, more plausible was that the inner conflict between militancy and non-resistance had its prehistory among the resisting commoners of 1525 (Stayer 1972). Worth observing, in this regards, was the existence of half-political status of the rural armies which could win commoners, peasants and unprivileged townsmen (Blickle 2008:81). Similar to the parliaments, “autonomous village and urban communes were bound together in armies, which became political rather than chiefly military bodies” (Blickle 1981:189). Another significance to be made are that there were elements of legal resistance, carnival mockery and strike among the rebels of 1525 (Stayer 1991:21) and the bloody war that began in April 1525 came actually not from the commoners but from the mercenary armies of the princes (Waas 1938:473-91 quoted by Stayer 1991:21).

Undeniable was then that there was the close connection between the Peasants’ War of 1525 and the Reformation; the latter was certainly a catalyst for the former. However, it needs to discern what role the Reformation may have played in the Peasants’ War. The answer to this question differs. First, the common men’s appeal to the Reformation was entirely sincere and the Reformation provided them new faith that they were able to change society, not without or against God, but following the divine and scriptural justice (Spillmann 1965:43 quoted by Broadhead 1984:171). Second, the Reformers, both radical and moderate, could be seen to have had an effect on the common men, giving them a medium for their grievances and shining new light on old problems through the Reformation. The life as well as ideas of both Reformers certainly influenced the way the common men called for change.

But it proved to be the fact that their role, in the end, became quite opposite; while the radicals supported the revolution of the common men as sharing their lot, the major Reformers in turn aided in the crushing of this movement as they once joined voice with the secular authorities (Blickle 1981:185). In the long run, the common men and radicals were subjugated with the princes and major Reformers' victory. Yet, the failure of the Peasants' War of 1525 means not the failure of the revolution of the common men. In the immediate aftermath of the Peasants' War, many of the radical remnants joined the new covenant of Anabaptism and complicated its character for the new beginning.<sup>50</sup>

#### **2.4.3.2 The German Peasants' War and Anabaptism**

This revisionist outlook, then, alerts many scholars to the relation of the German Peasants' War and Anabaptism. Among them are John Oyer (1964), Walter Klaassen (1978), Gottfried Seebass (1980:158-63), Arnold Snyder (1984), Hans-Jürgen Goertz (1996), Martin Haas (1975:50-78), Werner Packull (1977) and James Stayer (1977:83-102, 1985:62-82), to name a few (Stayer 1988:100), even if the connection between the two movements still remains a matter of dispute. The traditionally dominant positions render this link a lot more tenuous. For, in Franz's view, the participants of the Peasants' War were primarily rural and militant, so that their objectives were closely related to social, economic and political issues (Stayer 1991:5). While Clasen's Anabaptists were largely urban and non-resistant, so that their goals echoed in the religious tenet toward the withdrawal from society (Clasen 1972). However, as the new Peasants' War historiography of the 1970s and the 1980s has begun to provide possible point of contact between the two, the Peasants' War received new light as a popular movement beyond the social limits of the peasantry (Blickle 1995:161-92). What occurred in 1525 was, according to this viewpoint, no mere Peasants' War. It was rather considered as the revolution of the common men; not only urban burghers but also rural peasants did spearhead the massive shifts in the structure of the economy and society on the basis of the gospel (Scott 1979:966). Here, the bearers of the movement were not exclusively the peasants, but rather the common men both in city and countryside.<sup>51</sup> Only the authorities had indiscriminately used the term peasants to disparage their

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<sup>50</sup> It is, however, to be reminded that Anabaptism was neither a religion of the poor peasants only, nor its movement was exclusive version of the revolt from below. The recent studies rather indicate that the majority of Swiss-south German Anabaptist came from small towns, villages and farms –at least 60 percent at the start and eleven out of twelve at the end of the sixteenth century. The most characteristic Swiss-south German Anabaptist leader was the village craftsman (Classen 1972:305-34, Stayer 1991:5). Yet, in north Germany and the Netherlands, where the movement was more numerous, it centred in the towns and attracted a greater following than in the south of notables and persons of wealth (the same as to the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster). Commoners were assuredly more prominent in the radical Reformation than in institutional Protestantism, but their predominance was not absolute. In this sense, the concept of “Communal Reformation,” which coined by Peter Blickle, once again, appears to have some meaningful ground.

<sup>51</sup> It seems even evident that a great deal of the uprising occurred in fact in cities rather than in countryside. This suggests then that the term “peasant” is to be employed in the relatively broad sense of encompassing the various kinds of occupants,

opponents.

In a similar vein, the recent historical research has pointed out that Anabaptism was also, from the beginning, a movement not limited to any single region and single group, but engaged in all social classes.<sup>52</sup> Implicit in it is that the early Anabaptists were nearer to a “chaotic masses of group” whose characteristics were found in its fluid and flexible dynamics, like that of the Peasants’ War (Hillerbrand 1962:168, Packull, Stayer and Deppermann 1975:83-121). Furthermore, it is evidently recognized that the princely officials regarded the Anabaptists the direct descendants of the Peasants’ resistance of 1525, even though most of its participants were not involved in the believer’s baptism (Stayer 1991:6). The Peasants’ War was of course a much broader historical phenomena than Anabaptism, but this new revisionist view proposes that Anabaptism, to a larger extent, can be seen as the extension of the revolution of the common men of 1525,<sup>53</sup> or “a religious aftereffect of the Peasants’ War” (Blickle 1981:185, Stayer 1991:4), its nature originally radical and communal (Stayer 1977:83).<sup>54</sup>

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such as peasants, miners, craftsmen, local preachers, the citizens of territorial towns, and the politically disenfranchised citizens of imperial cities (Fabian 1962 quoted by Hillerbrand 1972:126, note 4).

<sup>52</sup> Evidently, Anabaptism was a movement that supported and welcomed greatly by the peasantry and craftsmen. Yet, this does not preclude the possibility for representing other elements in the population. In fact, some of the outstanding leaders came from prominent intellectual circles. In the Swiss Brethren, for example, Conrad Grebel (1498-1526) was a member of a wealthy, patrician family in Zürich, who even educated in the universities in Basel; Felix Manz (1498-1527) was also well-educated; Melchior Rink (1493-1561/63) was sufficiently trained at the universities in Leipzig and Erfurt; Balthasar Hubmaier (1480-1528) was a professionally trained theologian; and Ludwig Haezter (1500-1529) and Hans Denck (1500-1527) had gained a high education with academic proficiency. Many of them were also found in the ranks of the clergy; Michael Sattler (1490-1527), Georg Blaurock (1491-1529), Johannes Brötli (1494-1528), Menno Simons (1496-1561), Dirk Philips (1504-1568) and Adam Pastor (d.1560) were from the regular secular clergy. Some of the Anabaptists were apparently descended from prominent families or were themselves noted officials in their communities; Pilgram Marpeck (d.1556) was both a mining magistrate in Tirol and the council of Rattenberg before his conversion to Anabaptism; Eitelhans Langenmantel (d.1528) was born in a leading patrician family in Augsburg; Lord Leonhard (1482-1534) of Liechtenstein acquainted with Anabaptist teaching as a member of the nobility. At any rate, in the urban centres, the movement attracted a large number of artisans –teachers, book-sellers, weavers, furriers, millers, bakers, hatters, cartwrights and simply wage-earners. While, in the rural areas, Anabaptists were popular among the farmers. Historical evidence, based on court records, especially proved a wide diversity of occupation among the Anabaptists. From it, the notion that Anabaptism was the haven of the discontented, destitute and disinherited in hope of getting easy material gain pales into insignificance (Klassen 1964:83-97).

<sup>53</sup> Claus-Peter Clasen, however, has raised the question of whether Anabaptism may realistically be described as a radical Reformation, which implied that large numbers of people were involved and thus had the same impact as the counterforce of the magisterial Reformation, held by George H. Williams. According to Clasen’s investigations, Anabaptism may have spread to a very large number of communities, but for the most part, it appealed to an extremely small number of persons in a given community. Therefore, from a quantitative point of view, Clasen concluded that, Anabaptism was no more than a small separatist movement. In fact, Clasen, on the basis of his figures, analysed that there were on the average 3,000 converts in ten years, which meant their proportion of the population was only 0.1%. In his view, the history of early Anabaptism was therefore little more than a dramatic footnote to Reformation history (Clasen 1972:15-29). This conclusion, however, has been challenged by other scholars, especially Goertz and Stayer.

<sup>54</sup> From this viewpoint, James Stayer came to the conclusion that Swiss Anabaptism was originally a revolutionary movement. For Stayer, Anabaptism of Brotli in Zollikon and Reublin in Witikon, in terms of the opposition to the tithes with its religious and economic connotation, were not separated from the turbulent and revolutionary currents of the day, especially the rampant peasants’ movement (Stayer 1977:83-102).

The Anabaptists were, in this viewpoint, the remnants of the peasants' revolt with a goal of communalizing the church and thus sacralising the Christian community (Blickle 2008:81). It is not coincident then that the movement became a significant force after 1524 centring on Müntzer's heirs. In 1525, for example, there were forty-three Anabaptist communities; by 1529 the number had risen 500, under the bombarded twin persecution of the Catholic and the Protestant authorities (Blickle 1992:105). Nor is it questionable that the failure to enforce the gospel as the pillar of Christian life and conduct against the secular power had galvanized the committed re-baptizers into withdrawal from the social and political order. Despite diverse origins, "among their shared positions was their rejection of Luther, who had tied his gospel to the princes. The linking of theology to established authority became in their eyes a dreaded vision of a renewed authoritarian and official church, something they had to escape" (Blickle 1992:105). Thus, the connection between Anabaptism and the Peasants' War is no longer an open question in this revisionist view.

#### **2.4.3.3 Anabaptism**

Before Anabaptism was born, there were the radicals of the Reformation who already broke with the major Reformers over whether infants or adults should be baptized. They, as the opponents of infant baptism, pointed out that the New Testament did not describe instances of infant baptism. Rather all baptisms recorded in the New Testament involved adults who had conscious, deliberate faith in Jesus Christ (Mk. 1:4, 16:16). It is therefore hard to accept for them how an infant could believe and repent. Thus they argued that baptism must be seen as confession of faith by an adult, that is, believer's baptism (Mackay 2007:9). This view was, however, barely tolerable in the context of the sixteenth century and made their position even more precarious. Soon persecutions became their fate. Their persecutors, both by Protestant and Catholic, named them Anabaptist, referring to the practice of "re-baptizing"<sup>55</sup> when they converted, even if they had been baptized as infants. Yet, since adherents of believer's baptism rejected the validity of the initial infant baptism for it was not part of Scripture, there could be no rebaptism for them and the term was in origin nothing but one of hostility (Mackay 2007:9).

Despite Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), a priest in Zurich, was more radical than Luther in a number of ways, he, like Luther, recognized the power of the city council to decide in matters of doctrinal dispute (Mackay 2007:10). Again Zwingli, like Luther, defended the practice of infant baptism for not only

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<sup>55</sup> The term, "re-baptizer," appears for the first time in a report of Hans Brenwald, pastor of Hinwil, to the Zurich town council on November 13, 1525 (Muralt and Schmid 1952:129 quoted by Clasen 1972:439-40, note 13).

his theological conviction but also his church politics (Stephens 1986:206-16). From it came to the increasing tension between him and his followers who advocated more radical reforms. An official disputation of the sacraments in 1523 proved Zwingli's approval by the council and a number of radicals, centred on the leadership of Conrad Grebel (1498-1526) and Felix Manz (1498-1527), began to prepare for an independent church of believers (Mackay 2007:10). In January 1525, Zwingli was trying to push ahead by oppressing the objections of his detractors. An official decree was then passed, stating that all who continued to refuse to baptize their infants should be expelled from Zurich unless they did have them baptized within one week (Mackay 2007:10). Thus, sixteen of the radicals met on Saturday evening, January 21, 1525 and Conrad Grebel baptized George Blaurock (1491-1529), and they in turn baptized an assembly of all members.<sup>56</sup> This was the formal birth of Swiss Anabaptism (Ruth 1975).

But, the fate of Anabaptism was hailed with bitter experiences. Both Catholics and Protestants alike considered it as a threat to society as a whole and persecuted the Anabaptists, resorting to torture and execution in attempts to curb the growth of the "neo-Donatist" movement (Mackay 2007:10). Nonetheless, the movement gained adherents across a broad expanse of territory stretching from Switzerland through southern Germany into Austria. Even though the movement was never organized into a unitary hierarchically arranged institution, it was spread by a number of charismatic leaders (Mackay 2007:10). Notable was a parallel development of the role of the congregation, who began to commission their leaders. The Anabaptist leaders were chosen by the congregation and not appointed by ecclesiastical superiors or even the government (Littell 1958:92-3). In a historical twist of fate, the demand for popular election, made by the peasants in the uprising of 1525, was fully carried out by the future Anabaptists (Clasen 1972:52-3).

To some extent, the Anabaptist worldview became the road to withdrawal from the world. It came from a conflict reading between two biblical passages: Romans 13:1 and Acts 5:29 (Mackay 2007:11). The Catholics and the magisterial Reformers found the validity of the Christian loyalty to state in Paul's assertions in Romans, while the Anabaptists rejected the state's pretensions, arguing that it was necessary to obey God rather than human beings as that of Peter in Acts (Mackay 2007:11-2). For both Catholic and Protestant authorities, who conceived of the coexistence between a civil society and the

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<sup>56</sup> Zwingli was later to write that he and his followers had wondered at first why the radicals were so existed over the question of baptism, but subsequently they realized that if infant baptism was rejected, it would be necessary for the radicals to baptized conscientious believers, thus establishing a new church. In other words, Zwingli regarded the establishment of a separate church of Christian purists as the essential concern of the radicals (Clasen 1972:5).

established religious community, it was not simply the rejection of infant baptism that distinguished the Anabaptists from their neighbours. Rather such a worldview of the Anabaptists brought direct and serious threat to the secular authorities by refusing to pay taxes, to swear oaths, or to perform military service (Mackay 2007:12). To be sure, the decision to baptize adults seriously undermined the claim to universal inclusiveness that was the foundation of both ecclesiastical and secular order (Driedger 2007:515). To them, Anabaptism, in this light, was a reminiscent of the revolt of 1525, which proved the religiously and politically subversive potential of the revolution from below, so that they had to gain control of it. The proof of this was the history of the Anabaptists who were persecuted by the ruling authorities without mercy (Blickle 1981:185).

To sum, in the new Anabaptist historiography, the Reformation, Peasants' War, and Anabaptism are inextricably intertwined altogether in the life of the common men both in urban and rural areas. By pulling the Peasants' War of 1521 and the Anabaptist movement into the context of the Reformation, this shifts the perspective from great men's thoughts and deeds to those of the common men, while not denying the importance of the former. In it, the Peasants' War of 1521 was no longer the rebellion from the peasants, socially and economically motivated only. Rather it was the revolution of the common men in both city and countryside, motivated by a mix of religious zeal and social and economic grievances for their freedom and communal autonomy. This Communal Reformation was infused by the rhetoric of the Reformation and the support of the early Reformation by the common men is best explained by the fact that both city and village communities had conspicuously attempted to communalize the church. This also views Anabaptism as a "religious aftereffect" of the Peasants' War; as neither Catholic nor Protestant, it constituted another, more radical, reformation in direct conflict with both of them. And beyond intellectual and laity, it consisted of all social classes, embracing both of them. Thus, in this viewpoint, all these movements incorporated two major elements. On the one hand, they were radical not only religious and moral, but also socio-economic and political reforms. On the other hand, they were communal that both peasants and burghers made the same demands of the church and society, namely, the invocation of communal Christianity without the entire hierarchical structure of both church and society. The major Reformers were, by contrast, united with the secular princes in opposition to the Peasants' revolt and Anabaptism from magisterially sanctioned reform. This new interpretation of Anabaptism, then, challenges the conventional interpretations to re-read the Reformation from below, or being-in-the-common men in order for a more appropriate and balanced understanding of the Reformation as a whole.

## 2.5 RE-READING ANBAPTISM FROM THE RADICAL REFORMATION

### 2.5.1 Anabaptism and the Radical Reformation

Blueprints of the magisterial Reformation had been vetoed by all participants of the radicals, including Anabaptists, who were significantly connected with the peasants' revolt of 1525. This link to the Peasants' War contributed to the negative portrayal of Anabaptists under the shadows of violent peasant rebels (Friesen 1974:46-7). It seems, in one sense, undeniable to attribute the beginnings of Anabaptism to the revolt of 1525 –in fact, where experienced a more violent version of the Peasants' War, for example, Franconia, Thuringia, and South Tyrol, became mostly Anabaptists. But, neither became all peasants the Anabaptists, nor participated all Anabaptists in the Peasants' War. Nonetheless, the Anabaptists were often used interchangeably with the militant radicals by their opponents. The direct or indirect debt of early Anabaptist leaders to the radical Reformers, such as Thomas Müntzer, Andreas Carlstadt, and Caspar Schwenckfeld, added the use of this derogatory term (Haude 2002:241).

However, this, ironically enough, sheds Anabaptism new dignity; it may represent in microcosm what was deeply embedded in the radicals of the Reformation, to the extent that both were hardly distinguishable from each other by the major Reformers, their major counterparts (Williams and Mergal 1957:25). Indeed, there are significant overlaps between the two; the eccentric caricatures in Anabaptism illuminate the authentic accounts of the radicals as common denominators. On the one hand, within Anabaptism, like the radical camp, there were divergent groupings.<sup>57</sup> At one end of the spectrum there were the Swiss Brethren, a biblical group, who shared the idea of *sola scriptura* with the major Reformers and who considered the Sermon on the Mount a binding law (Williams 1962:853). At the other, there was the spiritualist group who had disregarded all Christian norms in the name of the freedom of the Spirit (Oyer 1953:88, Williams 1962:854). Some, such as Michael Sattler, had pledged themselves to strict pacifism in the “Schleitheim Articles,” while others, like Melchior Hoffman and the Münster Anabaptists, had proclaimed the extirpation of the godless (Williams 1962:207, 855);<sup>58</sup> one believed in the possibility of a Christian government, but the other considered

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<sup>57</sup> Already in 1531 Sebastian Franck was writing of the perplexing diversity in the Anabaptist doctrines, mentioning few groups by name; in 1538 Kaspar Heido presented a list of thirteen groups; in 1544 Johannes Gast listed seven; and 1566 Wendel Arzt also listed seven (Clasen 1972:30). Recently, G. H. Williams has clarified Anabaptism into seven regional groupings, such as; (1) Swiss Brethren, (2) South German and Austrian Anabaptists, (3) Hutterites, (4) Melchiorite Lower German, Netherlandish, English, and Prussian Anabaptists, (5) the revolutionary Münsterites, (6) anti-Nicene North Italian Anabaptists, and (7) anti-Nicene Polish and Lithuanian Brethren (Williams 1962:853).

<sup>58</sup> The recent scholarship suggests that contrary to what is usually believed, the early congregation of the Swiss Brethren was affected by the eschatological mania. In June 1525, for example, groups of the brethren of Zollikon came to Zurich, shouting in the streets for the day of impending judgment. At St. Gallen two prophets claimed that the Lord would come at Christmas 1525. In May 1527 Michael Settler also declared that the Lord would soon appear; and followed by similar predictions (Clasen 1972:119).

this impossibility, especially after the experiences of the Peasants' War of 1525. Thus, all had developed their own characteristics both regionally and doctrinally.

On the other hand, such dissimilarity among them turned into similarity under the context of the Magisterial Reformation (Williams and Mergal 1957:29). No doubt, there was a wide spectrum of Anabaptism in its different doctrinal and disciplinary traits. But such peculiar dissimilarities do not preclude the possibility of its turning into universal similarities in opposition to the moderate and lukewarm Reformation. Indeed, all these morphological groups were unhappy with the Reformation without and against the common men. Against it, there was an undercurrent of powerful solidarity beneath the variety of Anabaptism. Here, the common impulse that united them was a striving for the reformation from below against the dominant state-sponsored reforms. In this sense, the Anabaptists were not a separate one-plus-one, but rather they acted as an organic multi-dimensional unity, inextricably involved with the entirety of the resistance. Thus, common to the Anabaptists in all diverse grouping was the inherent protest against the propagation of the Magisterial Reformation. This then draws much attention to the nature and the beginnings of Anabaptism as the spearhead of the radical Reformation of the time.

### **2.5.2 The Anabaptist Historiography**

The question of the Anabaptist proper has long been an ambiguous one. In fact, many theologians and church historians have often held different, and even opposing, interpretations of the nature of Anabaptists, a sixteenth-century motley crew. The tangled debates, however, can converge two major propositions. One is exclusive and the other is inclusive to the Reformation. The adherents of the former tend to place Anabaptism outside the immediate orbit of the Reformation, such as; (1) "heirs of the Old Evangelical," (2) "the successors of the Spiritual Franciscans," (3) "medieval sectarians," or "mystics," and even (4) "existential Erasmian humanists" (Hillerbrand 1960:405). In this view, the Anabaptists have not so much radicalized themselves as the new driving forces for change, but rather simply held their own position without resort to the influence of the Reformation (Friedmann 1950:10, Dillenberger and Welch 1958:63). The heavy reliance on medieval spiritual mysticism even left room for the emergence of Thomas Müntzer as the originator of Anabaptism. At any rate, under this perspective, Anabaptism is another parody of the Roman Catholicism (Coggins 1986:191-93).

The exponents of the later view, by contrast, have seen in the Anabaptist movement the culmination of the Reformation (Bender 1944:3-24). This group of scholars have insisted then that Anabaptism must be understood as an integrated part of the whole of the Reformation. According to them, the

Anabaptists have basically concurred with the major Reformers in all essential doctrines. But, the great disappointment to the sluggishness of the Lutheran Reformation made them radical dissenters; hence their uncompromising stance against the major Reformers was nothing but an enthusiasm for the fulfilment of the original vision of Luther and Zwingli (Estep 1975:143).<sup>59</sup> This view elevates the Anabaptists as the true Reformers, while at the same time, relegating the major Reformers as merely the “prince-hireling” (Hillerbrand 1960:405, 418). Therefore, in their outlook, Anabaptism is to be understood as the counter-revolt within the Reformation camps against the compromise (Stayer 1991:123). Here, Anabaptism belongs to Protestantism as a child of the Reformation (Bender 1944).<sup>60</sup>

This scholarly debates leads the quest for Anabaptist proper to quite new stream of research (Hillerbrand 1960:404-23). Then, the scholars begin to see Anabaptism from a different perspective, that is, neither Catholic nor Protestant (Klaassen 1981). But, the aim of this double-negation is to alert one to *sui generis* characterization of Anabaptism that is both inclusive and exclusive. In its inclusive concern, this includes the necessity of interpreting the Anabaptist proper as a centrifugal force. Anabaptism then functioned as a “middle way between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism” (Bender 1953:2, Wenger 1946:252), by regulating both Catholic and Protestant manifestations in a harmonious way (Coggins 1986:192). But, in its exclusive concern, the Anabaptist proper is seen as a centripetal force. This renders Anabaptism a third alternative, opposing to both Catholic and Protestant. Here, the Anabaptists acted as the radicals who took a firms stand against the entanglement with the state, which the magisterial Reformers took over from the Catholics (Williams 1964, Clasen 1972, Mullet 1980:105). Yet, this new approach, in some sense, even complicates the search for the Anabaptist proper. Thus, the question of “Who are the Anabaptists in the sixteenth-century context?” has triggered various interpretations of Anabaptism.

### 2.5.2.1 The Protestant View on Anabaptism

The Protestant view of Anabaptism had a long academic tradition of discrimination. This position was, from its beginning, allergic to Anabaptism. The derogatory term Anabaptism was indeed coined by the

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<sup>59</sup> Interestingly enough, this position is already found in the nineteenth century by a Reformed scholar; “Historically seen, the Anabaptist movement is the extension and development of the church reformation in the entire area of the ethical and the secular –even the political... It represented *the more fundamental, more decisive, more complete and more powerful Reformation*, which was given up by Luther after 1522 and by Zwingli after 1524 (Goebel 1849:137-38 quoted by Durnbaugh 1986:97-118).

<sup>60</sup> This line of view is, however, not without criticism. Hans J. Hillerbrand, for example, posed a critical question, “Was there a Reformation in the sixteenth century?” in terms of a radical break with the past of religion and theology (2003:525-52). Some scholars, therefore, continue to propose that the Protestant Reformation had its roots in the medieval past and the Reformation in the sixteenth century was an essentially medieval phenomenon (Mullett 1980:55).

exponents of this view. Literally, in Greek, “ana” is a prefix meaning “again” and thus the word Anabaptist means “one who re-baptized” (Littell, 1958: xv). But, the sixteenth-century Protestants – who believed a single universal church and thus classified anyone not belong to the church as a heretic – had intentionally linked Anabaptism to the fourth-century Donatist heresy (Sunshine 2005:67). In the eye of the mainline Protestant thinkers, such as Bullinger, Melancthon and Luther, Anabaptism was nothing but a repetition of ancient heresy in disguise, which posed a major threat to the current religious and political order (Oyer 1964:174). The revival of ancient Justinian Code, therefore, would be the best answer to these neo-Donatists; drowning was then used as a capital punishment for the Anabaptists (Williams 1962: xxiii).

Martin Luther was quite aggressive in attacking the Anabaptists. Indeed, Luther’s harsh condemnation of Anabaptism had made Protestants immune to their cruel punishment. Luther denounced the Anabaptists as the *Schwärmer*, namely, dangerous fanatics, so that Anabaptism as “the *Schwärmer*’s religion” (Oyer 1953:30). This sweeping generalization had been directly handed over to Luther’s followers so as to contribute to a deep antipathy to anything associated with the Anabaptists (Packull 1979:313). Thus was created by blind prejudices against Anabaptism; every Anabaptists fell into two categories, either the *Schwärmer* or the would-be *Schwärmer* (Oyer 1964:248). This prejudgment was all the more reinforced by the Anabaptist takeover of Münster of 1534-35. The major Reformers considered it as the counter-evidence to unveil the true colors of the Anabaptists as arrogant and bellicose (Elton 1963:103, Oyer 1953:30). The debacle of Münster added fuel to the Protestant condemnation of the Anabaptists. Soon, Anabaptism became synonymous with the *Schwärmer*, and Müntzer and Münster came with all the pejorative overtones (Williams and Mergal 1957:26). In short, the Protestant view has undervalued Anabaptism as the first *Schwärmer*, closely related to Müntzer and Münster, the stigma of the Reformation.

### **2.5.2.2 The Marxist View on Anabaptism**

It was the Marxist historians of the Reformation who embarked upon their criticism of the Protestant interpretations on Anabaptism. Taking a cue from the economic interpretation of history, they placed the Anabaptist movement into the Marxist perspective (Friesen 1970:17). In it, Anabaptist lower strata of social matrix, which is determined by the historical-social conditions, offered the significant clue to the Anabaptist movement. From this vantage point, the Marxist historians, starting from Wilhelm Zimmermann and Friedrich Engels, have tended to define Anabaptism as the counter-revolution of the oppressed against the oppressor (Friesen 1970:18). They, in this way, rendered the Anabaptist

movement “the class struggles for a classless society” (Friesen 1974:140-45).<sup>61</sup> There was, therefore, the desire of the exploited lower classes to move beyond the position of magisterial Reformation lurking behind every Anabaptist revolutionary tenets (Haude 2002:240). This, as a result, put the external social conditions in the central issue of Anabaptism rather than the inner religious conflicts. Under this frame of reference, Anabaptism was seen as the seed of the original proletarian revolution and the Anabaptists as the proto-Marxist (Kautsky 1894, Bax 1903, Friesen 1974:203). The Marxist historians argued that this social revolutionary aspect of Anabaptism was rooted in the Peasants’ War. After the debacle of revolt of 1525, the peasants’ struggle against the feudal hierarchy had rubbed off on the Anabaptists, the sixteenth-century proletariats (Coggins 1986:185). Thus, the task for freedom from the socio-economic suppressions was also given to the Anabaptists. This then characterized Anabaptism the advocacy of violent revolution from below, originating in Saxony with Thomas Müntzer, the hero of the Peasants’ War. (Friesen 1974:140-42, Haude 2002:240).

At this point, the Marxist view of Anabaptism did not differ greatly from the Protestant view; both regarded Thomas Müntzer as the father of Anabaptism (Coggins 1986:185, Friesen 1974:206). Yet, there was a striking contrast between the two. The Protestant rendered Müntzer’s influence on Anabaptism in the negative, while the Marxist saw it in the positive (Coggins 1986:185). In fact, in the Marxist camp, Müntzer as a ringleader of the *Schwärmer* was insignificant beside Müntzer as a hero of the *Volks*. It came no surprise then that the Marxist regarded the Anabaptists as the heirs of Müntzer, mostly drawn from the impoverished of the time (Friesen 1974:140-45). The transfer of Müntzer’s revolutionary potential into the Anabaptists was, therefore, a logical consequence; “Anabaptist stiffened the determination of the peasants to revolt against their rulers and where the peasants had not yet risen, [they] incited them to revolt” (Friesen 1970:21). In this light, the Anabaptist movement was seen as the social protest from below within the orbit of Müntzer’s influence (Friesen 1970:25). This gave the Marxist historians a great tolerance to the Anabaptist use of the violence as the rational revolution against the socio-economic injustice.

Yet, this interpretation of oppressor-oppressed binary has been made suspect. Indeed, the maximization of the socio-political sphere of Anabaptism, or the minimization of the religious-spiritual sphere of Anabaptism, came into question even within the Marxist camp. Thus was created by the so-called new

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<sup>61</sup> Engels in particular illustrated this point in the selection from “letters to Starckenberg, January 25, 1894”; “the political, juridical, literary, artistic, and other developments rest upon the economic. But they all react upon each other and upon the economic basis. It is not that the economic situation is the only active cause and all the rest passive reaction. But it is an interchange on the basis of economic necessity, which in the long run finally always prevails” (Engels 1955:622).

Marxist interpretation. What was new here was a shift of emphasis to the religious character in Anabaptism. These Marxist revisionists proposed then that for both Müntzer and Anabaptism, the religious and social concerns were inextricably interwoven during the Peasants' War. In their perspective, "Müntzer was primarily a theologian and Anabaptism was primarily a religious refuge for ex-revolutionaries" (Coggins 1986:185, 197). From this viewpoint, neither was Müntzer merely a forerunner of the social revolution (Kautsky 1894:42, quoted by Friesen 1974:174, Bax 1903:86), nor were the Anabaptists Müntzer's secret agents, who simply incited the disillusioned peasants to a violent revolt (Kautsky 1894:129: quoted by Friesen 1974:177). Rather, giving equal emphasis on religious and social dimension, the new Marxist interpretation began to grant both of them a dual character. Thus, Thomas Müntzer was depicted as a mystical-religious theologian as well as a social revolutionary (Bax 1968:86, Friesen 1974:179). Whereas Anabaptism as a religious movement as well as a socio-political counter-revolution to the existing hierarchical order (Zschäbitz 1958:160, quoted by Friesen 1974:206).

Nonetheless, this attempt which sees Müntzer and Anabaptism as both religious and social movement was self-contradictory in the logic of Marxist thinking. For even in the new Marxist interpretation, the role of religion was doubtful, if not hateful as "an opium of the oppressed" (Marx and Engels 1975). This view found ambivalence toward religion and its effect on the mass; religion encouraged the socially disoriented people to revolt against the current conflicts and contradictions, while, at the same time, discouraging them to be silent against them. Yet, the new Marxist interpretation much weighed its concern toward the latter so that religion was nearer to a negative, not positive, catalyst for change. Thus, religion, in the last resort, proved to be the major obstacle to the ultimate goal that Müntzer and the Anabaptists had really hoped (Friesen 1974:238-39). In this viewpoint, Müntzer was defeated because of the religious errors of his time and the Anabaptists were condemned by the religious prejudice of church dignitaries. This even led to the different interpretation on the Peasants' War. Unlike the older Marxists, the new Marxist interpretation began to see the Peasants' War as an early bourgeois, not proletariat, revolution in which the proletariat (Müntzer and the Anabaptists) cooperated with the bourgeoisie. In it, the former receded into the wings, taking on supporting roles (Coggins 1986:185). Supplanting them at centre stage were the bourgeoisie, as the upper middle-class. They alone lacked power to overturn the princes, the high-rank class, so that they tried to make an ally of the peasants, the lowest class, who were most active in their opposition to the ruling classes (Coggins 1986:185).

In the new Marxist interpretation, this bourgeois and proletariats framework, therefore, had an Achilles'

heel from the beginning. Just like the religious adoption had eventually mitigated the act of social protest from Müntzer and the Anabaptists, a fiasco of the Peasants' War was already expected when the peasants were working hand in glove with the bourgeoisie. It proved to be true that the bourgeoisie had used this alliance not to close, but to continue the exploitation of the peasants under the princely power. Given that circumstances, it was a foregone conclusion that the Peasants' War ended in failure. For, though allied, two groups had different goals. Indeed, the bourgeoisie were not ready to give up their privileges, while the peasants urged the wealthier classes to take genuine action. Furthermore, when the demands of the peasants were combined into the general interests of the bourgeoisie, the former began to become subordinate to the latter as a whole. The upshot of it was the emasculation of the peasants in the Peasants' War. The bourgeoisie were overrepresented in the Peasants' War by providing the overwhelming majority of its leadership. While the mass of the peasants were brought again under the sway of their new masters, the bourgeoisie. Thus, the epilogue of the Peasants' War meant the epilogue of the revolution from below (Tschistoswon 1965:409 quoted by Friesen 1970:33). From then on, the revolutionary tendencies of the grassroots had been forced underground and quickly transferred into the hands of the petite bourgeoisie (Friesen 1974:208-9, 228). This alerted the new Marxist interpretation to the middle-class bourgeoisie behind the Peasants' War, whose aims were fundamentally different from the Anabaptists, the sixteenth-century proletariats.

In short, the new Marxist interpretation, unlike the older Marxists, had admitted the diversity and complexity of the Peasants' War and Anabaptism; in it, neither were two movements a proletarian revolution nor the participants were drawn chiefly from the lower classes. Rather both were seen as a dynamic mixture of religious and social factors in which the proletariat cooperated with the bourgeoisie. Yet, this did not mean that the new Marxist interpretation broke with the older Marxist view. Instead, much of its position was still in tune with the original Marxist interpretation. In its slight shift of emphasis, the Peasants' War and Anabaptism were depicted as the class struggle in a religious garb. In this sense, the new Marxist interpretation reiterated the older Marxist theme in an elaborate way. The Peasants' War and Anabaptism were to be understood as an abortive social revolution through an uneasy combination between proletariat and bourgeoisie, whose goals were quite different from each other.

### **2.5.2.3 The American Mennonite (Benderite) View on Anabaptism**

This polarity between the Protestant and Marxist view provoked the advent of the so-called "normative-typological view of Anabaptism" (Strübend 2003:22, quoted by Stayer 2004:297). Presuming that both interpretations had presented a prejudiced view of Anabaptism, a group of

Anabaptist scholars, mostly American Mennonites, had begun to reinterpret the sixteenth-century Christian radicalism from a different point of view. Deeply indebted to Troeltsch's idea of Anabaptism as the sect-type,<sup>62</sup> they devoted all their energies to the restoration of the Anabaptist name which had suffered a fall from grace. The centre of gravity of this vibrant scholarship was Harold S. Bender, the American Mennonite historian, who believed Anabaptism as "consistent evangelical Protestantism" (Bender 1944:13). He, basing on the first-hand Anabaptist writings as source materials, had tried to rehabilitate the battered and bruised Anabaptists, not as a byword for rebellious heretics, nor for the violent proletariats, but rather as the sixteenth-century epitome of peaceful and evangelical Christians (Hillerbrand 2003:533).

Bender, in this sense, seemed to see himself as the herald of a third wave of Anabaptist historiography; with an in-group perspective, he turned his critical eye on the established thesis of both Protestant and Marxist in an attempted to change the negative picture of Anabaptism. Bender in this way proposed the three-fold reconstruction of Anabaptism, namely, (1) its Zurich priority over Zwickau, (2) its religious over socio-political aspect and, (3) its non-resistance over violent revolution (Bender 1944:11). In Bender's view, Thomas Müntzer and his revolutionary circles were insignificant (Bender 1953:2). Rather the idea of a suffering church with Conrad Grebel and his peaceful successors should receive more spotlight as the Anabaptist proper (Bender 1944:13). To Bender, the genuine heirs of the Reformation were thus the Swiss Brethren who strove to recreate the original New Testament church. While Luther and Zwingli failed to fully implement their reform ideals (Bender 1944:13). This recognition of religious sincerity of Grebel circle enabled Bender to put the socio-economic element in Anabaptism asunder. Not surprisingly, Bender came to a conclusion that the Anabaptists were a religious, not a socio-political, group whose characteristics was in their discipleship through believer's baptism (Bender 1944:20). It was the logical consequence then that Bender had tried to keep the Anabaptist movement separate from the violent revolution, particularly from a series of armed insurrections, such as, the Peasants' War, Müntzer's apocalyptic crusade, and the Anabaptist Münster revolt. By putting the peaceful Anabaptists in the spotlight, this American Mennonite historian rather established a new identity of "evangelical Anabaptism," in which all revolutionary elements were eliminated (Bender 1950:25, Packull 1979:313). Then, under Bender's umbrella, only three branches were genuine Anabaptists, namely, the Swiss Brethren (in Switzerland and South Germany), the

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<sup>62</sup> Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), a religious sociologist, made a major contribution to the Anabaptist interpretation, by distinguishing individual radicals (Spirituals) from the radical congregations (Anabaptists). He recognized the distinct nature of the Anabaptists far more distant from the teaching and practice of the major Reformers. In his statement, Troeltsch placed the genesis of Anabaptism in Zurich rather than Wittenberg (1931:742-43).

Hutterites (in Moravia), and the Mennonites (in the Netherlands) (Coggins 1986:187). For Bender, Anabaptism's non-resistance took precedence over its violent revolution (Bender 1950:25-32); and its theology of martyrdom over its theology of revolution (Bender 1944:27-8, Stauffer 1945:179-214).

In sum, fundamental to Bender's normative vision was a reworking of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists. This had begun with his veto to the Protestant and Marxist outlook. Bender made any radical heritage, especially from Müntzer and Münster, extraneous to the origin, source, and essence of the sixteenth-century Anabaptism. Rather he constituted the triangle norm in the Anabaptist interpretation: first, the elevation of the Swiss Brethren and Zurich as the origin of Anabaptism; second, the elevation of evangelical Protestantism as the source of Anabaptism; and third, the elevation of the peaceful New Testament ecclesiology as the essence of Anabaptism. In doing so, Anabaptism had been transformed from "the left wing of the Reformation" to "the culmination and fulfilment of the original intention of the reformers" (Packull 1979:313), and particularly the Anabaptists from the revolutionary *Schwärmer* to the non-resistant evangelical Protestants (Bender 1950:76-88).

#### **2.5.2.4 The New Mennonite View on Anabaptism**

The Benderite view, however, has come under criticism.<sup>63</sup> In the 1960's, a guild of North American scholars began to challenge the Bender's normative interpretation. In their view, Bender's vision was too sectarian and ideal to be accepted. They soon yielded a new school, but labelled as the "new Mennonites" due to their lingering debt to Bender (Coggins 1986:189). Yet, it was George H. Williams who left an indelible mark in these new scholarship. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that these new Mennonites were Williams' protégé (Coggins 1986:189-90). What particularly attracted them was Williams' new outline to the sixteenth-century groupings; he had incorporated previous three groups –Catholic, Protestant, and the left wing (including Anabaptists) –into two: Catholic and Reformation (Williams and Mergal 1957), while dividing the Reformation into three, namely, Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican, and radical (including Anabaptists) (Coggins 1986:189). In this way, Williams' reshuffling categories gave the radical Reformation new identity, which competing not only with Catholics, but also with Protestants (Coggins 1986:189).

Its subsequent effect has been to make the radical Reformation more dynamic. Williams had first divided the radical Reformation into three; Anabaptists, Spiritualists and Rationalists. This was made by their different roots of faith, which is, the New Testament church, the Spirit, and reason respectively.

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<sup>63</sup> A helpful introduction to the debate, see John Roth (2002:525-35).

These three groups were also subdivided into another three. Anabaptists, thus, were divided into evangelical, spiritual, and revolutionary branches; Spiritualists into evangelical, revolutionary, and rational; and Rationalists into either evangelical Catholics or free spirits (Williams and Mergal 1957). Significant was that this, somewhat meticulous, categorization led to a significant shift of scholarly concern (Coggins 1986:190). By recognizing the radicals in a more diverse and dynamic groups, scholars began to do away with the previous monolithic image of the left wing of the Reformation, and rather looked at the radical Reformation anew as the multi-pronged movement, which had from its first stage possessed the inner dynamics, including both complementary and contradictory interconnections (Coggins 1986:189). The new Mennonites did not hesitate in drawing fresh water from Williams' well so as to remove the strait jacket of Bender's evangelical Anabaptism (Coggins 1986:190). In so doing, they turned Benderite interpretations of Anabaptism on its head.

The new Mennonites, in the first place, challenged Bender's primacy of the New Testament church as the essence of Anabaptism. They argued that the church was not central to Anabaptists, but rather the key issue pertinent to them had actually revolved around the question of salvation (Oyer 1964:228). The new Mennonites discovered that in the sixteenth-century context, behind every conflict between Anabaptists and Protestants there stood soteriology (Oyer 1964:234, Hillerbrand 1960:411). To them, it became evident that both had struggled primarily on different concepts of grace (Peachey 1977:10-26). Protestantism held fast to predestination and original sin, while Anabaptism to man's free will; Protestantism was predicated upon justification by faith alone, while Anabaptism constituted discipleship as its replacement (Hillerbrand 1960:415). Thus, the new Mennonites challenged the Benderite view to attend soteriology, not ecclesiology, as the essence of Anabaptism.

Also, the new Mennonites' stress on soteriology oscillated the Bender's assertion that Anabaptism had its source in Protestantism. The question thus had to be asked; "Was Anabaptism Protestant or Catholic?" In one sense, the Anabaptists seemed to be closer to Roman Catholicism in their advocacy of free will (Hillerbrand 1960:406-7, 418). But, in other sense, they seemed to belong to Protestantism in their belief in the priesthood of all the believers and the Scripture (Coggins 1986:192). This *sui generis* characterization of Anabaptism, then, required of the reinterpretation about the Anabaptist source. Three different positions were newly offered. A first viewpoint was best found in Walter Klaassen's work, which tended to see Anabaptism as a third alternative, distinct from the mainline Christianity. Thus was characterized by Anabaptism as neither Catholic nor Protestant (Klaassen 1973). Yet, it implied that its reverse could also be true so that Anabaptism was seen as both Catholic and

Protestant (Bender 1970:2). In this double-connotation, Anabaptism, on the one hand, represented radicalism which waved an opposing force against Roman Catholicism and the magisterial Reformation (Williams 1962). It, on the other hand, signified universalism, standing as a middle way between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism (Hillerbrand 1967). At any rate, this outlook gave the Anabaptists new identity beyond both Protestant and Catholic (Coggins 1986:192).

Another attempt was made by Kenneth R. Davis. In his book, *Anabaptism and Asceticism*, Davis described Anabaptism as a repetition of medieval theme. He especially stressed on the close proximity of Anabaptism to medieval Catholic asceticism in the pursuit of holiness and discipleship (Davis 1974:26-31). In fact, Davis' theory was indebted to his two predecessors: Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) and Walther Köhler (1870-1946). Davis in one sense revived Albrecht Ritschl's thesis that Anabaptists were the successors of the spiritual Franciscans (Ritschl 1880:22-36 quoted by Williams and Mergal 1957:27, Davis 1974:35). He, in other sense, followed Walther Köhler, who singled out Erasmus as the spiritual father of Anabaptism (Liehard 1997:91 quoted by Williamson 2005:1). Davis, then, gave a great importance to the *Devotio Moderna* as a nexus of both humanism and Anabaptism (Davis 1974:266-348). In this way, he proposed a new Anabaptist lineage, starting from the *Devotio Moderna* to Erasmine humanism and to finally Anabaptism, as a continuation of medieval ascetic reform (Coggins 1986:193). Yet, Davis' elaborate theory of transmission had an Achilles heel in presenting the close link between the various movements, such as *Devotio Moderna*, Erasminianism, and Anabaptism. The distinct characters of each diverse movement paled into insignificance beside his loose definitions of concepts. In the long run, this tenuous connection confused the issue of whether Anabaptism derived from spiritual Franciscanism, Erasmine humanism, or Protestantism (Coggins 1986:193). This made Davis' theory less popular among scholars.

The last position attributed the Anabaptist source to the heritage of late medieval mysticism. This may be the most widespread view since Karl Holl's unequivocal statement that "[t]here is no Anabaptism that did not lean upon mysticism" (Holl 1923:424 quoted by Zeman 1976:260). Indeed, there is a scholarly consensus that a vital link of Anabaptism to medieval mysticism cannot be denied. This even became a historical pedigree that mysticism was clearly mediated to Anabaptism, especially to German Anabaptism, through two outstanding forerunners, namely, Thomas Müntzer and Hans Denck (Coggins 1986:193). It explained an undercurrent of doubt towards the Swiss origin of Anabaptism in this theory. Thus, this helped Müntzer's revolutionary and Denck's spiritualistic tendencies to gain momentum once again. The new Mennonites immediately responded to this challenge with a two-fold strategy. In one sense, they reiterated the Benderite presupposition. Against Müntzer's primacy, the

new Mennonites had insisted on the importance of the Swiss Brethren in Zurich. Even though Muntzer's heritages were clearly detectable in early Anabaptism, particularly in connection with Hut's discipleship (Klaassen 1962:209-27, Loewen 1974:70-9) and the Zurich Anabaptists' soteriology (Hillerbrand 1962:152-80, Klaassen 1967:258), it did not necessarily mean that Anabaptists were merely Muntzer's emissaries (Loewen 1974:70-9). In their view, Anabaptism was rather originated by the Swiss Brethren in Zurich, who had incorporated Muntzerite discipleship and Zwinglian Biblicism into a new ethic of non-resistance, "the concept of following the example of the suffering Christ" (Coggins 1986:194).

Yet, in other sense, the new Mennonites turned against the Bender's ignorance of spiritualism. They came to recognize that the Anabaptist continuum had many shades between biblical literalists and spiritualists; between the emphasis on Scripture as the outer word and on the Holy Spirit as the inner word (Zeman 1976:261). Thus, to them, the conventional distinction between the Spiritualists and the Anabaptists was inexcusable (Packull 1975:100-11). For such spiritual elements remained intact even after the inauguration of evangelical Anabaptism. This enabled them to embrace many of the so-called charismatic Anabaptists into the Anabaptist main camp (Klaassen 1967:254-59, Yoder 1967:104). Here, the new Mennonites began to see the Anabaptists more inclusively; both evangelical and charismatic re-baptizers as the witness of the Spirit as well as the Scripture (Armour 1966:135-37, Yoder 1967:104).

All in all, the new Mennonite interpretation of Anabaptism had reshuffled the Benderite normative categories in subtle ways. This viewpoint had both preserved and modified the older Benderite presuppositions; the essence of Anabaptism was basically discipleship soteriology; its sources were medieval mysticism (for discipleship soteriology) and Protestantism (for Biblicism and the priesthood of all believers); and its origins were the Swiss Brethren in Zurich, who incorporated Muntzer's radical apocalypticism and Denck's spiritualism into a critical and creative new ethic of love and non-resistant pacifism (Coggins 1986:195).

#### **2.5.2.5 The Syncretist (Revisionist) View on Anabaptism**

By the late 1960's, the quest for Anabaptist historiography had entered into a new phase. This appeared as the radical change of centre of gravity in Anabaptist studies from American scholars to Canadian (James M. Stayer, Werner O. Packull, and C. Arnold Snyder) and European (Hans Jurgen Goertz, Klaus Deppermann, and Gottfried Seebass) ones. They were called both "secularists" –due to their advocacy of "methodological atheism" in history (Goertz 1979:186) –and "syncretists," or "revisionists" –for their attempt to reconcile between the (new) Mennonite and Marxist views of Anabaptism (Goertz

1982:15). In this viewpoint, Anabaptism was to be seen as a dialectical synthesis between theological ideas –as elucidated by the (new) Mennonites –and the socio-economic context –as described by the Marxists (Goertz 1982:21).<sup>64</sup> They, in other words, put the intrinsic link between ideas and context as a keyhole of interpreting the Anabaptist history. This combination of theology and socio-economic context, then, began to break the mold. The syncretists argued that both Mennonite and Marxist view had erred in defining the Anabaptist proper, giving more priority to either theological or sociological factor (Goertz 1982:21). Thus, they adopted the holistic approach to Anabaptism as an alternative. This enabled them to approach the Anabaptist historiography from the Mennonite-Marxist-debate to the Mennonite-Marxist-interplay (Goertz 1982:15).

As such, the syncretists' dialectical relationship between ideas and actions –or between the Mennonite and Marxist interpretation –challenged the scholarship to rethink about the nature of Anabaptism. Since the syncretists regarded the nucleus of Anabaptism as its flexible and fluid dynamics rather than its fixed and flat rigidity (Stayer 1982:111), chaos-in-order, and vice-versa, came to the forefront as the main thread of Anabaptist characteristics. To them, there had been considerable confusion and diffusion among the early Anabaptists as an amorphous mass until they sorted themselves out in a certain specific way, or to be more specific, until after the “Schleitheim Confession” of 1527 (Coggins 1986:197-98). ). It was indeed only later that the practice of believers' baptism (rebaptism) became the trademark of Anabaptism (Packull 1979:315). But before that, this formless form served as boundary markers of the early Anabaptism. The syncretists even argued that this state of fluidity was the common denominator not only in Anabaptism, but also in the radical Reformation as a whole (Coggins 1986:197). The radical Reformation, according to them, was nearer to a “chaotic mass of groups,” whose characteristics was varying and even conflicting with each other (Hillerbrand 1962:168, Goertz 1982). Implicit in it was then a two-fold. First, in this chaotic state, the boundaries between the Anabaptists and the radicals became blurred; there was rather a flux of character between the two. Second, in the beginning, there were only the radicals of the Reformation with no discernable boundary markers, and through them, there gradually emerged distinct groups, such as revolutionaries, Anabaptists, and spiritualists (Packull 1977:112-13, Coggins 1986:198). Taking a cue from it, the syncretists proposed that the Anabaptists were a pretty motley crew of radicals, consisting of not only evangelical, but also spiritual and even revolutionary group of people as a whole (Packull 1975:57-67). To them, once again, the concrete boundary marks of Anabaptism was ironically attributed to its

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<sup>64</sup> This alerts one to the danger of “extreme interpretations”, emphasizing strongly on either *purely* socio-economic or, conversely, *purely* pious motive as a root-cause of the Anabaptist movement (Cameron 1991:3). Rather it suggests to consider social, political, and religious factors as equally important in principle (Schilling 1992:247-301).

confused, chaotic and oscillating elements. This significantly paled Bender's normative vision of Anabaptism, on the basis of the non-resistant Swiss Brethren (Packull 1973:327-38). In the syncretists' view, there was no longer a single Anabaptism, but many Anabaptisms, consisting of the inner dynamics –including tensions and even contradictions.

From this vantage point, the syncretists built their own interpretation on Anabaptism. First, they held its multiple origins. In it, there were at least three distinct origins of Anabaptism, Swiss, German, and Dutch (Packull, Deppermann, and Stayer 1975:83-121), which remained separate without assimilating each other (Clasen 1972, Stayer 1978:193). Second, they saw its sources in the social experience of sixteenth-century upheavals in general and the Peasants' War of 1525 in particular. In their view, Anabaptism was drawn chiefly from the lower class, particularly from the downtrodden peasants (Clasen 1972), and thus was revolutionary by nature, whose main aim was to “shake the foundation of society” (Goertz 1982:20, Packull 1975:57-67). Third, they regarded a chaotic nature as its essence. Anabaptism was this state of flux within the radical Reformation, distinguished only by its practice of believer's baptism (Packull 1979:315). Yet, the syncretists began to recognize the importance of spiritual and revolutionary aspects to Anabaptism and this enabled them to stress on Thomas Müntzer's influence on early Anabaptism (Coggins 1986:200).

#### **2.5.2.6 Conclusion**

The Anabaptist historiography has developed with its historical controversies and disputed points, and unexplored areas still remain. Nonetheless, the emerging consensus is that there was a Christian radicalism in the sixteenth century, neither Catholic nor Protestant, now called, the radical Reformation. Even within this radical Reformation, there were various groups, such as revolutionaries, spiritualists, and Anabaptists. Yet, the contemporary scholarship has also been aware that such separate category was not clear in its early stage.

Regarding Anabaptist *origins*, both the Protestant (the new Mennonite) and the Marxist view considered Thomas Müntzer the key protagonist, while the Benderites gave more emphasis on the Swiss Brethren, a peaceful Biblicist group as the genuine progenitor of Anabaptism. The syncretists added a third, Dutch origin, to them, under the influence of Melchior Hoffman, although Müntzer was given some prominence. Regarding its *sources*, the Old Protestant ideas of medieval heresy contrasted the Benderite suggestions of Protestantism. Here Thomas Müntzer was also seen as a man behind the scenes. Yet, one overvalued him a kernel of the *Schwärmer's* religion, whereas the other undervalued him a husk of evangelical Anabaptism. The controversy became more subtle when Müntzer was hailed

as a hero by the Marxist historians. They began to separate the revolutionary Müntzer in the Protestant view from the religious Müntzer in the Benderite position. The new Mennonites, by contrast, saw the spiritual Müntzer in medieval mysticism as a primary source in connection with its discipleship soteriology. The syncretists rather insisted on great influence of the Peasants' War of 1521 and thus stressed on Müntzer the revolutionary, rather than Müntzer the theologian, who left a crucial mark on Anabaptism. According to them, the idea of the peaceful, pacifist and separatist Anabaptism was by no means shared by the majority of Anabaptists until 1535 at least. This only came after they had suffered two catastrophes: the Peasants' War and the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster (Stayer 1972, Deppermann 1984:101).

Then who were the Anabaptists in *essence*? The nominalist definition, such as Anabaptists were all those who re-baptized and their associates –is no longer satisfactory. For this working definition excludes the radical opponents of infant baptism who never took the further step of instituting adult baptism. Thus, Thomas Müntzer, the Zwickau Prophets and Andreas Karlstadt were not Anabaptists, in spite of their outstanding objection about infant baptism.<sup>65</sup> While the radical Anabaptists were nevertheless Anabaptists: followers of Müntzer and the defenders of the Anabaptist regime in Münster in 1534-35 were not peaceful persons, but all of them were upholders of the water baptism of adults. This means both the Peasants' War and Münster are to be part of Anabaptist history (Snyder 2007:47-8). Most, if not all, historians seem to have recognized then that believers' baptism is not the essence of Anabaptism, but the sign of something else. The Benderites saw it as a sign of the New Testament ecclesiology with its emphasis on pacifism against the onslaught of revolutionary tenets, thrived on both the Protestant and the Marxist camp. The new Mennonites argued that it was a sign of discipleship soteriology, while the syncretists laid emphasis on its chaotic nature within the radical Reformation. Despite all such attempts, however, the answer to the question of essence remains still open. This, therefore, reiterates the point that “Anabaptism was probably too dynamic movement to be reduced to a simple definition” (Peachey 1957:330). Figuratively speaking, Anabaptism is no longer to be lied on a Procrustean bed, an arbitrary standard in which exact conformity is forced.

Nonetheless, in the new Anabaptist historiography, it seems evident that there is a close relationship between the radical Reformation and the early Anabaptism, deeply anchored best of all, by the social experience of the German Peasants' War of 1525, the revolution of the common men. Indeed, the

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<sup>65</sup> In 1523 and 1524, the Zwickau Prophets and Thomas Müntzer had rejected infant baptism and demanded the baptism of believers, but there is no evidence that they baptized adults and be baptized by others (Bender 1953:266).

radicals had anticipated the socio-economic demands of the peasants, while Anabaptism had reacted as a religious aftereffect of the Peasants' War. To be sure, the peasant revolts of 1525 had expressed the common men's ambitions to put Luther's Reformation ideas into practice and its unsuccessful fate had channelled into the flourish of Anabaptist movement in new and radical ways.<sup>66</sup> It is true of course that not all common men were radicals. Nor did become the whole peasants the Anabaptists. But it is also true that Anabaptism of 1525 was radical enough and not in a purely religious sense (Stayer 1977:102). The idea of true Anabaptism as evangelical, peace-loving and tolerant was in no sense common to the whole movement. This, therefore, calls for a re-reading of Anabaptism from a perspective of the radical Reformers who played a decisive role in initiating and shaping the history of Anabaptism as part of the revolution of the common men. They are; (1) Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525), (2) Hans Hut (1490-1527), (3) Melchior Hoffman (1495-1543), and (4) John Bockelson (John of Leiden) (1509-1536).

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<sup>66</sup> It is noteworthy then that after the suppression of the revolt of 1525, only the Anabaptists of the southern Germanic territories connected the defeated rebel's efforts to the concrete social commands of the divine justice.

## CHAPTER 3

### RE-READING THE RADICAL REFORMERS

#### AS BEING-IN-THE COMMON MEN

These four were so-called the bastard line (*sic*) of radicals whose revolutionary ideas were interwoven with the history of Anabaptism in general and the Münster event in particular. Thomas Müntzer, “the mystic with the hammer” (Goertz 1976), had unfurled the revolution of the common men of 1525 and shared his lot with them. After the debacle of the Peasants’ War, Hans Hut, Müntzer’s comrade-in-arms in Frankenhausen battle, had continued to fan the flame of revolution by transforming the agent from the peasants to the Anabaptists who once had joined the Peasants’ revolt. Melchior Hoffman came into contact with Hans Denck, a baptizer of Hans Hut (Depermann, Packull and Stayer 1975:86). Hoffman’s movement continued to grow and found expression in the Anabaptist communitarianism and the apocalyptic regime that was established in the city of Münster, whose king was John Bockelson, the Dutch disciple of Hoffman.

This chain of connections had reached its climax in the apocalyptic messianic hope which had been commonly held by all. Starting from Thomas Müntzer’s prediction to the people of Prague in 1522 – if they refused to be the apocalyptic elect under his leadership, “God will let you be struck down by the Turks,” Hans Hut had reset the Last Day for Pentecost 1528, three and one-half years after the Peasants’ War (Seebass 1980:154-63). Melchior Hoffman, supported by some of Hut’s prophetic followers in Strassburg, has also foretold that the Lord would come again in 1533 (Depermann 1987). This passed down to Hoffman’s two Dutch disciples, John Matthjisson and John Bockelson. John Matthjisson, as the first Melchiorite prophetic overlord of Münster, had adjusted the time to Easter 1534 and died in battle that day when his prophecy failed (Stayer 1991:123-38). Then came with the new prediction of *parousia* before Easter 1535 from John Bockelson (John of Leiden), the new tailor king of Münster, even if it, too, ended in failure. All implies then that these bastard line (*sic*) of the radicals were intimately connected to one another as a whole; all were engaged in an apocalyptic struggle, its last stage came down to Münster, the New Jerusalem. In this connection, Müntzer acted as a point of contact between the peasants and the Anabaptists, Hut, between the remnants of the Müntzerites and of the Anabaptists, Hoffman, between the native Anabaptists and the immigrant Melchiorites, and Bockelson, between the radical Melchiorites and the peaceful Münsterites. In this light, all four –Müntzer, Hut, Hoffman and Bockelson –stayed loyal to each other through the revolution of the common men in general and the Anabaptist Münster in particular. All of them were, in this way, being-in-the-common men through being-in-the-messianic hope, or being-in-the-*avatar*-

hood-for-the common men through being-in-the-*guru*-ship-for-the common men.

### **3.1 THE PROFILES OF THE RADICAL REFORMERS**

#### **3.1.1 THOMAS MÜNTZER (1489-1525)**

##### **3.1.1.1 Müntzeriana; a Historiographical Overview of Interpretation of Thomas Müntzer**

Müntzer's radical enthusiasm remained a thorn in the side of Luther. Indeed, Luther had always overreacted to anything associated with Müntzer's name. Even in his last sermon on February 15, 1546, twenty-one years after Müntzer's death, Luther referred Müntzer as "Master Wiseacre" who impeded the gospel's course by trying to dominate it with his own satanic wisdom. This contributed to the stereotypical view of Müntzer as "symbol of dissent and heresy" (Gritsch 2006:120). Furthermore, to Luther's disciples, particularly Bullinger, both Müntzer and Anabaptists were intrinsically inseparable; the former was the beginner of the latter "down there in Saxony" (Bullinger 1560 quoted by Friedmann 1957:79). Meanwhile, the Anabaptist takeover of Münster urged both Protestant and Catholic princes to launch a crusade against it. Although the revolt proved abortive and most participants were annihilated in 1535, this was enough to confirm Protestant orthodoxy's belief that the spirit which drove Anabaptists were satanic, having its root in Müntzer (Gritsch 2006:120).

It is, however, ironic that the Protestant version of the Müntzer legend attempts to disassociate him from Luther, while the Roman Catholic version is to portray Müntzer as the embodiment of radicalized Lutheranism (Lindberg 1990:195). Many Catholic historians sought to downplay Luther's influence by promoting the idea that conditions in Germany were already ripe for Reformation. There were an intense anti-papal and anti-clerical movement, held by the majority of the population. The people merely needed a leader and Luther was the prime beneficiary of the time (Lortz 1968). This alerted them to a large number of vital figures to which the Reformation owed, including Ulrich Zwingli, Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer. Furthermore, Luther's role in the Peasants' War of 1525 was under controversy; Luther indeed compared the peasants to a mad dog which must be destroyed (Franz 1968:414-15 quoted by Bainton 1982:12-3). In this view, Luther's associates had simply carried out what Luther had preached, whereas Müntzer did what Luther had advocated in his earliest years (Lortz 1968:356).

The Müntzer research entered a new phase with Marxist historians who regarded him as a theologian of liberation from social and political oppression (Lindberg 1990:195-96). Taking a cue from Frederick Engels's interpretation, the early Marxist scholars adopted Müntzer as a forerunner of their cause. They

incorporated the Reformation into “the early bourgeois revolution” in religious guise (Scribner and Beneke 1979:9-18) and characterized the Peasants’ War of 1525 as its violent culmination. So, pride of place stood not Luther who had betrayed the common men, but Müntzer who championed the mass, even declaring that “power shall be given to the common men” (Baylor 1993:193, 197).<sup>67</sup> According to them, Müntzer’s aim was to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, namely, the classless society (Engels 1967:65). His political doctrine extended far beyond the social conditions but failed because the historical conditions were not yet ripe for a realization of his ideals (Engels 1967:105-6).

Later Marxists, however, had tended to give more weight to theological cast of Müntzer. Acknowledging that Müntzer’s revolutionary activities have been somewhat overrated (Kautsky 1897), they rather put his chiliasm in the spotlight (Bloch 1960:25, quoted by Loewen 1977:160). The importance, then, laid Müntzer’s ability to inspire the oppressed with his chiliastic vision. This, however, required a significant caveat. Even if they admitted that Müntzer was largely motivated by religious factor, it was to be seen as a catalysts to bring about the revolution (Zschäbitz 1958 quoted by Loewen 1977:162). To them, Müntzer’s religion was external and active so that he was nevertheless the great revolutionary hero of the suffering mass (Smirin 1952:83 quoted by Loewen 1977:161). Indeed, in the sixteenth-century context, there was no way for Müntzer except but using religious ideas, for religion was the only language that the common people could understand (Smirin 1952:87 quoted by Loewen 1977:161). The later Marxists, in this way, depicted Müntzer as the founder of a “people’s reformation” (*Volksreformation*) which, in contrast to “Luther’s party” (*Luthers Partei*), had advocated a socio-political revolution that would begin with the Peasants’ War of 1525 (Meusel 1952:178 quoted by Loewen 1977:162).

At any rate, the Marxist interpretation gave Müntzer new dignity, despite some overstated the case, and thus became a stimulus for a new more sophisticated Lutheran analysis of Müntzer. It was Karl Holl, the founder of modern Luther research, who offered a critical assessment of Müntzer. For Holl, Müntzer’s theology was derivative of Luther’s, but since its elements were caught with medieval mysticism, it brought a tension into his socio-political activism (Holl 1932 quoted by McLaughlin 2008:88). In a way, Holl was “yes” to the Marxist interpretation when it argued that Müntzer’s revolutionary activities were not based on theology, but he was “no” to its attribution of Müntzer’s theology to social consequences (McLaughlin 2008:88). This made Holl to place Müntzer into the

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<sup>67</sup> It was Wilhelm Zimmermann, who first identified Thomas Müntzer as a revolutionary figure. Zimmermann’s radical interpretation had indeed deeply influenced Friedrich Engels to see Müntzer a precursor of all later revolutionaries (Mjaaland 2016:167).

context of a broad interpretation of the radical Reformation (Holl 1923:425 quoted by Gritsch 2006:123). Against Holl's interpretation of Müntzer, Heinrich Böhmer, another Lutheran, rather proposed that Müntzer's theology had its root not in mysticism, but in apocalypticism derived from Taborite chiliasm (Böhmer 1927:187-222, quoted by Mclaughlin 2008:89). In Böhmer's view, Müntzer was not a social revolutionary who led the Peasants' War, but an apocalyptic "Mordprophet," proclaiming the renewed kingdom of God (Böhmer 1927:187-222 quoted by Mclaughlin 2008:88-9). Thus was created by the templates for Müntzer for the rest of the century: "the mystic, the apocalyptic, and the revolutionary" (Mclaughlin 2008:89).

### **3.1.1.2 Müntzer and Luther**

The downward spiral of the relationship between Thomas Müntzer and Martin Luther had also been attractive to many scholars. Indeed, an assessment of Müntzer's link to Luther has remained controversial. For Müntzer went his own way, despite he may have been in Luther's orbit during his early career. Walter Elliger's summary of Müntzer's relationship to Luther represented its complexity. Müntzer was Luther's disciple "who, to be sure, already came to Wittenberg with the bias of an independent and personal formulation of questions...Luther made the radical break, not Müntzer, even though it was he [Müntzer] who had already separated himself from him [Luther]" (Elliger 1975:7 quoted by Gritsch 2006:125-26). From this ambiguity, Müntzer was even called an ally, "who admired and supported Luther without, however, ever having become dependent on him" (Bensing 1989:30 quoted by Gritsch 2006:126). Hayo Gerdes's study in this regard was equally inconclusive. He saw Müntzer's dependence on Luther on the one sense, but, also described Müntzer's distance from Luther when he began to preach about the imminent end of the world (Gerdes 1955:152-63, quoted Gritsch 1988:57). Having compared Luther and Müntzer's views of political authority and the individual's right to resist, Carl Hinrichs had concluded both were classic opponents who had virtually nothing in common; Luther demanded submission to authority, while Müntzer faced official opposition (Hinrichs 1952 quoted by Gritsch 1988:58). Thomas Nipperdey agreed Müntzer's dependence on Luther, but he contended that Müntzer turned Luther's theology upside-down, focusing on the subjective experiencing of the Holy Spirit (Nipperdey 1963:140, 147, 183-84, quoted Gritsch 2006:126).

Bernhard Lohse, however, reached a different conclusion. To him, Müntzer, who was heavily influenced by late medieval German mysticism, can no longer be viewed as a disciple of Luther, but must be seen as an independent thinker who unfurled spirit-revolution over against Luther's Bible-faith (Lohse 1974:12-32, quoted by Gritsch 1988:60). Ulrich Bubenheimer also called attention to Müntzer's independence from Luther, but found its root in Müntzer's anti-Roman Catholic stance.

Müntzer was already a persecutor of injustice; his theological critic of indulgences in Braunschweig preceded Luther's Ninety-Five Theses in 1517 and this proved the fact that Müntzer developed his theology without the influence of Luther (Bubenheimer 1983:36-7 quoted by Gritsch 2006:126). The question of Müntzer's dependence of Luther was also raised by Max Steinmetz. Contending the womb of Müntzer's thought was in the class struggles of 1521 to 1525, rather than in Luther's influence, Steinmetz tried to make a clear distinction between Müntzer and Luther (Steinmetz 1979:9-22). He then elaborated the basic components of Müntzer's theology formulated in his struggle against Luther's social and political passivity; a doctrine of the Holy Spirit over against the authority of the Bible; a doctrine of the cross manifested in spiritual suffering and in purification for the sake of true faith; and a doctrine of the sword which included the right to resist the godless authority and to bring justice to the poor and the oppressed (Steinmetz 1975:665-85 quoted by Gritsch 1988:60-1).

In addition to the relation between Luther and Müntzer, there has also been the discussion of Müntzer's spiritualism (Gritsch 1963:172-94). The recent research works tend to ascribe more significance to the influence of mysticism on Müntzer than any decisive impact that Luther may have had on him (Goertz 1967 quoted by Mclaughlin 2008:90). In 1967, Goertz in particular depicted Müntzer a revolutionary in a mystical spirit, whose roots linked not to Luther, but to Tauler (Goertz 1967:25-8 quoted by Maclaghlin 2008:90). Goertz argued then that Müntzer joined in Luther's early reformation activity but he already did so on the basis of a mystical spiritualism. Müntzer used this mystical thought to form of dialectic of internal and external order and thus of the link between theology and revolution (Goertz 1967 quoted by Gritsch 1988:59). Heiko A. Oberman suggested an interesting connection between mysticism and political history in Müntzer's theology (Oberman 1986:205-14 quoted Gritsch 1988:59). According to Oberman, Müntzer related the young Luther's notion of faith –described in terms of bride-mysticism –to his own interest in predestination, and finally argued for “the great sorting out” –first microcosmically in heart and soul, then macrocosmically in world and history (Gritsch 1988:59). Reinhard Schwarz was, however, reluctant to agree that Müntzer was decisively influenced by medieval mysticism. He instead tried to link Müntzer's theology to Taborite eschatology (Schwarz 1977:125-26 quoted by Gritsch 1988:59-70). In Schwarz's view, Müntzer's theology and activities were the product of a “peculiar fusion” that played against each other between the influence of Luther, of mysticism and of the chiliastic Taborite tradition within an acute apocalyptic framework (Schwarz 1977:8, 62-64, quoted by Petersen 1993:59-70).

M. M. Smirin also tried to portray Müntzer a mystic who was dependent on Joachimite-Taborite eschatology, but linked its radical nature with his People's Reformation (Smirin 1952 quoted by

Friesen 1974:182-86). Stephen E. Ozment took a more cautious stance to this kind of popular sovereignty to Müntzer. Apart from Smirin's paradigm, Ozment explained that "Müntzer's theology of heart became a revolutionary ideology when applied to society, but that there is much controversy on this relationship" (Ozment 1973:91).<sup>68</sup> Siegfried Bräuer and Helmar Junghans had also included and acknowledged the contribution of medieval mysticism to Müntzer's thought (Bräuer and Junghans 1989 quoted by Mclaughlin 2008:90). According to both authors, the "first beginning of Müntzer's theology of revolution" can be traced back to "grade of tradition" in medieval mysticism; to the apocalyptic milieu created by Joachimite eschatological speculations and by Taborite (Hussite) millennialism; and to the early writings of Luther, "in the way Müntzer understood them" (Bräuer and Junghans 1989 quoted by Gritsch 1988:57). Both, however, explained that since Müntzer's thoughts were "erratic" and "associative," the motives of his actions were not always clear (Mclaughlin 2008:91).

In sum, there is much that remains unclear about Müntzer's early life, about his relationship to Luther, and about his affinity to or dependence on medieval thought. Thus, such labyrinth of research and controversy of Müntzer shows that a good assessment of Müntzer's identity is still in process and thus needs to be put him in the widest possible contexts – Müntzer's aims and achievements, whether theological and social or political, must be related to those of all the other varieties of reform. Nonetheless, one thing is clear; Müntzer cannot be understood at all apart from his relationship with the common men.

### 3.1.1.3 Biographical Sketch

Thomas Müntzer was born around 1489 in Stolberg, not far from Eisleben, where Martin Luther was born, and spent his childhood in Quedlinburg.<sup>69</sup> Contrary to widely held assumptions, he was born not to poverty but to modest comfort (Cohn 1961:251, Hillerbrand 1967:3).<sup>70</sup> There was too little information on personal records about Müntzer, but certain only is that he began the basic university

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<sup>68</sup> Hillerbrand, in particular, argued that Müntzer's concern was not practical and thus political and social considerations were secondary for him. When Müntzer, therefore, talked about the "poor" he meant the "poor" in spirit, the "people" were the elect, and the "rulers" were the godless. To Hillerbrand, since Müntzer was a man of words rather than deeds, Müntzer's involvement with the peasants was seen as a nightmare – a terrible involvement made possible by his theological dualism (Hillerbrand 1967:22-30).

<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, only few facts are known about the childhood and youth of Müntzer. Not even the year of his birth is quite certain indeed.

<sup>70</sup> It was Ulrich Bubenheimer who came important result for Müntzer's early life and education. According to his research, Müntzer's family was related to the goldsmith's trade, which implies that he was not a man of the lower classes (Bubenheimer 1989 quoted by McLaughlin 2008:90).

curriculum at Leipzig in 1506 and appeared six years later at the University of Frankfurt on the Oder (Gritsch 2006:3). Young Müntzer sought new knowledge voraciously even to be a “bibliomaniac” – one who was unable to see a book without buying it (Gritsch 2006:14). Once he ordered seventy-five books at one time which was tardy in payment (Hillerbrand 1967:3-4). In 1514 Müntzer accepted a benefice in Braunschweig and became a priest of the Halberstadt diocese (Goertz 2007:21). Around 1518 Müntzer stayed in Wittenberg and travelled to Franconia and probably attended the famous Leipzig disputation of 1519,<sup>71</sup> where Karlstadt, Luther and Eck debated the teaching authority of the popes and councils (Seidemann 1842:4 quoted by Hillerbrand 1967:4). At Easter 1519, Müntzer preached against the Franciscans at Jüterbog, where he had reputation as a Lutheran. Next he became a father confessor for Cistercian nuns at Beuditz near Weißenfels (Goertz 2007:21). There Müntzer read some historians of the ancient church, the records of the Council of Constance, the German mystics, and the tracts and pamphlets of humanism (Friesen 1990:33-52).

It was the economically important city of Zwickau where Müntzer caught the public eye to begin his official career in May 1520 (Wappler 1966:19-20 quoted Ozment 1973:61). Luther recommended Müntzer to fill a vacancy in St. Mary’s church with the intention of influencing the local church situation in the direction of the Reformation. Soon Müntzer moved to a permanent position at St. Catherine’s church, which brought him closer to the lower class (Klaassen 1992:35). In fact, a series of involvements of Müntzer was nothing extraordinary of those years, certainly far from a decision to carry out his own people’s Reformation. He had simply joined in the usual anti-clericalism which was often entangled with economic discontent and social protest (Hillerbrand 1967:4). In here, Müntzer experienced the effect of mystical piety and theology in anticlerical struggle under the initiative of an uneducated layman, Nicolaus Storch,<sup>72</sup> a spiritually gifted apocalyptic visionary. Anti-clericalism, of course, encouraged Müntzer to begin to think about and work for the Reformation on the one hand,

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<sup>71</sup> In his later treatise, Müntzer charged Luther; “You were doing all right at Leipzig, held a bouquet of carnations in your hand while departing through the city gate and you drank good wine with Melchior Lothar.” This then suggests a firsthand acquaintance with the event (Hinrichs 1952:97 quoted by Hillerbrand 1967:4).

<sup>72</sup> He was known as a weaver and radical lay-preacher in the town of Zwickau. Little is known about his life and theology, but, in the history of Marcus Wagner (Erfurt, 1597), there are reports not only of Storch’s support of polygamy, communism, revolt against established political authority, and denial of infant baptism, but also of his insistence on the direct presence of the Spirit as God’s singular means of grace (Ozment 1973:64). Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that Storch worked closely with Thomas Müntzer. In fact, Müntzer, from the pulpit, not only extolled Storch as a spiritually gifted layman (Rupp 1969:259), but also hailed the status of all laymen on par with that of prelates and ministers (Seidemann 1842:110 quoted by Hoyer 1988:85-98). This indicates then that Müntzer, more than any other Reformers, not only promoted lay preaching, but also publicly proclaimed it as an alternative to the work of ordained priests (Hoyer 1988:90). In light of this, some scholars, Wappler and Gritsch in particular, see a rapid and total capitulation of Müntzer to Storch’s extreme spiritualism during the Zwickau period (Wappler 1966:30, Gritsch 1967:36), while Rupp by contrast insists that Müntzer led, rather than, was led by the Zwickau prophets (Rupp 1969:167). Max Steinmetz rather attributes the Storchian influence on Müntzer to Melancthon’s pejorative creation (1963:160 quoted by Hoyer 1988).

and the mystical tradition, rather, provided him with theological arguments on the other (Goertz 1982:33). Müntzer's entanglement with Storch and his circle, however, polarized the public opinion in Zwickau and this urged the council to dismiss him. Müntzer then had to leave Zwickau for Bohemia in April 1521, going first to Saaz and then to Prague.<sup>73</sup>

Müntzer's theology, quickened by his experiences at Zwickau, began to take shape more clearly in his composition of the *Prague Manifesto*<sup>74</sup> in November 1521. This shows Müntzer's theological outlines as the combination of anti-clerical sallies and mystical soteriology (Gritsch 1967:56). It is in one sense the gateway which runs through the present and future of Müntzer's theology. Everything that he later wrote and did is basically present here, only needing to be worked out, deepened, and sharpened by concrete situations (Goertz 1982:33). In it, Müntzer rejected the legitimation of the priests of the official church, but rather elevated lay people who had been seized by the Spirit (Klaassen 1992:36); he presented himself as the prophet of the apostolic church and thereby as the tool of God in the imminent judgement of the world in which the elect would be separated from the godless (Goertz 1982:34-5). This certainly was the significant shift of Müntzer's emphasis of the previous Lutheran position (Hillerbrand 1967:7).

Müntzer was unable to remain long in Prague, however. After a number of failed attempts to locate himself in the Saxon Thuringian area, he finally obtained a pastorate in the town of Allstedt on Easter 1523. Here Müntzer married a former nun (Steinmetz 1956:59 quoted by Hillerbrand 1967:8). With his translation into German of the liturgical offices, psalms, and hymns, people crowded to the Allstedt services from the surrounding territories. Müntzer's sermons and liturgies became an event (Goertz 1982:35).<sup>75</sup> In this reform of worship Müntzer pursued the goal of educating the common people. He tried not only to lead them to the experience of faith, but also to make them the bearers of the new order. This enabled Müntzer to establish a "covenant,"<sup>76</sup> a secret military organization, for the defence

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<sup>73</sup> Scholars suggest that the direction of this travel was no accident. It is because, first, Luther's support of John Hus at the Leipzig Disputation made Müntzer become more sympathetic with the Hussite tradition. Second, the proximity of Zwickau to Bohemia had brought him already into contact with the Hussites (Hillerbrand 1967:6, Klaassen 1992:36).

<sup>74</sup> The three versions of the Manifesto are now present: German, Latin, and Czech. Among them, the two vernacular versions especially contain emphatic attacks upon the learned and educated (Hillerbrand 1967:168, note 11).

<sup>75</sup> This shows that Müntzer's reforming activities were more people-oriented than Luther's. Notably, Müntzer antedated Luther's liturgical efforts and was even superior to Luther's in terms of his translation from Latin into German. Luther instead saw nothing wrong in principle with the continued use of Latin (Hillerbrand 1967:9).

<sup>76</sup> Robert Friedmann saw that from onwards, this "covenant" has been called everything from a conspiratorial secret society in a negative way to the prototype of the Anabaptist concept of church in a positive way (Friedmann 1957:75).

of the new gospel (Goertz 2007:23). Müntzer also attacked infant baptism by challenging the Scribes to cite a single Scripture passage that a child was baptized by Christ or his disciples. To Müntzer, only adults were accepted and this meant that baptism is not a sacrament, but only a symbol (Hillerbrand 1967:10). That quickly stimulated the enmity of the Catholic rulers and officials in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it even enraged Luther in his growing distrust of Müntzer.

As the disorders around Allstedt increased, particularly after Müntzer's supporters destroyed the chapel at Mallerbach, the court at Weimar found itself obliged to investigate the situation (Hillerbrand 1967:12). Yet, it was Müntzer who had taken the initiative to turn the tables. Now he would have to present a trial sermon at the castle in the presence of Duke John and his son John Frederick, who stood under the influence of the Wittenbergers (Klaassen 1992:37). Here Müntzer, filled with confidence, interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar about the collapse of the world empires in Daniel 2. His intention was to win the princes for his "invincible," future Reformation (Matheson 1988:244). The princes must help it to victory against the resistance of the godless; otherwise, Müntzer threatened, God would take the government from them and give it over to the common people.<sup>77</sup> This was the forthright and bold sermon, known as "The Sermon before the Princes." The Saxon court, however, refused the prophetic offer of the "new Daniel" (Williams 1957:64-5).<sup>78</sup> This made the political situation in Allstedt too volatile so that Müntzer was forced to leave this town in August 1524.

Again, Müntzer's life was on the run. Nevertheless, Müntzer was now more politically active than he had ever been; he cooperated with Heinrich Pfeiffer, a runaway lay-preacher, in trying to initiate a radical Reformation in the Thuringian imperial city of Mühlhausen (Josipovic and McNiel 1996:444). In an effort to give his goal organizational support, Müntzer founded the "Eternal Covenant of God," in a more radical form of the previous covenant in Allstedt, which took on a military character (Goertz 2007:23). After some turbulent episode, both Müntzer and Pfeiffer were soon forced to leave the city.

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<sup>77</sup> Here the contemporary scholarship is willing to agree that as explicitly expressed in Müntzer's later letter, his sermon to the princes was, in fact, not revolutionary. Müntzer rather asserted the necessity of a new *Bund* (covenant) among the truly elect. Müntzer, indeed, seemed to have no intention of being against the secular rulers, but rather offered an olive branch to them, by saying that "a proper covenant must be established so that the common men and the pious ruler unite for the sake of the Gospel." At point here was not that the people would rise against the godless rulers, but that the pious people and rulers should unite for the "sake of the Gospel." In short, Müntzer's *Bund* was to unite rulers and the common people against all godless, and not the people against the godless. This implies that Müntzer's *Bund*, by nature, stood closer to revolution "from above" than revolution "from below" (Hillerbrand 1967:15, 20).

<sup>78</sup> At this juncture, Martin Luther intervened. Luther, in his *Letter to the Saxon Princes about the Rebellious Spirit*, had aggressively warned against Müntzer, though he conspicuously avoided mentioning Müntzer by name. Luther's treatise constituted an ample proof that Müntzer's activities at Allstedt were widely viewed with concern and associated with civil insurrection. All this made Müntzer's attempt less convincing and less successful (Hillerbrand 1967:14-5).

Müntzer journeyed to Nuremberg and there he met Hans Hut who had secured the publication of his “Expose of False Faith” (Hillerbrand 1967:18). In the months around the year’s end, Müntzer went travel to the territory of the peasant uprising in the Upper Rhine region and in this journey he also met with Johannes Oecolampadius in Basel and possibly with Balthasar Hubmaier in Waldshut (Hillerbrand 1967:21).

Taking advantage of the disorders in the north, Müntzer readmitted to Mülhausen in February 1525 (Josipovic and McNiel 1996:444). Meanwhile, the mood in the city had changed in his favour. The old council was replaced with an elected “Eternal Council,” and this gave Müntzer a chance to take over the pastorate at St. Mary’s (Hillerbrand 1967:22). Despite the new elected council hesitated to follow Müntzer’s apocalyptic plans for conquest, it did give him a free hand to participate in the organization of the peasants marches through Thuringia and the Eichsfeld (Hillerbrand 1967:22). Müntzer now committed himself totally to the uprising and spurred it on. Furthermore, his apocalyptic perspective interpreted the imminent confrontation with worldly might as the last judgement (Matheson 2012:105). On 12 May, Müntzer joined the Frankenhausen crowd, which was the sole remaining and armed peasants group of any significance. Not surprisingly, he immediately became their leader (Scott 1979:719). Philipp of Hesse’s army approached from Fulda three days later, promising the peasants a general amnesty if they surrendered Müntzer to the authorities. The charismatic leader, however, consolidated his opinion and promised the victory of the peasants (Rothbard 1990:146). On the same day, the peasant camp was surrounded and artillery fire directed at their positions. When the expected divine intervention failed to materialize, the peasants fell into a panic (Williams 1962:165). The battle did not drag on but its result was catastrophic. With some 5,000 out of 6,000 rebels were killed and 600 taken prisoner, while there were only six fatal casualties in the whole princely army (Rothbard 1990:146). Müntzer was able to escape the field of battle, but was soon discovered in an attic in the town (Williams 1962:165). Thus was followed by interrogation under torture to force him to recant of all his misdeeds. Müntzer admitted himself in the wrong and wrote a farewell letter to his followers in Mühlhausen, which was complete turnabout from his former position (Friedmann 1957:79).<sup>79</sup> On May 27, 1525, he was executed, so was ended the life of Thomas Müntzer (Williams 1962:165). His body, with that of Pfeiffer, was put on public display as a warning sign against further rebelliousness (Scott 1989, Goertz 1993).

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<sup>79</sup> In retrospect, Müntzer was persuaded that the peasants had deceived him, since they had been more concerned about material gain than the gospel (Hillerbrand 1967:23). But, the reliability of this letter has been challenged by many scholars (Williams 1962:165).

Luther's call for the stern punishment of the peasants was, then, justified. The Wittenberg Reformers also joined hands against Müntzer's tragic fate. They propagated it as God's victory over the assaults of the Antichrist, and suppressed any scruples about the bloody massacres of the fleeing peasantry at Frankenhausen (Gritsch 2006:120). Nobody could afford to show mercy to the Antichrist and the devil. Luther and his followers could not see it otherwise. To them, Müntzer's shameful end was the refutation of a theology which had falsely claimed the support of the Holy Spirit (Loewen 2015:69-70). So, "Luther killed Müntzer; his death is on my shoulder. But I did it because he wanted to kill my Christ" (Brecht 1990:184-85). In succinct, the battle was won for Luther, the major Reformer, and Müntzer, the radical, has been forgotten.

### **3.1.1.4 Theological Perspective**

#### **3.1.1.4.1 Anti-clerical Medieval Mysticism**

Müntzer's theology can be seen as a creative fusion of anti-clericalism and medieval spiritualism (or spiritual mysticism). Both elements were closely intertwined as a whole and ultimately evolved into a theology of revolution. Müntzer saw anti-clericalism not a populist, demagogic campaign of the early Reformation, designed to attract support from the common people. But he regarded it as the material that oriented his action on behalf of the revolution of the common men. Anti-clerical was, in other word, Müntzer's theological point of origin (Goertz 2007:24). Nowhere did Müntzer more to sharpen his anti-clerical critique than in the *Prague Manifesto*. To his eyes, the clergy had failed to lead anyone in the right way to the "true exercise of the faith" (Matheson 1988:357). They were rather a "plague on the poor folk," "lords, who only gobble and guzzle," "usurious, interest-extorting testicled doctors" and thus all "devil's priests" who were all damned (Mattheson 1988:364-70). Müntzer signed the *Prague Manifesto*; "Thomas Müntzer, who wants to worship not a dumb, but a speaking God" (Mattheson 1988:371). In it, Müntzer had rejected the legitimation of the priests of the official church who could not hear the voice of God. The priests' claim that God long ago stopped the outpouring of His Spirit sparked Müntzer's anger. He thundered then that "whoever robs God of His speech becomes speechless himself; whoever shuts God's mouth...is responsible for people's spiritual degeneration" (Goertz 2007:25).

Furthermore, the conceptual arsenal of Müntzer's medieval mysticism was already manifested in the *Prague Manifesto*. In it, he insisted that faith can be experienced only through the living voice of God in the depth of the soul, without external means –neither through the letter of Scripture, nor through the sacraments, nor through the institutional church, or ecclesiastical hierarchy (Goertz 1976:120). Therefore, as long as the priests remained in their silence and opened no one to the voice of the divine

Spirit, they automatically invalidated their office. For Müntzer saw all three of them –speechless, spiritless and godless –in the same package (Goertz 2007:25-6). In the anti-clerical milieu, Müntzer made a sharp contrast of the damned priest and the elect layman on the basis of experience of the speaking God. This close link between anti-clericalism and mystical spiritualism led to Müntzer’s espousal of *solo spiritu* over *sola scriptura*. In fact, Müntzer’s appropriation of the mystical tradition was an essential component of the individual’s path to salvation and was inextricably linked to the pneumatological arguments of the Bible (Goertz 2007:26). Access to God, for Müntzer, was not mediated through the Holy Scripture but through the Holy Spirit alone. For scripture was only a testimony of the working of the Spirit.

If one had throughout his entire life neither heard nor seen the Bible, he could still have a sincere Christian faith through the true teaching of the Spirit, as all those have who, without any books, have written the Holy Scripture (Ozment 1973:88).

Here, once again, the contrast between priests and laymen was visible. By emphasizing the primacy of the Word, the priests forgot the Spirit, and so doing relativized the experience of the Holy Spirit (Ojakangas 2013:75). While the layperson recognized that without the living Spirit, the Word of God had no significance (Baylor 1993:56, 62) and thus were ready to hear the testimony of the Spirit in the “abyss of the soul,” where they may expect God’s present revelation (Mattheson 1988:358). “So the authority of the priests is shattered by the experienced authority of the speaking God” (Goertz 2007:25). Müntzer elaborated this process as if he drew a diagram; (1) the Spirit’s visitation to person from within → (2) the Spirit’s encounter with the believer through suffering → (3) the arrival of faith → (4) the birth of the Spirit-filled New Men (Goertz 2007:27-8). Then was followed by his footnote. The Spirit permeated the person from within; the Spirit encountered the believer in his/her innermost heart to which no mere man, or merely human word could reach. This encounter was a painful struggle to overcome the old man, but this suffering experience led the believers into the “arrival of faith” (Baylor 1993:18). Such faith created new spirit-filled persons who would obey only God and only these new persons, through suffering submission to God’s work, allowed themselves to be purified of creaturely attachments (Goertz 2007:27).

This led Müntzer to preach not the “sweet,” but the “bitter” Christ (Mattheson 1988:200), whom he followed in tribulation and suffering (Scott 1989:35).<sup>80</sup> Müntzer had, once again, criticized that the priests made the way to salvation too easy so even as to the common people sought to avoid all sufferings (Loewen 2015:61); they had taught that another suffered for them and that Christ’s suffering

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<sup>80</sup> Yet, this preaching of the “sweet” and “bitter” Christ was not Müntzer’s original invention. Such theme was in fact popular in the late medieval German mysticism (Hoffman 1980:82, 84).

was sufficient. This teaching was more inviting, but invented and fictitious because it not only deprived Christ of his relevance for life, but also turning him into a cute and fantastic idol (Nipperdey 1963:145-81 quoted by Lindberg 1983:84). A true gospel rather required suffering. As Christ was crucified, so the believers entered into Christ through suffering. In fact, suffering, according to Müntzer, was a prelude to the Spirit's visitation for all his glory (Rupp 1969:188). Thus, the preaching of the sweet Christ represented a turn away from the gospel. Müntzer believed then that it was the bitter Christ who must be grasped by the believers. But this bitter Christ came with task; believers must take up the task that Christ set before them (Holder 2009:124). Müntzer, in this way, made clear that faith was founded not on the dead letter, but on the living experience (Drummond 1979:65). By placing himself in the "poor in spirit," who relied on not his own, but only God's Spirit (Scott 1989:102), Müntzer rejected the invented faith, a faith which was only accepted outwardly so that neither did it fundamentally change believers, nor did lead to their moral improvement. The official priests claimed to be Christians but denied it by their lives. This was none other than a cheap grace, a grace entirely without cost, a grace left everything else as before, because it did not change anyone's life. Müntzer had rather developed the concept of experienced faith, a faith which emphasized emotional inner spiritual genuineness as well as the purity and practical application of the Word of God (Baylor 1993:18).

Müntzer saw this lack of the Spirit in Luther's *sola scriptura*, even if he "swallowed a hundred thousand of the Bible" (Baylor 1993:105). The problem in Müntzer's eyes was that Luther fell into the fallacy of "bibliolatry," the worship of external letters, by putting the Bible in the highest court of appeal in spiritual matters (Loewen 2015:61). Furthermore, Müntzer had become suspicious of Luther's theology of justification. Indeed, Luther's teaching on justification in the theory of imputation was foreign to Müntzer's view of justification (Lindberg 1977:35-50). According to Luther, justification consisted of declaring the unjust just on the basis of the vicarious satisfaction wrought by Christ. But, Müntzer saw this vicarious substitution of guilt merely intellectual conception (Gritsch 1963:180). His own stated view was that justification was not static and rigid, but rather dynamic and holistic. It involved more than a divine declaration. It must embrace mortification, perdition, and dying and rising with Christ, in correspondence with Christ's life (Gritsch 1963:180). Using the colourful language of German mysticism, Müntzer had advocated the observance of several stages before God's invitation took place in individual believer. "First, man has to get rid of all coarseness and sin (*Entgrobung*); second, he has to meditate and think on the new life in Christ and eternity (*Studierung*); third, he has to contemplate the sinfulness of sin and God's grace to man; fourth, he has to feel sorrow and repent genuinely of his former sinful life (*Langeweile*); last, he must attain to a state of perfect resignation before God (*tiefe Gelassengeit*)" (Loewen 2015:61-2). To Müntzer, this process began

anew again and again. The Spirit of the fear of God demanded the self-mortification of man and in the “night, when wretchedness is at its highest, then Christ, true Son of God, descends” into the depth of the soul (Goertz 1976:110-120).

Müntzer even went to so far as to argue that justification was part of the process of deification; it led believers to the *unio mystica*, namely, the uniting of man with God;

Fleshly, earthly people should become gods through the incarnation of Christ, and thus with [Christ] be God’s pupils, taught by him, deified by him, and indeed much more, completely transformed into him, so that earthly life changes into heavenly (Mattheson 1988:278)

Thus, each one had to bear his own cross and must not, like Luther, assume that Christ suffered for him and no more human accountability. Suffering was the means of purification; the “bitter Christ” therefore had to be experienced first before the “sweet Christ” would bring comfort (Nipperdey 1980:109). In this way, justification was sanctification and also deification for in justification man was renewed and totally transfigured into God through Christ (Nipperdey 1980:110).

Müntzer had developed this inner spiritual sphere of persons into an external reality. As one became transformed through the suffering, produced by the Spirit, so must the entire world be changed into the kingdom of God (Gritsch 1963:181). Müntzer no longer distinguished between the inner and outer world. The inner transformation envisioned by Müntzer rather included a transformation of outer condition, leading to the establishment of the kingdom of God (Nipperdey 1980:115). In Müntzer’s dialectic of inner and outer, renewal of the individual logically linked to a renewal of the church, the government and society (Goertz 2007:27). Here, the essentials can be expressed in concepts of time: not an objective past, not a completed, fossilized cross, but a present process was decisive (Nipperdey 1980:110). As the Christ for believers became real only as the Christ in them, Christ’s suffering for them became real only as Christ’s suffering in them. In this light, the believer became a contemporary of Christ. The eschatological promises of the coming of the kingdom of God were not only for the future, but were already present in believers (Nipperdey 1980:110). Indeed, fear of God was part of the process of salvation, election and was the important step of believers, leading to the transformation of not only man but also the world (Drummond 1979:67). So, in Münster’s theology the anti-clerical and mystical impulses were fully intertwined (Goertz 2007:28-9).

#### **3.1.1.4.2 Theology of Revolution of the Common Men**

Müntzer’s dialectic of inner and outer enabled him to become more than a mystical theologian; it erected him to be an “apocalyptic crusader” (Stayer 1972). Once Müntzer was certain that the

movement of the Spirit in the individual corresponded with the movement of society, he regarded it as the end of the eschatological tension within the church (Gritsch 1963:181). Now was the time of the inauguration of the new age. Thus, Müntzer's concern for the existing external forms of human society as hindrances to the advent of this new age was rapidly growing toward his advocacy of revolt against the external authorities of church and state (Goertz 2007:28-9). Since Müntzer saw the elect, who had experienced faith, as God's servants in this undertaking, he called for "the Spirit-led cleansing of the godless not only from the [church], but also from the world" (Lindberg 1977:43). This perspective had decisive consequences in two ways. First, the human race was divided into two categories; the elect (*ausserwelten*) and the godless (*gotlosen*) (Bainton 1982:8). Those of the one group had experienced faith, while the others only had invented faith, or stolen it out of the Holy Scripture. Second, this distinction also turned up Müntzer's emphasis on the separation of wheat and tares in preparation for the new age (Bailey 1983:35);

One must remove the enemies, for otherwise the church cannot return to her origin. One must tear out the weeds from the vineyard of God if the harvest is to come. Only then is the wheat able to grow (Mattheson 1988:371)

This was the critical moment where Müntzer's theology of suffering and the Cross was transformed into a theology of revolution (Scott 1989). He wanted to transform the inner experience into an external social program and the Peasants' revolt further elaborated his revolutionary program (Gritsch 1963:190). Taking a cue from Joachim of Fiore's Trinitarian interpretation of history, Müntzer identified the age of Spirit with his own time (Gritsch 1963:188).

Indeed, Joachim himself stated that in the new era the individual would have immediate contact with God, that the written Word would become superfluous for the religion of the Spirit would reign supreme (Friesen 1973:17)

To this end, Müntzer founded "the covenant of the elect" (*Bund der Auserwählten*) who instituted the age of the Spirit (Gritsch 1963:190). This was the logical conclusion of his theology. In the inner process, it cleansed the inner man and destroyed the power of sin –mortification and suffering submission to the divine work. In the outward process, it appeared in man's activity in resisting oppression by the world –in transforming, changing, or even annihilating the existing worldly conditions (Goertz 1980:125). In it, not only man, but also God and man were both active; God acted in, through and with man (Goertz 1980:126). Thus, the elect no longer remained as mere passive and pessimistic instruments of God, but rather an ardent agents of God who were called to work with the Spirit to transform the world –smash all the earthy powers, especially the state-church system (Goertz 2007:28-9).<sup>81</sup> Then, sooner or later the kingdom of this world would be given to the elect (Mattheson

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<sup>81</sup> This shows that Müntzer's reference to chosen one (elect) stood in stark contrast to the Reformation framework of predestinarianism. Müntzer's must be understood within the context, meaning self-selected instruments of God (Packull 1977:190).

1988:371). From it detected a clear turn toward apocalyptic thinking of Müntzer (Bailey 1983:34). The grounding was derived from the mystical process of salvation, but the consequence was a great confrontation between the godless and the elect which assumed apocalyptic dimensions (Goertz 1982:34-5).

Furthermore, in Müntzer's understanding, this apocalyptic transformation, or to be more specific, the Christianization of the world, could not be postponed to an indefinite world to come, but must be realized here and now, *secula seculorum* (Franz 1968:505 quoted by Bailey 1983:35). The Kingdom of God indeed did not take place aside from the world, but in it (Nepperdey 1980:115) and like the Joachimist third age, it would be eternal (Hinrichs 1952:19-21 quoted by Bailey 1983:35). To Müntzer, the Armageddon-like sweep of the Peasants' War into Thuringia would be a sign that the end was close at hand and alerted to his role in the last days (Gritsch 1963:190). Since the time had come to separate the godless from the elect and the Spirit was now given to the poor masses over the aristocracy, Müntzer's theology resulted in demands for social justice (Drummond 1979:66). The experience at Zwickau provided a basis for Müntzer's social program. He saw before his very eyes how "poverty benumbed the spirit and impeded faith" (Bainton 1982:6); townsmen suffered from unemployment and the development of nearby silver mine forced the majority of weavers into bankruptcy (Gritsch 1967:13). The enthusiastic responses to Müntzer's preaching in Zwickau and Allstedt, where the guildsmen and the poor rallied behind his reform, speeded his own sense of mission and status as a special prophet who would lead mankind to the revelation of God (Bailey 1983:38-9). This may be one reason why Müntzer had identified the common people with the elect. While the elect could not easily be spotted, Müntzer sought them primarily "among the poor and oppressed, among artisans and peasants" (Blickle 1998:24).

Yet, Müntzer's pendulum, at the outset, oscillated. The "Sermon before the Princes" proved that Müntzer attempted to gain the support of the princes for his revolutionary program (Gritsch 1967:190). When he faced the two princes, John of Mansfeld and Frederick the Wise, at the castle of Allstedt (July 13, 1524), Müntzer tried to convince them through his own allegorical interpretation of the Book of Daniel (Friesen 1986:156). By setting himself up as "the new Daniel," Müntzer appealed to the Saxon authorities his qualification to distinguish false from true revelation and thus suggested them to give him a place of prominence, as Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel his advisor (Bailey 1983:39). The conclusion was that "the godless have no right to live except the elect grant it to them" (Matheson 1988:248), so that "let the princes do their duty" (Bainton 1982:11). Müntzer, in this way, sought to the revolution "from above" (Lindberg 1977:44), despite he saw in the revolution of the peasants the

end of the fifth period, described in the Book of Daniel (Gritsch 1967:190). Yet, it was Müntzer himself who had taken the initiative in this matter. In the same sermon, he threatened that power would be taken from the princes and given back to the common people, which is, the elect, if the princes refused to protest the elect from the godless (Matheson 1988:250).

But our scholars come and –in their godless, fraudulent way –understand Daniel to say that the Antichrist should be destroyed without human hands when it really means that he is intimidated already, like the inhabitants of the Promised Land when the chosen people entered it. Yet as Joshua tells us, he did not spare them the sharp edge of the sword...they did not win the land by the sword, but by the power of God, but the sword was the means used, just as eating and drinking is a means for us to stay alive. Hence, the sword, too, is necessary to eliminate the godless (Rom. 13). To ensure, however, that this now proceeds in a fair and orderly manner, our revered fathers, princes, who with us confess Christ, should carry it out. But if they do not carry it out the sword will be taken from them (Daniel 7), for then they would confess him in words but deny him in deeds (Titus 1) (Matheson 1988:249-50)

According to Müntzer, if a ruler gave cause for fear of the creature instead of making place for fear of God, he had lost all claims to legitimate authority and would lose his power to the people (Matheson 1988:249-50). A government that resisted the Word of God *ipso facto* legitimated the resistance of the common men (Hinrichs 1952:8 quoted by Drummond 1979:66).

When his appeal to the Saxon authorities failed, Müntzer changed his mind to replace Luther, who was in the favour of the princes, as Daniel replaced the unilluminated scribes (Cohn 1961:239). Rather, he decided to become the new Daniel for the common people. Müntzer then began to extend his attack from the priests to worldly rulers –the princes; “the lords do the same as the rest of the godless so that the poor man becomes their enemy. They do not want to do away with the cause of rebellion” (Franz 1968:326-27 quoted by Bailey 1983:42). The increasing theological and political alliance proved how the princes were still too far from God and how easily theology could be abused as a prop for the existing order (Lindberg 1977:44). It thus gave Müntzer conviction that the Kingdom of God on earth could only be established by the destruction of the godless by the elect and the common people were now potentially the elect who would wield the sword for the extermination of the ungodly (Matheson 1988:249-50). The Peasants’ rebellion was, therefore, inevitable, for the princes failed to fulfil their God-given duty and its right was given to the congregation of the elect, the common men (Bailey 1983:42). So, Müntzer thundered that “the rising sought to level all Christendom and to kill all lords opposed to the gospel” (Franz 1968:548 quoted by Blickle 1998:24). This had led him to the point of widening the category of those he called, the godless. At first only the clergy who were obsessed by their false authority. But soon also the major Reformers with Luther, who had claimed to have a monopoly over the interpretation of Holy Scripture. Ultimately the godless included unrepentant political rulers (Scott 1989:87). Thus was created by Müntzer’s identification with the common men; he now became a revolutionary, being-in-the common men.

Müntzer used the Peasants' rebellion as a motivation and rationale for his revolutionary program. His apocalyptic interpretation, based on third-age Joachimist tradition, gave the current event, the Peasants' War, a new character (Bailey 1983:43). It was no longer simply an armed resistance, fired with indignation over the plight of the peasants, but rather "the cataclysmic transformation of the world" from below, including "the necessity of rooting out evil within the secular and religious spheres" (Bailey 1983:43). The final battle had begun, so that Müntzer arose the elect, the common men, to action with the following words;

Dear Brothers: May the true fear of God be with you. How long will you sleep? Why don't you serve God's will? Do you think God has let you down? Oh! How often have I told you that God can reveal himself only to the wholly committed (*gelassen*). Otherwise your excruciating heartache is worthless. You must start all over again with suffering. I tell you, unless you are willing to suffer for God's sake, you will be the devil's martyrs. Pull yourselves together. Do not sag. Be not lazy. Pander no more to perverted knaves, the godless scoundrels. Pitch in. Fight the Lord's war. It is high time.... The bands are coming in from the French, German, and Italian lands. The peasants in the Schwartzland number now 3,000, and there will be more.

If you were utterly committed to God, you would not fear 100,000. So now, on! on! Run down the rascals like dogs. On, on, on. Have no mercy. Give no heed to the whining of the godless. Rally the peasants, the town folk, the miners especially, and other good chaps. We must sleep no longer. Join the dance. On! On! While the iron is hot. Let not your sword grow cold. Smite! *Pinke Panke!* God leads. On! On! God says, "Fear not." Recoil not before the great horde. It is not your war. It is God's. Play the man. The shield of the Lord is about you (Franz 1968:414-15 quoted by Bainton 1982:12-3)

Indeed, Müntzer's apocalyptic revolutionary activity led him to rendezvous with the Peasants' War, which followed the tragic defeat at Frankenhausen in May 1525. A coalition of three of the princes opposed Müntzer and his *Bund*: "Duke George of Albertine Saxony, a rabid Catholic, Philip of Hesse, a belligerent Protestant; and the Elector John of Ernestine Saxony, a moderate" (Bainton 1982:13). They fought and butchered. In the long run, Müntzer's goal in the separation and destruction of the godless failed. But his third-age apocalyptic revolutionary program established important lines of continuity, including some Anabaptists and Münster (Bailey 1983:44). To be sure, in his dialect of inner and outer, Müntzer was first a mystic, but later a revolutionary who integrated it into an apocalyptic framework, putting himself to the point of being-in-the-common men.

#### **3.1.1.4.3 Theology against Luther**

Müntzer's call for the destruction of all secular lordship stood in stark contrast to Luther's for a confirmation of princely authority (Blickle 1998:24). Müntzer saw in Lutheran theology, especially in the theology of the two kingdoms, all-consuming social passivity toward the reality of injustice (Lindberg 1977:44). In fact, Luther in his theology had rendered the political and social conflicts less important than obedience to the will of God and thus allowed unwittingly for the perpetuation of social, political and spiritual injustice by the nobles toward the peasants (Seebass 1980:109). Müntzer battled against

it with theological means. Against the teaching of Luther, he set up his own theology with its three chief components; (1) the teaching of the Spirit as the constant divine revelation, (2) the teaching of the cross as a person's purification through suffering, and (3) the teaching on the sword, consisting in a right of resistance against the godless rulers (Steimetz 1980:135). On these three points ran contrary to Luther's teachings; (1) the teaching of the Scriptures as the sole and definitive source of revelation –*sola Scriptura*, (2) the teaching of justification, *sola fide et gratia* without any human contribution, and (3) teaching of the “pathos of obedience,” namely, suffering obedience since all governments were established by God (Steimetz 1980:136).

To be more specific, Luther's teaching stressed man's passivity –his incapacity to raise himself up, passive reception of grace, and suffering obedience (Steimetz 1980:139). In his prioritizing the Holy Scriptures as the single and complete divine revelation, Luther defined the Christian a justified sinner (*simul justus et peccator*) by faith alone, waiting for the fullness of the kingdom of heaven in Christ's second coming (Vogel 1986:261). This ultimately enabled him to assert the doctrine of two kingdoms. Christians should serve God by obeying both secular and spiritual authority (Steimetz 1995:112-25). Against this, Müntzer developed a theology of the Spirit, or a “theology of *Anfechtung*” (tribulation) (Bornkamm 1926:44:6 quoted by Gritsch 1963:178). He made it clear that Luther's theology, especially the doctrine of justification by faith alone, was an invented doctrine, for “Christ had come to fulfil the law” (Lindberg 1977:43). Since Müntzer saw the Holy Spirit a source of knowledge and principle of transformation, being independent of the letter of Holy Scriptures, it was the Holy Spirit who converted the sinners into God's instrument through the “justification by law” (Gritsch 1967:90). Thus, “the justification of the sinner [was] not achieved solely through faith in what Christ did, *sola fide*, but through the voluntary acceptance of the punishment of the law, *sola lege*” (Gritsch 1963:180).

This contributed to a significant theological basis for Müntzer's way of engaging with the world. As men became inwardly transformed through the suffering and the cross, so must the entire world be outwardly changed by those who experienced the Spirit, namely, the elect (Bailey 1983:40). The elect were called to work with God in order to make the godless aware of God's law (Gritsch 1963:181). This included the possibility of violent revolution against the godless *Obrigkeit* (Goertz 1993:21). The elect would go above and beyond the temporal law when it hindered the work of the Holy Spirit (Gritsch 1967:8). It was their duty to fight against injustices perpetuated by the godless authority and this required an outward war, involving the physical destruction of powers of this world (Goertz 2007:27-8). Müntzer saw, in this light, the Peasants' rebellion a sure sign that the power of the sword was given to the Spirit-filled common people (Friedmann 1957:79). So, he approached this revolution

of the common men in a more defensible way. Indeed Müntzer did not struggle to justify the use of violence to execute God's law and fulfil his will (Steinmetz 1980:139). For, in his theology of *Anfechtung*, without its concomitant revolutionary work in the outer order, neither man's salvation, nor the advent of the Kingdom of God on earth could begin (Bailey 1983:40).

Nonetheless, Müntzer and Luther had something in common. Both started their theology from "a dialectic of the Word of God (Scripture) and the Spirit of God (Revelation)" (Blickle 1992:114). But, theological divergence between the two began to emerge when Müntzer intensified a hermeneutic of Spirit, while Luther of Scripture (Lindberg 1977:38). The former "stressed the subjectivity of a faith experienced through the Spirit," whereas the latter "accentuated the objectivity of a faith transmitted through Scripture" (Blickle 1992:114).<sup>82</sup> Thus, Müntzer saw in Scripture an objective effect; it attested the faith of those who wrote it, but did not constitute Revelation who could transform man (Blickle 1992:114). To him, only when Revelation became a subjective experience could men be transformed (Gritsch 1963:179). Since those who experienced the cross could cleanse himself of the strain of original sin (Lohmann 1931:47 quoted by Friedmann 1957:83), they, then, "became rather Christ-like, filled by the Holy Spirit and thus justified before God" (Blickle 1992:114). This resulted in a plain separatism between the elect and the godless –those who had experienced the cross and the Spirit and those who had not. And it actually released Müntzer to resist against the godless and social injustice in his link between mystical concept of *Anfechtung* and God's work in the outer order (Bailey 1983:40). Müntzer's radical solidarity with those who had endured the most severe *Anfechtung* and those who were saved from spiritual death through the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit could serve as a reminder and an admonition to any church in any age to see the gospel as a divine power, having socio-political implication (Whitford 2001:46-7).

Luther was, in this sense, dramatically different from Müntzer. Although Luther's message and his view had the revolutionary nature –especially in terms of the peasants quest for political and economic rights (Hillerbrand 2007:143-44), he indeed opposed any efforts by the peasants to overturn the social order and rather remained an ardent defender of the *corpus christianum* (Williams 1974:302-303).

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<sup>82</sup> This made Luther and his colleagues so judgmental. They gave suspicious look at the uneasy connection between Bible-reading and the spiritualist heresy. To their eyes, with misuse and overuse by Müntzer and his followers, the healthy balance between the word of God and the Spirit of God was in trouble. To them, more problematic was that by declaring that every person can not only read the word of God for herself/himself, but be a judge of it, the radicals even criticized Luther and the ruling authorities. This perhaps explained one reason why the sixteenth-century Lutherans later turned their emphasis from Scripture toward the catechism, where there was nothing to judge, but only to memorize and repeat. For the traumatic experience of the 1520s had left behind the lesson that when even trained minds had fatally misread the Bible and urged, or encouraged, people to meet the Bible on their own terms (Strauss 1978:116-17).

Since Luther required the support of the nobility to keep his Reformation, he did not lend his overt support to any Spirit-filled mob action, just like what Müntzer had instigated (Hillerbrand 1968:43-4). Luther even portrayed *Schwärmer*, particularly Müntzer, as one of Satan's "fifth column" (Gritsch 1994:19). In his eyes, they were the false brethren who had become agents of Satan, rather than of the Holy Spirit. Thus, their resistance to his gospel proved their truly satanic nature (Gritsch 1994:18). According to Luther, the principal issue in Müntzer's *Schwärmerei* was attributed to his confusion of God's judgment and His law with God's mercy and His gospel (Whitford 2011:76). This confusion of law and gospel even justified the destruction of image and of the Mallerbach chapel by Müntzer's "league of the elect" as the application of the Mosaic Law, which was fulfilled in Christ (Gritsch 1963:181). To Luther, such a claim transformed Christ's gospel into a legalistic mandate which manifested nothing but the most visible work of Satan (Whitford 2011:76). In this light, Müntzer failed to respect the temporal authority that was ordained by God (Dejonge 2017:191). In Luther's theological perspective, this kind of spiritualism had no place, for he saw "the identification of any political program...with the will of God is to subvert both politics and gospel" (Lindberg 1990:691). Thus, Luther's own preoccupation with the work of the devil fed his impatience towards Müntzer and his followers, marked by subjectivist judgments and speculations (Headly 1963).

The conflict between Luther and Müntzer was critical enough to take every opportunity to attack each other. Ironically, Luther condemned Müntzer as a satanic prophet, creating chaos in the *corpus christianum* (Bainton 1950:263), whereas Müntzer denounced Luther as the satanic defender of the *status quo* (Franz 1968:341 quoted by Drummond 1979:64). In his dualistic doctrine of two kingdoms, Luther had divorced the spiritual realm from the secular; God from Caesar (Moltmann 1984:70), and had even encouraged the authorities to quell the revolt of the common men which resulted in killing thousands of them (Luther and Janz 1999:177). Yet, Müntzer had refused to separate the two realms and had given the commoners moral justice, grounded in Scripture (Blickle 1981:93, 188). Luther had trusted the Reformation to the protection of the secular authorities, who began to control the political and the ecclesiastical arenas (Gonzalez 1975:60-1). Müntzer, on the other hand, linked the process of reformation with the destiny of the common men and harnessed the revolutionary power of the people in his intervention in the Peasants' revolt (Drummond 1979:63). When Müntzer called for the destruction of the godless, he did not mean the "ignorant folk" who still denied his message (Scott 1988:561, Stayer 1999:665-66). Rather it meant only the clerical and secular ruling elite of his day, who sought with all their power to preserve the ecclesiastical and social order under which the common men suffered (Goertz 1993:179).

Consequently, the incompatibility of the two men led to an outcome which determined the weal and woe of ruler and subject (Balyor 1993:39). Blood flowed on both sides, but more on the common people's side, less on the side of the princes and their servants (Ozment 1980:284, Lindberg 1996:165). Neither Luther nor Müntzer had actually managed to stop it, despite both tried to convey the conciliatory Christian message –justice, peace, and salvation for both peasants and princes (Kolb 2009:142). Yet, soon this message had been divided into a gospel for the rulers and a gospel for the common people (Edwards 2003:198). The princes didn't want Müntzer to be a new Moses in the peasants' revolt and Luther worked very hard to keep him invalid (Tappert 1967:170). In 1521, Luther increased his attacks on Müntzer and urged the Saxon princes to move against “the restless spirit of Allstedt” (Köstlin 1883:278). This enabled Müntzer to finally break with Luther and relied instead on what he perceived to be a new age, initiated by the peasants' rebellion (Williams 1962:75–6). Müntzer hurled at Luther in his last writing the “malicious raven,” the first messenger from Noah's ark, who did not return with the message of peace, while at the same time portraying himself as the “dove” who properly continued the work and completed it (Gritsch 2006:88). The truth had dawned on Luther, but he had neglected and abandoned it. Thus, Müntzer became the best enemy of Luther, precisely because he began on the ground won by Luther but betrayed by him (Nipperdey 1980:106). Indeed, there was an interesting circular antagonism between the two; “Doctor Liar” rejected the “Satan of Allstedt” and vice-versa. No doubt, “Luther's time was Müntzer's time, the Last Days” (Brady 2009:200). But, Müntzer's theology had actually released him to resist against injustices by the temporal authority, while Luther's theology had led him to a doctrine of the two kingdoms which resulted in a chilling indifference and even offense toward resistance to the injustices of temporal authority (Steinmetz 1995:113-14).

### **3.1.1.5 Conclusion: Müntzer the Radical Reformer as Being-in-the-Retributive Common Men**

The terrible ordeal by the Peasants' War left Müntzer a shameful legend. Müntzer's name became a dirty byword for heretic and *Schwärmer*. No doubt, this legend had been hastily decided by his major opponents, namely, the Wittenberg theologians –Luther, Melancthon and Bullinger who were really allergic to Müntzer's commitment to the naked sword (Rupp 1969:247). So, they disparaged Müntzer's enthusiasm as the devil's<sup>83</sup> and defined his shameful death as God's judgment.<sup>84</sup> Yet, this dominant defamatory portrait of Müntzer has been challenged. Ironically, it is the widespread and one-sided

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<sup>83</sup> “...whoever has seen Müntzer may say that he has seen the devil himself in his greatest wrath...” (quoted by Gritsch 1988:77).

<sup>84</sup> “...since Thomas has failed, it is quite clear that he used God's name but spoke and acted in the name of the devil...” (quoted by Friesen 1988:59-80).

criticism which calls for a more critical assessment for the historiography of Müntzer. Then this includes the necessity of positing a parallel consideration of Müntzer from the perspective of the common people.

First, Müntzer was anti-clerical and mystical. In fact, no other reformers came nearer to contact with the late medieval German mystics than Müntzer (Rupp 1969:247, Friesen 1988: 63, Gritsch 2006:17). It was indeed Müntzer's anti-clerical and mystical conviction that led to the dialectic of the damned priest and the elect layman; of internal and external order (Goertz 1982:29-44). For Müntzer, the restoration of the inner order –the unity of God and layman –was indispensable to the transformation of the outer order (Packull 1977:31-2). Since Müntzer saw the outer order as a sinful structure of the world, corrupted by the damned priest, this resulted in a successful rendezvous for his theology and revolution (Goertz 1990:30). Here, Müntzer's anti-clericalism and mysticism were balanced by his apocalyptic vision, (Stayer 1976:74). By integrating mystical-religious elements into an apocalyptic framework, Müntzer had developed his social and political theology (Bailey 1983:43). Taking a cue from the Joachite interpretation of history, Müntzer was convinced that a new age was about to dawn (Friesen 1973:13-4). Despite the world pointed forward to the coming conflict between the godless and the elect, the former must be rooted out by the later (Matheson 1990:87, Myers 1992:162). When the princes, or if they would not do it, the common people, must clash the present ungodly politico-religious order, so that the kingdom of this world would be given to God's elect for all time (Matheson 1988:244, 246).

Müntzer's Christian League of the Elect was, in this sense, no other than an effective instrument to make his apocalyptic dream come true. Not only did identify himself with a new Daniel, an apocalyptic figure, Müntzer also made it plain to his followers that theirs was "a transcendent battle in the name of God, a holy war against the reprobate and obdurate" (Scott 1989:154). Despite his position changed or developed over time, Müntzer had finally equated the elect with "the common folk, the poor, and the materially oppressed" (Scott 1989:168). Müntzer's call for rule by, of and for the elect "tapped a ready vein of [the common people]" who had suffered a type of social *Anfechtung* (Scott 1983:213). It thus beat the drum for the common people's demand for a better world (Goertz 1993:170). Both – Müntzer and the common people –recognized that this demand could be achieved only after a revolutionary overthrow of the existing socio-economic structure (Goertz 1993:161). Yet, Müntzer was very cautious about sanctification of the elect. Since he recognized that "Christians are not so many that they can get together in mobs" (Rupp 1969:299), Müntzer initially allowed into his league both the pious and the evil-doer; the sinned-against and the sinner. This urged him to keep the "ungodly"

peasants in check and thus to avoid the same trap as the princes had fallen (Bailey 1983:42). Indeed, Müntzer's League of the Elect was good enough to be the spearhead, but not strong enough to be a saviour of the whole peasant army. The peasants were completely destroyed by the advanced princely army at Frankenhausen in 1525 (Friesen 1990:261). Müntzer attributed his downfall to his misplaced faith in the peasants, who had not been properly prepared to act as God's agents (Bailey 1983:42-3). Contrary to his expectation to the peasants, "they sought only their own interests and the divine truth was defeated as a result" (Matheson 1988:160). At any rate, Müntzer's concept of elect provided the whole dynamic of his leagues, his apocalyptic, and his participation in the peasants' struggle.

Second, Müntzer never ceased to be spiritual. The Spirit was of catastrophic importance for Müntzer (Lindberg 1977:44). To him, it was the Spirit, who would make true baptism; who would teach the Elect faith with the fear of God; and who would begin the divine work at every state in salvation (Rupp 1969:267-72). This resulted in Müntzer's persistent concern to the timeless power of the Holy Spirit in, through, and for all Christians (Friesen 1973:9, Gritsch 1963:178-79). Thus, Müntzer's spiritualism served as litmus test to separate the elect from the godless. True believers must always be overshadowed by the Spirit before they became the League of the Elect as the bearers of inner turmoil (*Anfechtung*) (Matheson 1988:290). This even made Müntzer's spiritualism highly dynamic. To become the elect meant, according to Müntzer, to become the agent of the Spirit who began to undertake the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God (Gritsch 1963:188). It was, therefore, this spiritualism that led Müntzer, like Elijah, to the prophetic mission (Matheson 1988:250, 300) and eventually to the Peasants' revolt under the banner of the sword of Gideon to herald the age of the Spirit (Matheson 1988:149).

In Müntzer, the spiritual hermeneutics ruled his ideas and praxis. Since the Spirit defined the Word, not *vice versa* (Snyder 1995:161), Müntzer saw the Scripture without the Spirit the dead word of God (Gritsch 1988:61). In this primacy of the Spirit over Scripture, Müntzer threw his gauntlet to Luther. Undoubtedly Müntzer's *Solo Spiritu* (by Spirit alone) went directly against Luther's *Sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone) (Irwin 1972:71). Müntzer criticized Luther and the Wittenberg theologians as false scribes who had "stolen the Scripture" (Matheson 1988:235, 363). By divorcing the Scripture from the Spirit, Müntzer added, the official Reformers had neutralized the power of the cross as well as the power of the revelation (Matheson 1988:235-36, Packull 1977:29). It was clear for Müntzer that the Scripture testified the revelation –dreams and visions –of God's Spirit as the living Word, not the dead letter (Williams 1957:62). The Spirit spoke here and now and the Scripture became alive only in the Spirit (Matheson 1988:274). Thus, the main focus of Müntzer spiritual hermeneutic became evident.

Müntzer had the Spirit, Luther did not, so that true believers must join Müntzer in battle on the Lord's side (Williams 1957:47).

Yet, Müntzer's spiritualism would run in parallel with his full of knowledge about the Scripture (Rowland 1988:97, Gritsch 1963:176). Despite his primacy of the Spirit over the Scripture, Müntzer was well aware of the healthy tension between the Spirit and the Scripture (Rupp 1966:476). He, in this way, adopted a new hermeneutic, an interpretation of the works of the Spirit as a verification level, appropriated only as long as they did not contradict the Word of God in Scripture (Goertz 1967:90-1, Nipperdey 1963:150 quoted by Lindberg 1976:366). Actually, such a balanced position made Müntzer the fully Spiritualist and the fully Biblicist (Bailey 1983:33). Interesting was that this reunification of Spirit and Scripture had played a major role in shaping his radical attitude towards both the major Reformers and the secular authorities (Kolb 1978:119-22). Deeply anchored by the Spirit-Scripture interplay, Müntzer rejected infant baptism as a groundless relapse of the Old Church (without the Scripture) (Stayer 1981:102), while at the same time espousing the Peasants' War as a ground-breaking progress to the advent of New Church (with the Spirit), the "kairos" (Lindberg 1976:369). In this light, Müntzer especially came to identify the Peasants' revolt with the physical embodiment of dialectic of the external Word and the internal Holy Spirit, namely, the harmony of the Spirit with the Scripture (Gritsch 1963:180). "Rulers usurped the place of God in their subjects' hearts; landlords exploited their peasants," so that the outer order had to be transformed by the common people, "spiritually humbled and yet socially and politically aroused by oppression" (Goertz 1967:143-44 quoted by Stayer 1969:149). This striving for healthy equilibrium turned Müntzer into a spiritualist with the hammer in the common people, who "were usually quicker to respond to God's revelation" (Franz 1968:252 quoted by Bailey 1983:40). Indeed, bearing on his body the marks of the Spirit, Müntzer had marshaled the Elect, the common people, to usher in a new age, epitomized by a sheer integration of Spirit and Scripture.

Third, Müntzer appeared as "a destroyer of the godless," being-in-the-retributive-common people (Friesen 1990:271). There was coherence about Müntzer's belief in the elect. In principle, the elect for Müntzer were not a small band of the chosen saints, but the whole community of Christ, being connected with suffering (Matheson 1988:260). Against the easy and sentimental promises of the major Reformers, Müntzer's consistent stress was on the solidarity of the elect and their conformity to Christ in the fellowship of his suffering (Scott 1989:35). Indeed, Müntzer was not merely an armchair critic; "not reading and speculating, but living, dying and being damned" made him an angry young

man (Rupp 1969:304). Especially Müntzer's first-hand experience of the plight of the peasants under the feudal system had widened his definition of the elect (Bainton 1982:12). This made him to embrace not only the volunteers of Christ's suffering, but also the victims of the secular lords, who lost their opportunity to conform to the suffering Lord (Lindberg 1976:370). This explained why Müntzer's theology of suffering, of the Cross, and of the bitter Christ, became homage to the common people. Since Müntzer began to identify the elect with the downtrodden of this earth, the materially as well as spiritually poor and the victims of the powerful (Bailey 1983:42, Baylor 1989:51), the defense of the common people soon was inseparable from the defense of the Gospel (Goertz 1993:170).

Yet, "Müntzer never spoke of force, nor did he call for a show of force, but only of counterforce" (Goertz 1976:106). Indeed, his aggressive actions in the Peasants' revolt were defensive in nature and "rhetorical and hyperbolic" in particular (Josipovic and McNiel 1996:446). Müntzer was not attributing the cause of the Peasants' War neither to his theology nor to the demands of the suffering peasants (Goertz 1976:106). He rather saw it only in the "antisocial, exploitative behaviour of the ungodly rulers" (Goertz 1976:106). Now God's command was abused by the rulers and this kind of abuse was the cause of the rebellion (Franz 1968:326-27 quoted by Bailey 1983:42). This notion enabled Müntzer to extend his violent aim only to the "ungodly rulers" responsible for his and his followers' suffering (Josipovic and McNiel 1996:446). To Müntzer, "[i]t is clear that the ungodly rulers themselves violate the peace of the country and beat and punish the people on account of the Gospel and our princes have not a word to say against it" (Franz 1968:421 quoted by Goertz 1976:106). "Force that was employed in this situation...was counterforce and to Müntzer it seemed to be ethically required. He did not decide lightly to issue the call for counterforce. He tried to form an alliance with the princes who favoured the Gospel or who refused to persecute people for their faith, to keep "the ungodly rulers" in check and thereby to avoid a bloody insurrection, while there was still time," despite "the transfer of ruler-ship to the common people would eventually come to pass" (Goertz 1976:107). This did resist one-sided interpretation of Müntzer's violent participation in the Peasants' War. There was an urgent need to arise the common people as an instrument of self-defence, no longer based on civil obligations and allegiance, but on a new religious covenant with suffering God (Scott 1989:49). This was the power of suffering against the suffering of the power and Müntzer strove to harness the suffering peasants to the suffering Elect as "a necessary, unavoidable counterforce" (Goertz 1976:108).

To be summarized, Thomas Müntzer was the prototype and outstanding figure of the radical Reformation, whose responses to him oscillated between "fascination and repulsion" (Goertz 1993:

xiii). His name, “to the little band of the poor and needy, . . . has the sweet savor of life, while to those who pursue the pleasures of the flesh it is a gruesome abomination presaging their speedy downfall” (Matheson 1988:68). Indeed, Müntzer was neither a Lutheran, a Zwinglian nor an Anabaptist. Taking a cue from revolutionary apocalypticism and mystical-spiritualist view, Müntzer expected the immediate coming of God’s Kingdom on earth, not in a passive way, but through the active revolutionary assistance of the suffering people as God’s chosen elect. To him, it was predestined –by following Christ in the Cross and suffering, by the repudiation of all worldly possessions and all human passions –to destroy and to overcome the worldly order. Müntzer’s intentions were not aimed at any reform of existing conditions, or the restitution of past conditions, but at complete revolution in order to bring about the immediate rule of God. This was the establishment of Christian freedom and equality on earth, which was to be achieved not within the framework of the old governmental and social order, but only through its revolutionary overthrow (Scott 1993:206). In Müntzer’s view, man could “become righteous” (*Gerechtmachung*) rather than merely be “accounted righteous” (*Rechtfertigung*), so could be the church and society (Gritsch 1963:180-81). The Peasants’ War acted as catalyst for the formation and the radical development of his theology for appealing to the rural peasants and urban burghers, namely, the common people as the driving power of revolutionary change. In this way, Müntzer could equate their reforming intentions with the retributive common men.

Yet a real portrayal of Müntzer appeared at the intersection of various characteristics of anticlerical, mystical and spiritual. As each of a single picture maximized Müntzer’s distinct elements through an incongruous and seemingly self-contradictory effect, these three, at least, different features, ironically enough, made his profile coherent in a collision with one another. When such plural characters intersected, they indeed came together with power. A popularized and familiar image of Müntzer then transformed into a new set of oxymoron, which embraced positive tensions between his polarity and coherence; glory and suffering; and success and failure in retributive justice against claims and prejudices of the ungodly rulers. Thus was born of the revolutionary Müntzer being-in-the-retributive-common people.

### **3.1.2 HANS HUT (1490-1527)**

#### **3.1.2.1 Biographical Sketch**

Hans Hut, known as evangelist and founder of Anabaptism in South, has remained a controversial figure (Stayer 1965:181). Despite there is no detailed picture of his life, it seems certain that Hans Hut was a self-taught man rather than an educated man (Stayer 1965:181). His concern was practically the whole Christian social order rather than the sinner’s standing before God raised theologically by the

monks and professors at Wittenberg (Seebass 1982:54). From it came to Hut's strong adherence to Thomas Müntzer who was diametrically opposed to theology of Luther and major Reformers (Klassen 1959:267-304). As a book peddler, Hut had supervised the publication of a major pamphlet, the *Manifest Expose of False Faith*, by Müntzer in 1524 (Brandt 1933:243 quoted by Klassen 1959:280).<sup>85</sup> This may imply that Hut had met with Müntzer on several occasions and formed a special friendship with him (Seebass 1972:168 quoted by Packull 1975:58). Thus, Hut was willing to refuse baptism for the last of his three children and to accept the risk of exile from his native village Bibra when Müntzer (and Karlstadt) had stigmatized pedobaptism (infant baptism) as a spineless character of Christianity (Klassen 1959:280). Thereafter, Hut became a planetary vagabond, wandering from Wittenberg to Erfurt and Nuremberg (Rupp 1969:333).

In the spring of 1525 Hut found himself in the town of Frankenhausen, where a peasant revolt was taking shape under Müntzer's leadership (Klassen 1959:178-79). There Hut was taken captive, possibly because of his books, which he had bought in Luther's city (Klassen 1959:268), but released at the command of Müntzer, his old friend (Packull 1975:59). From the fact that Hut's name appeared on the list of Müntzer's covenanters, it is possible that he witnessed the beginnings of the peasants uprising in Thuringia (Williams 1962:78-9, Seebass 1972:168 quoted by Packull 1975:58). At any rate, Hut was a "sympathetic spectator" of Müntzer's fiery sermon on the eve of the great battle with the prince forces (Franz 1963:523 quoted by Friesen 1974:178) and participated personally in the Frankenhausen debacle, in which Müntzer identified it with the last great conflict between the godly and ungodly before the return of Christ (Matheson 1988:148-49). Hut managed to escape alive from the disastrous holocaust (Klassen 1959:179).

It seemed evident that the person and message of Müntzer remained decisive for Hut even after the debacle of Frankenhausen (Klassen 1959:179, Packull 1975:59). At the end of May 1525, Hut appeared at Bibra, his home town, and at the request of Jörg Haug of Juchsen, an elected pastor by the peasant, he delivered a sermon on May 30, 1525 (Seebass 1972:105-11 quoted by Packull 1975:59). There his sermon was not only religious in nature but also political (Klassen 1959:179). Hut, as a kindred spirit with Müntzer, incited the defeated peasants to rise up again against the rulers and to kill them, while the sword was still in their hand (Loserth 1893:130-31 quoted by Stayer 1965:182). Echoing the

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<sup>85</sup> In late September 1524, Thomas Müntzer stopped in the little town of Bibra and there he spent a night and a day in the house of Hans Hut to whom he delivered for his publication. This visit was later recounted by Hut during his interrogation in Augsburg. Hut, however, insisted to his judges that he had no specific business with Müntzer during this visit (Ozment 1973:98).

lamentation of Müntzer, Hut also argued persuasively that God had destroyed the peasants because they had not been the pure, but sought their own in place of God's honour (Meyer 1874:241-42 quoted by Klaassen 1981:273).<sup>86</sup> While the peasants' revolt failed, Hut did not appear deterred. Rather he had applied the current event to his own sense of new mission. From the bodies of Müntzer and Pfeiffer, which had not been buried but put on spikes, Hut began to identify them with the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-9, whose bodies were to lie unburied for three and a half days (Seebass 1972:180-81, 190 quoted by Packull 1975:60). Instead of merely disregarding it as a failure, Hut redefined this great debacle as a sign of another three and one-half years of tribulation and the testing for the faithful before the Second Coming (Meyer 1874:239 quoted by Stayer 1972:153). This gave the Peasants' War a new momentum; it was not the end but the beginning of the apocalyptic tribulation of three and one-half years (Stayer 1972:153). In Hut's new schemata, the end was then to be newly expected for Pentecost 1528 (Deppermann 1987:175-76). Thus would begin again the judgement on the ungodly for the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth (Williams 1962:163).

But who would fill the role of the godly? Hut found the answer to this question in the Anabaptist group in which he had joined through Hans Denck (Waite 1990:24). Hut met Hans Denck (1495-1527), another Müntzer's covenanter, in Augsburg on the Day of Pentecost 1526 and there he was baptized himself by Denck (Meyer 1874:223, 245 quoted by Klassen 1957:180). From it emerged a distinctive picture of Hut who formed the dynamic link between the revolutionary Müntzer and the reactionary Denck (Packull 1973:327-38, Klassen 1959:171-205). It, however, does not mean that Hut had immediately converted from the social revolutionary peasant-Saul to the religious, peaceful Anabaptist-Paul (Seebass 1974:161 quoted by Packull 1977);<sup>87</sup> "He was baptized but not converted, so to speak" (Friesen 1984:155). Rather Hut, while being remained as a faithful disciple of Müntzer, found in the Anabaptists the separatist elect who would vindicate the defeat of the peasants, seeking to inspire hope through apocalyptic end-time forecast (Stayer 2007:85). So the adult baptism became totally integrated into Hut's apocalyptic speculations as a sign of the sealed between God and man (Seebass 1974:158 quoted by Packull 1977). At any rate, this gave Hut's mission a vibrant impulse. It did not permit him to remain for long in one place. Hut, indeed, became the major south German

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<sup>86</sup> The report conveys that Müntzer had even scolded the common people, criticizing their selfish ambitions, and in so doing, reminded them of the deeper roots of his "righteous uprising" (Matheson 1988:160, 341).

<sup>87</sup> In fact, many Anabaptist scholars, who have little sympathy for Müntzer, have interpreted Hut's baptism by Denck as a regenerative experience. From then onward, according to them, Hut's inheritance from Müntzer had transmitted to the Swiss Brethren and thereby his teachings were the noblest and most conciliatory (Bender 1953:16). This view, however, has gained little support due to its exclusive focus on Hut's political ethic. For the critical view on this interpretation, see especially Packull (1977:63-4).

Anabaptist missionary (Kiwiet 1957:227-59). In the next year and a half Hut had constantly been on the move from his home territory in Franconia through Austria and as far as Moravia (Klassen 1959:179-80).<sup>88</sup> Everywhere he went, Hut dispensed adult baptism to seal the faithful remnant, namely, the apocalyptic assembling of elect (Seebass 1974:158 quoted by Packull 1977). From onwards, Hut saw himself as the man of Daniel (12:6) and Ezekiel (9:2-5) (Meyer 1874:21 quoted by Packull 1975:61), whose duty was to mark as many as possible of the 144,000 elect with the sign of the cross on the forehead in the approaching judgement, as the opposite of the sign of the beast on the forehead of unbelievers (Packull 1975:61).

He took two fingers, dipped them in water, and made the sign of the cross on his forehead. Whoever does not have this cross will find God sending His angel who will strike him dead. And all who are unbaptized will be slain by the angel (Armour 1966:87)

Restless and secretive activities then ensued. In Franconia, Hut had particularly appealed to fugitive veterans of the peasant rebellion, who longed for the day of vengeance (Seebass 1974:140-56 quoted by Stayer 1978:62). But, Hut had told them to put up their swords in their sheath until the final tribulations began. “A Christian may certainly have a sword, but he must keep it sheathed until God tells him to draw it” (Meyer 1874:242 quoted by Klassen 1959:204). Before the Day of the Lord, according to Hut, the Turk would invade the land to annihilate the ungodly (Meyer 1874:367 quoted by Packull 1975:60) and the remnant of them –princes and priests –shall be destroyed by the little band of Anabaptist, the special Christian elect (Wappler 1913:231 quoted by Stayer 1965:185). Echoing Müntzer’s most bloodthirsty rhetoric (Packull 1977:35-117), Hut, in this way, could provide the veterans of the peasants’ uprising a rationale for the distress and suffering of the present (Seebass 1982:57). Suffering had to be endured for some time yet in awaiting the vengeance of the godly upon the ungodly. This made Hut an erstwhile disciple of Müntzer rather than an Anabaptist (Friesen 1984:155). Indeed, Hut’s identity stood closer to patient revolution/Müntzerism than peaceful Anabaptism (Ozment 1973:101). To be sure, Hut’s brand of Anabaptism signified him nothing but a patient revolutionary as “Müntzer’s Erbe” (Packull 1976:64).

This explains why Hut remained in the eyes of important Anabaptist leadership an intruder despite his conversion into Anabaptism under Denck (Kiwiet 1958:25). The theologically trained Balthasar Hubmaier, for example, wanted no part of Hut’s end-time fantasies (Stayer 1965:189).<sup>89</sup> This resulted

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<sup>88</sup> During this period, an apocalyptic expectation had remained a live option for those who continued to hope for the reform of society, despite it had increasingly been abandoned by the majority of Hut’s followers in Austria and Moravia (Snyder 1995:201).

<sup>89</sup> Gottfried Seebass considers this event as “the first head-on collision between a spiritualistic, apocalyptic Anabaptism dependent on Müntzer and a humanistic, Biblicist Swiss Anabaptism, even though the latter was represented in the form

in the sharp confrontation between the two and culminated in the so-called Nikolsburg debate of May, 1527 (Seebass 1972:279 quoted by Packull 1975:59). Hubmaier's attempt to create a magisterial Anabaptism from above (Zieglschmid 1943:50 quoted by Rothkegel 2007:170), by securing places for the learned and the powerful, could not stand together with Hut's communitarian idea which encouraged commoners to sell temporal goods in view of Christ's return (Balint 2014:140-41).<sup>90</sup> Leonard of Liechtenstein, the local prince, called for a disputation between Hubmaier and Hut which, when it occurred, was focused primarily on Hut's apocalyptic interpretation of Scripture (Rupp 1969:333, Seebass 1972:257-59 quoted by Packull 1975:59). In the long run, the conflict between the two leaderships ended with Hut's temporary imprisonment by Hubmaier's noble patron, who supported his interpretation of the gospel (Williams 1962:225-26).<sup>91</sup> Only by flight Hut was able to escape a threatened deportation (Klassen 1964:52). This charge, however, continued to plague Hut as a scarlet letter.

A major meeting of Anabaptist leaders of various backgrounds held in Augsburg in the summer of 1527 (Klassen 1959:184). This so-called "martyrs' synod" –since many of those present shortly thereafter fell to the sword of the executioners –had finally singled out Hut as an outsider of the mainline Anabaptism (Williams 1962:177-78, Stayer 1965:187). This enabled Hut to save his apocalyptic predictions as a sort of esoteric teaching, only to be shared with selected followers in private (Müller 1938:12, quoted by Clasen 1972:163). At these meetings, Hut seemed to break with

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developed by Hubmaier. The subject of the debate was not political ethic but Hut's eschatology" (Seebass 1972:279, 257-59 quoted by Packull 1975:59). Hubmaier feared that Hut's apocalyptic expectations would offend the magistracy so as to lead to the demise of his successful establishment of Anabaptist reformation in Nikolsburg. Indeed, Hut's message of apocalyptic violence and community of goods had created discord with the Anabaptist community in Moravia, which had already been built by Balthasar Hubmaier, who led the rebellion of Waldshut against the Habsburg during the Peasants' War. Hubmaier found that his new religious establishment in Nikolsburg, Moravia was threatened by large numbers of property-less Anabaptist refugees from all parts of south Germany and Switzerland. They rallied around the travelling missionary Hans Hut who visited Nikolsburg as the staunch advocate of the chiliastic ideas and the community of goods. Hubmaier, under these present circumstances, retorted that his baptism was the very opposite of Hut's baptism. Furthermore, he complained that the two were as different "as heaven and hell, Orient and Occident, Christ and Belial" (Packull 1977:99-106). Nonetheless, Hut's kind of Anabaptism prevailed there (Stayer 1995:261).

<sup>90</sup> According to the testimony of one of Hut's followers, it was believed that Nikolsburg was to be one of the cities where the elect were to gather together for the unfolding of the eschatological events (Schornbaum 1934:212 quoted by Rothkegel 2007:179).

<sup>91</sup> In the court records of November 4, 1527, Hut recalled the following theses, which Hubmaier had composed for the debate of Hut's no fewer than 52 heretical teachings that; (1) Christ was not God's son; (2) Christ was merely a prophet; (3) Mary had more sons (after Christ); (4) the angels should have become man with Christ; (5) when a man is possessed by a good angel he can do only good, and when possessed by a bad angel only evil; (6) Hut and his followers put stock in vision and dreams; (7) Hut and his followers maintain a specific time for the last day; (8) with Scripture one receives lies as well as the truth; (9) Christians wish to rule the world; (10) no prince or power in this world has accepted or recognized the truth; and (11) power should be taken from the government and given to Christians (Meyer 1874:232 quoted by Friedmann 1967:393). Hut, however, countered that only two of these propositions, which is, (6) and (8), accurately represented his teachings. Hut twice maintained that Hubmaier acted "from anger and envy" (Williams 1962:284-85).

other Anabaptist leadership so as to stand all on his own (Klassen 1959:283). He rejected both the “Sermon on the Mount ethic” (Seebass 1972:512-25 quoted by Packull 1975:62) and the “Schleitheim Articles,” as the outright manifesto of the Swiss Brethren (Yoder 1972:35-47 quoted by Stayer 1996:113).<sup>92</sup> Since Hut, from the beginning, had treated the end-time expectation as secret doctrines reserved only for an initiated few, he could not set aside it for those who eagerly wished to hear it (Seebass 1982:59, Stayer 1972:157). In fact, Hut’s eschatology was by nature a secret teaching not revealed to everyone (Meyer 1874:239 quoted by Stayer 1965:187).

A few weeks later Hut was arrested in Augsburg (Klassen 1959:185). The trial, with tortures, lasted several months. For the Augsburg authority, Hut’s connection to Müntzer and the peasants as well as his expectation of judgement upon the present order (*Obrigkeit*) was enough to call for his execution and the burning of his body (Stayer 1965:187). The sentence was complete in September 1527 in spite of Hut’s attempt to escape by premature death (Klassen 1959:175). The reports, however, conflicted on the cause of Hut’s death. Hut’s accusers spoke very unfavourably of his last moment. Hut had a premonition of his miserable death and decided to a violent escape by setting fire to the straw in his cell, but this last-ditch attempt rather brought him a terrible death by asphyxiation (Meyer 1874:253 quoted by Klassen 1959:185). But, according to Hut’s son, his father, when being released from the torture room, had almost been dead. This comatose condition, then, prevented him escaping from a fire, accidentally set by a candle left by the guard in his cell (Wolkan 1923:47 quoted by Klassen 1959:185). At any rate, Hut perished without honour (Williams 1962:179). The trial made a deep abhorrence of Hut’s eschaton and the court pronounced sentence on Hut’s corpse. His dead body was then condemned to be burned at the stake the following day (Loserth and Friedmann 1956:849 quoted by Estep 1975:119).

### **3.1.2.2 Theological Perspective**

#### **3.1.2.2.1 Gospel of All Creatures**

Hut’s theology was shared across boundaries between Müntzer and Anabaptism. For one aspect, Hut, like Müntzer, was more likely to understand the scripture through the lens of mysticism (Goertz 2008:588-96). He actually saw theological axiom in the *unio mystica*, namely, mystical reunion between man and God (Klaassen 1981:89-90). Characteristic was then the emphasis on God’s grace through an abyss of the soul, the necessity of suffering, the reception of a living Spirit in all believers,

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<sup>92</sup> Hut, through his contact with Jacob Groß, an Anabaptist from Waldshut, had become acquainted with Schleithem’s separatist ordinance concerning oaths and had rejected it. Hut had argued then that “this [oaths] was not contrary to God, nor was it forbidden” (Meyer 1874: 229, 231 quoted by Snyder 1984:97).

and a preaching about the imminent end-times (Seebass 1972:512-15 quoted by Packull 1975:62). This “less emphasis on sin and greater emphasis on becoming like Christ through suffering” (Buschart 2006:63) made Hut’s theology as “a cruder version of Müntzer’s basic assumptions” (Seebass 1982:57). Since Müntzer’s mystical approach to suffering had obviously become very meaningful to Hut, the necessity of suffering was once again taken up by his formulation of the “Gospel of All Creatures” (Packull 1975:62).

In order to extend this exposition, Hut introduced the concept of *Ordnung Gottes*, “the Order of God”; “as man rules over the creatures, so God reigns over man” (Seebass 1972:435 quoted by Packull 1975:63). Echoing Müntzer’s mystical conception of *yieldedness* (*Gelassenheit*),<sup>93</sup> Hut began to reformulate his theology of the Gospel of All Creatures. This instructed agriculturalists and craftsmen that just as they used plants and animals to fulfil the will of man, so God used human beings to fulfil his divine purpose (Liechty 1994:63). “By yielding themselves fully to God, suffering Christians ‘complete the suffering of Christ’ and fulfil his redemptive mission” (Stayer 2007:86). According to Hut, God had revealed in all creation the fundamental *gospel* that lower orders of creation must *suffer* the will of the higher orders of creation. Just as animals must suffer at the hands of human beings, so also human beings must be subject to, and suffer, at the hands of God (Klaassen 1981:49). Hut wrote that “no one can come to blessedness other than through the suffering and grief which God works in him, just as all of Scripture, and every creature also, show nothing but the suffering Christ in all his member” (Müller 1938:3:17 quoted by Gregory 2007:472). “Thus, the order of God built into nature illustrated and demonstrated the principle of suffering as the redemptive process. For Hut, therefore, the works of creation not only testified to the majesty of the Creator in the traditional sense but also revealed his redemptive activity” (Seebass 1972:435 quoted by Packull 1975:63). No doubt, this call to accept the suffering was thoroughly Müntzerian (Liechty 1994:63).

The influence of Müntzer even made Hut more focused on the passion of Christ than on the *nova lex Christi* (new law of Christ) (Packull 1977:68). To Hut, the suffering of Christ was, like Müntzer, the prototype of human suffering (Seebass 1972:516 quoted by Packull 1975:62). Indeed suffering itself

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<sup>93</sup> Hut’s teaching of “yieldedness,” to a large degree, seemed to extend Müntzer’s criticism of the current social and economic order. In his major writing, “On the Mystery of Baptism,” Hut attacked the mainstream Reformers’ conservative affirmation of temporal wealth and status with a rhetorical question; “Everybody says each of us should stay in his vocation. If this is so, why didn’t Peter remain a fisherman, Matthew a tax collector –and why did Christ tell the rich young man to sell what he had and give to the poor?... Oh, Zacheus, why did you give up your property so frivolously; according to our preachers you could have kept it and still been a good Christian!” (Stayer 1991:115, Rupp 1969:392)

was “the medium and the justice” through which justification was obtained (Packull 1977:75).<sup>94</sup> He, therefore, saw true righteousness as something attainable only in the experience of the bitter Christ,<sup>95</sup> only those who had experienced the suffering Son became partakers of the Spirit. This made it possible for Hut to regard Christ’s suffering not as the vicarious but as the example of faith (Seebass 1972:516 quoted by Packull 1975:62). It was Hut’s belief then that Christ’s conception, birth, passion, and resurrection, were to be repeated in every true followers of Jesus (Packull 1977:68). From this vantage point, Hut could call the believer’s suffering as Christ’s suffering, and Christ’s merit as the believer’s merit.

Everything that such persons suffer is all called Christ’s suffering and not ours, because we are in Christ one body in many members, united and allied in the bond of love. Wherefore...Christ accepts such persons as His own body...because Christ’s suffering must be fulfilled in every member...For just as Christ, the lamb, has been slain from the beginning of the world, so also is He still crucified until the end of the world, that the body of Christ be perfected according to the length, width, depth and height in the lover of Christ (Packull 1977:75)

Yet, for the other aspect, this Gospel of All Creatures was a “signature notion of Hut’s Anabaptism,” which was solely distinctive to himself (Mecenseffy 1980:152-53, Stayer 2007:86). Hut, in a sense, placed it on a par with the content of Scripture (Liechty 1994:71). To Hut, the Scripture repeated the message of the Gospel of All Creatures, first by the law and ceremonies through Moses in the Old Testament and then by suffering and the cross in the New Testament (Seebass 1972:47 quoted by Packull 1975:63). Both, in this light, contained the same Gospel. From it distinguished Hut from the Swiss Brethren who maintained the difference between Old and New Testament (Seebass 1972:453 quoted by Packull 1975:63). This even enabled Hut to postulate the so-called Trinitarian witness, namely, “the Gospel of All Creatures as the witness of the Father, the Scriptures the witness of the Son, and the exemplary lives of Christians [as] the witness of the Spirit” (Seebass 1972:459 quoted by Packull 1975:63). Furthermore, by permitting dreams and visions as a mode of special revelation, Hut began to set himself apart from the major Reformers (Seebass 1972:430-31 quoted by Packull 1975:64). Furthermore, Hut’s emphasis on the mystical experience of the cross did not harmonize with Luther’s teachings on justification (Seebass 1972:465-66 quoted by Packull 1975:62). For Hut saw suffering itself as the process of justification. The overall framework of Hut’s system, therefore, did not permit predestinarianism, a logical prerequisite for Luther’s *iustitia passiva* (the passive righteousness) and *sola gratia* (by grace alone) (Seebass 1972:499-50 quoted by Packull 1975:62). Rather Hut, like Müntzer, minimized the effect of original sin (Packull 1975:64) and subscribed to the principle of

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<sup>94</sup> “Suffering is the medium on account of which the Lord justifies His own. This happens through penitence and bitterness...Therefore I say...there is no other way, we must step into the footpath of Christ” (quoted by Packull 1977:75).

<sup>95</sup> “...whoever does not want to follow these footsteps and this way, and has not carried the cross of Christ, or does not want to carry it, he does not have or recognize the Son, and whoever has not the Son, he does not have or recognize the Father, and can also not be illuminated through the goodness of the Holy Spirit” (quoted by Packull 1977:68).

*cooperatio*, the interplay between divine grace and human will, with regard to salvation (Packull 1976:76).

All in all, to Hut's eyes, the entire Bible declared nothing but the Gospel of All Creatures (Müller 1938:95 quoted by Finger 2004:263) and it could be clearer to illiterate the peasants than the scholars (Liechty 1994:67-72). Since the peasants, from their daily activities, knew well that how animals and plants must suffer to fulfil human purpose, they should attain their destiny by letting God prepare themselves to fulfil his divine purpose (Finger 2004:263). Thus, Hut called it dying and rising with Christ and even identified it with Christ crucified in all his members (Baylor 1991:158). This was, in a sense, reminiscent of Hut under the Swiss Brethren whose emphasis was on their discipleship; each individual had to take up the suffering cross in conformity with Christ (Bender 1944:415). Yet, it was unable to circumvent the great Müntzer totally (Rupp 1960-61). To be sure, Hut under Anabaptism was an insignificant figure beside Hut under Müntzer (Stayer 1965:185). The suffering theme in Hut's Gospel of All Creatures rather proved that Hut was a student of Müntzer as a man of violence (Seebass 1972:512-15 quoted by Packull 1975:62).

### **3.1.2.2 The Doctrine of the Sword**

Hut's teachings, especially his doctrine of the sword, cannot be said without considering his early association with Thomas Müntzer. Hut was actually Müntzer's comrade-in-arms (Loserth 1893:130-31 quoted by Stayer 1965:182). From Müntzer's exile from Mülhausen in 1524 to his last battle at Frankenhausen in 1525, Hut had been in Müntzer's Eternal League (Packull 1975:59). All implied then that Hut must be deeply affected by Müntzer's apocalyptic crusade in his heyday (Bailey 1983:44). Hut's admiration for his master remained even after the crushing defeat at Frankenhausen (Seebass 1972:322, 564 quoted by Packull 1975:60). Evidently, it was Hut who tried to venerate the memory of Müntzer in order to give some sense of hope to the remnant peasants (Deppermann 1987:201, 219). Here Hut acted as Joshua in the post-Moses period. In an open pulpit on May 31, 1525, Hut had no hesitation in advocating the use of the naked sword for apocalyptic vengeance and it was no other than an extended version of Müntzer's revolutionary activism. "The subject should kill all rulers, because the right time has come now that they have the sword in hand" (Meyer 1874:241, 251 quoted by Stayer 1972:151). This utterance was strong enough to hail Hut as a successor of Müntzer, the destroyer of the godless (Stayer 1972:150). Hut continued to draw the theme of Müntzer's righteous upheaval and he, in this way, urged his followers to share violent anticipation with apocalyptic expectations (Stayer 2007:85). From this vantage point, despite his career between June 1525 and May 1526 was mostly in bracket, Hut remained the most prominent figure who tried to keep alive the revolutionary potential of

Müntzer's teachings on the sword (Stayer 1972:150-51).

Here again, Müntzer's theology was reflected in Hut. Evident was that Hut's edge of the sword did not become blunted even after his conversion into Anabaptism (Stayer 1972:156). Indeed, both internal and external records proved that Hut's teaching had consistently advocated the violent sword of vengeance, despite it was to remain in the sheath until the right time (Stayer 1965:185). Sebastian Franck was one of the first outsiders to mention Hut as the Anabaptist leader with the sword (Klassen 1959:176). His writing in 1531 bore witness to it.

...he [Hut] thought from reading of Moses and the Prophets that they, as the children of God, must, like Israel, root out the ungodly –but not before God would summon and prepare them for this task. Many of the Anabaptists spoke and wrote against him [Hut], and this opinion [of Hut] is held none of them any longer (or only by very few whom I cannot find out about). For they absolutely disapprove of this opinion, condemn it in Hut and speak of it as a lapse and an error (Stayer 1972:156-57)

This campaign of violence, according to Franck's account, became the main reason to disregard Hut as an unwelcome guest in the Anabaptist camp (Stayer 1965:182). The internal evidence, conversely, shed more light on Hut's insistence on the doctrine of the sword. In fact, it was no other than Hut's Anabaptist converts who had clearly testified his violent teachings on the sword (Stayer 1965:184). For example, George Nespitzer and Marx Maier, significant figures of Hut's Anabaptist disciples, had clearly echoed Hut's hardline manifesto of the sword (Klassen 1959:182). Nespitzer confessed that "Christ will give the Sword and revenge to them, the Anabaptists, to punish all sins, stamp out all governments, make all property common and slay those who do not permit themselves to be rebaptized" (Schornbaum 1934:188 quoted by Stayer 1965:184). Maier also said that the Anabaptist leaders of Augsburg insisted that "the government does not treat the poor people properly and burdens them too heavily. When God gives them revenge they want to punish and wipe out the wicked" (Schornbaum 1934:198 quoted by Stayer 1965:184). All suggested then that Hut's teaching never played down the use of the sword (Wappler 1913:242-44 quoted by Stayer 1965:184), but rather it encouraged his followers to participate the righteous upheaval as some "hawks," not as mere "doves" (Stayer 1972:155).

Yet, Hut had reshaped Müntzer's apocalyptic crusade in more creative and critical manners. On the one hand, Hut, like Müntzer, separated the sword from the ungodly *Obrigkeit* (government). For he saw a legitimate right to use the sword in the common people (Stayer 1972:75-6). But, unlike Müntzer, Hut adopted the so-called interim ethic, which allowed the temporary rule of Christian magistracy (Stayer 1965:185). Hut insisted that he had "neither said nor heard that magistrates were not Christian" (Meyer 1874:229, 243 quoted by Stayer 1965:183). Thus, Hut's interim ethic required a significant

caveat. The *Obrigkeit* could operate in a just and Christian way until the return of the Lord (Stayer 1965:185). Closely related to this interim ethic was Hut's doctrine of the sheathed sword (Stayer 1972:158). Christians could fight and rule under the legitimate magistracy, but until Christ came, the sword was not to be drawn from its sheath for the vengeance of the saint upon the ungodly (Stayer 1972:158). Nonetheless, at here Hut's main point was not sheathing, but unsheathing of the sword; not just waiting, but actively participating in divine judgment. The central thought standing behind Hut's interim ethic was the holy war, accompanying the punishment of the ungodly –one day “[the saints] will slay a thousand, two will slay ten thousands [of ungodly]” (Stayer 1965:185). What Hut really expected was then the advent of the Day of Judgment. For on that day, God would punish the evil authorities and all sinners in close collaboration with the saints (the Anabaptists) (Meyer 1874:231, 239 quoted by Stayer 1972:156).

This meant that Hut had a consistent position on the sword –the use of force. Indeed, from first to last, Hut never dropped the sword from his hand (Stayer 1965:184). Yet, Hut's methodological approach to the sword was divided into two positions by his baptism on May 26, 1526: the peaceful *Stäbler* (staff bearer) and the warlike *Schwertler* (sword bearer) (Klassen 1959:177-78). One portrayed Hut as a disciple of Müntzer (Packull 1977:62-117). Here Hut had wielded the sword of justice openly in an attempt to continue to carry the burning torch of his master's apocalyptic mission (Loewen 2015:114). As in the case of Müntzer, the retributive revolution had been swallowed up in Hut's teachings on the sword (Vedder 1905:160-61). Hut believed that the sword was given to the Anabaptists to annihilate the ungodly (Stayer 1965:185). To be sure, Müntzerite thought patterns enabled Hut to be the *Schwertler*, who was called by, in and for the sword (Stayer 1965:184). The other position, however, depicted Hut as the *Stäbler* under Anabaptism (Klassen 1959:171-205). The debate between Hut and Hubmaier at Nikolsburg even paled Hut as the *Schwertler* into insignificance since Hubmaier was a *Schwertler* who permitted the use of the sword (Schlachta 2015:83). The failure of the Peasants' War must have taught Hut an important lesson and made him more cautious to maintain the use of the sword (Stayer 1965:182).

It, however, did not lead Hut to completely lose his revolutionary character, mediated to him from Müntzer (Stayer 1972:156). Rather he had just temporarily set aside it in order to accommodate the changed situation. While in upholding the non-resistant position, Hut was still sincere in awaiting and defending the holy violence (Bergsten 1978:452). To this end, Hut willingly set aside the spirit of the *Schwertler* and took on the status of the *Stäbler*. In this mixed *Schwertler-Stäbler* concerns, Hut soon exhaled his revolutionary fire again by encouraging his followers to slay the wicked when Christ

returned (Stayer 1972:154-58). Furthermore, since Hut saw him and his followers as the divinely appointed elect (Anabaptists) who would play a decisive role in punishing the ungodly (Meyer 1874:219 quoted by Packull 1975:61), the necessity was not blunting, but sharpening the sword for the holy war (Goertz 1996:17, Snyder 2010:73). Hut's interim ethic, in this sense, served, not as the proof, but as the counter-proof of Hut as the peaceful *Stäbler* (Brock 1972:84). Despite Hut was never willing to be considered a revolutionary as the same extent as Müntzer, he, too, never adhered to the doctrine of non-resistance (Stayer 1991:114). Put it differently, Hut used the same sword that Müntzer had used, but saved it for the last chance; he molded his sword under Müntzer's forge and sharpened it within the Anabaptist house. In short, to the doctrine of the sword, Hut was indeed an Anabaptist in different kind, far more subversive than non-resistant in his defense of the "sheathed sword" (Stayer 1965:189). Here Hut stood closer to an impatient Anabaptist with the sword, or the *Schwertler* in *Stäbler's* clothing.

### 3.1.2.2.3 The Violent Eschatology

It seems evident that Hut was a critical and creative imitator of Müntzer in developing his theological ideas (Loewen 2015:114). In fact, Hut's doctrine of the sword once again identified Hut as a student of Müntzer; he had reshaped Müntzer's naked sword into his sheathed sword (Stayer 1972:167). The point here was not the denial of wielding Müntzer's sword, but its temporal suspension until the D-Day, namely, the second coming of Christ (Stayer 1995:258). This critical extension of Müntzer's apocalypticism served Hut as both a stigma and a stimulus (Stayer 1972:153). Many of Hut's early followers were "little Müntzer" and they regarded Hut a great protégé of Müntzer who was able to revive the apocalyptic vision again (Stayer 1972:152). Their unswerving loyalty to Hut remained alive even after his conversion into Anabaptism, because Hut's proclamation still echoed the Müntzerite expectation. "The threatening judgement of the godless...in which they wanted to participate" (Seebass 1972:202 quoted by Packull 1975:60). Nonetheless, the collapse of Müntzer's League of the Elect was a thorn in the side of Hut and his apocalyptic zealots. Thus, from Hut's view, the rehabilitation of the debacle at Frankenhausen in 1525 was not an option but a must to be done. Here Hut's chiliasm came to the forefront as an apologia for the debacle of the Peasants' War (Stayer 1972:153). Hut in this way began to "readjust his apocalyptic expectation to the changed circumstances" (Packull 1975:59).

At this point, the traditional figure of three and one-half years revisited to Hut's new interpretation (Williams 1962:163). By identifying Müntzer and Pfeiffer with the two prophets of Revelation 11:3-10, Hut started anew his new schemata. Taking a cue from the fact that both of them lasted three and

one-half years ministry and both bodies lay in the street without burying (Seebass 1972:180-81, 190 quoted by Packull 1975:60), Hut justified in predicting the millennium for three and one-half years after the Peasants' War (Meyer 1874:239 quoted by Stayer 1965:186). The end of the world, therefore, would come in the summer (Pentecost) of 1528 from the outbreak of the Peasants' rebellion (Packull 1975:60, Williams 1962:163). From this vista, the defeat of the peasants at Frankenhausen gained new momentum. It was not the end but the new beginning, allotted for repentance before the end of the world (Meyer 1874:239 quoted by Stayer 1965:186). Furthermore, it made Hut's Anabaptism "an urgent, hurried and apocalyptic mode" (Snyder 2010:73). Under the prediction of the imminent end of the world, Hut and his followers felt a sense of urgency to baptize adults so as to mark them as members of the 144,000 elects of the last days (Snyder 2010:73).<sup>96</sup> To be sure, it was Hut's apocalyptic-chiliastic vision that made the Peasants' War an end-time event and the Anabaptists the special Christian elect in end times (Hillerbrand 2007:117).

This overriding zeal of apocalyptic expectation made Hut a chiliastic prophet (Stayer 1972:153). While being recognized by his followers Jeremiah-*redivivus*, "a prophet sent of God" to the nations (Williams 1962:164), Hut considered his role as that of the end-time Elijah for the faithful remnants. Encouraged by certain of his commission from on high,<sup>97</sup> Hut even signed one of his letters "Hans Hut from the den of Elijah," by reflecting on the prophet's miraculous nourishment during the three and one-half years of drought (Seebass 1972:21, 398-99 quoted by Packull 1975:61). It was clearly detectable in the testimony of his important followers (Stayer 1965:186). Two of his ardent disciples, Marx Maier and George Nespitzer, portrayed Hut as the chiliastic prophet who proclaimed the three-and-a-half-year millennium after the Peasants' War (Schornbaum 1934:188, 198 quoted by Stayer 1965:186). Leonhard Schiemer, Hut's another Anabaptist convert, spoke of the same mid-1528 millennium under the influence of Hut (Stayer 1975:154). Besides, Schiemer, another follower of Hut, fully absorbed his master's thought patterns so that he even considered the suffering persecution of Anabaptists in Switzerland at Solothurn as a sign of the end of the world (Müller 1938:54-6 quoted by Stayer 1965:186).

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<sup>96</sup> The passage in Ezekiel 9 provided a main supporting text for the apocalyptic mode of baptism practiced by Hans Hut and his followers (Packull 1986:59). Such references to the sign on the foreheads of believers, however, seemed to have confused some of Hut's followers. Evidently Hut and his disciples had not baptized them but had given them the sign (Mecenseffy 1964:18-21), even though they had used the words "I baptize you" when they baptized them (Schornbaum 1934:79, 80, 87) (both quoted by Clasen 1972:101).

<sup>97</sup> In fact, Hut told Urbanus Rhegius (1489-1541), the chief Lutheran pastor at Augsburg, about his commission at night (Seebass 1972:396 quoted by Packull 1975:61).

At any rate, Hut's chiliasm was attractive to the majority of his contemporaries, especially to the broken common people after the Peasants' War (Deppermann 1987:201). Hut's eschatological impulse was strong enough to awaken the peasants' lost hope once again, stirring up nostalgia for the apocalyptic dreams of Thomas Müntzer (Klassen 1959:177). This explained why "remarkably many" of Hut's followers were veterans of the Peasants' revolt (Seebass 1972:186 quoted by Packull 1975:60). Furthermore, much of Hut's eschatology expressed social concerns; "the kingdom of God derives its life from and through the hearts of people" (Seebass 1982:70). Indeed, there was an openness by Hut's preaching on the last things to social justice and equality (Packull 1977:77-87). By connecting eschatology to ethics, Hut emphasized the solidarity with the suffering and the oppressed and this offered them a hope stronger than death (Snyder 1995:70-72) by asserting that "God would judge the authorities who oppressed the poor" (Packull 1977:80-87). This even led Hut to espouse the vengeful eschatology (Stayer 1965:188). Thus, Hut's chiliasm, like his doctrine of the sword, was essentially revolutionary (Packull 1977, Stayer 1965:185). Notably, Hut never denied that he defended the violent eschatology (Deppermann 1987:202). Rather, in his tendency to identify the magistrates with the ungodly, Hut had repeatedly promised the vengeance of the elect upon the ungodly with the imminent *parousia* (Packull 1975:60). To Hut, if the *parousia* meant the Day of Judgment, it was by its very nature to be vibrant and violent.

...Finally, the Lord would assemble them [the saints] and come to them with his *parousia*. At that time the saints would punish the others, the sinners who had not repented. Then the priests who had preached falsely would have to give an account of their teaching and the powerful of their government (Meyer 1874:242 quoted by Stayer 1972:154)

Hut's violent eschatology, in this way, bred a commitment to the open espousal of the use of the sword. But distinct was that the former (eschatology) proceeded the latter (sword), not *vice-versa*. In other words, the role of the saints (Anabaptists) would be determined by the rule of God (Stayer 1972:154). Therefore, despite they indeed had the sword in their hands, its use should be hold until God confirmed its execution. Here, Hut's code of conduct was clear; "a Christian can indeed have a sword, as long as he allows it to remain in the sheath until the Lord tells him to draw it" (Meyer 1874:242 quoted by Stayer 1972:154). So, Hut's eschatology encouraged his followers to stand with the suffering patiently. Even during the persecution, the sword was to remain silent. Only after the Second Coming, the sword would be wielded for apocalyptic vengeance (Stayer 1972:154-55). To put it differently, although Hut promised God's imminent inauguration, accompanying the destruction of the godless (Deppermann 1987:202), this demanded a proper order. At first the Lord's return; then wielding the sword by the saints; and finally the end of this world (Klassen 1959:180). In fact, Hut's violent eschatology embraced the already-but-not-yet tension. The Anabaptists had *already* the sword in their hands so as

to actively take part in that but they did not *yet* draw it in its sheath. In short, in Hut's eschatology, the kingdom would come, not be advanced; Christians must receive the kingdom. But, his eschatological conviction, in which the Anabaptists were called to punish the ungodly as the special Christian elect, led him to defend the radical and militant eschatology (Scribner 1994:753). Thus was created by Hut's idea of double vengeance. To Hut, vengeance on the ungodly was two-fold: action by God and action by man (Stayer 1972:156, Packull 1975:60). In his eschatology of holy war, Hut had emphasized the role of the saints even in parallel with that of God (Goertz 1996:17). Figuratively speaking, Hut's chiliastic rhapsody had two main characters –God and the saints (Anabaptists) –and reached its climax in their mutual punitive sanction on the ungodly. Indeed, it was the central theme of Hut's chiliasm that God worked in close collaboration with the saints on eschatological vengeance –it belonged to God, but, at the same time, was also assigned to the saints (Stayer 1972:156). Thus, instead of removing the sword, Hut's eschatology sharpened the sword of justice for the final judgment (Stayer 1965:191).

All in all, it seemed evident then that chiliasm was at the centre of Hut's thought and teaching. This violent eschatological expectation gave Hut a new perspective to the debacle of the Peasants' War. In Hut's eschatological re-formula, the Peasants' War received new light. It became a decisive point in history, a *kairos*, which inaugurated the Second Coming of Christ. This resulted in Hut's open espousal of the violent eschatology, promising the great vengeance on the ungodly. Thus, Hut's advocacy of the violent eschatology had verified his defense of the violent sword by the saints, namely the Anabaptists. Hut never left the Last Judgment in the hand of God alone, even though his chiliasm defended the doctrine of unsheathed sword –the sword was to be remained until the *parousia*, the Day of Judgment. In a word, Hut was a chiliastic prophet who held the vengeful and violent eschatology.

#### **3.1.2.2.4 The Theology of Baptism: Baptism in Blood**

Another explicit theme of Hut's teaching was his baptismal theology. The eager expectation of return of Christ enabled him to develop a concept of "eschatological baptism" (Spinks 2006:86). During his life time, Hut had actually bred a sort of love-hate relationship with baptism. From about 1521 onward, Hut was, like the other radicals, an opponent of infant baptism to the extent that he refused to have himself and his children baptized (Rupp 1969:333). Much of Hut's attacks on pedobaptism had followed in the footsteps of his master, Thomas Müntzer; faith preceded baptism and was made real in suffering (Klassen 1965:178, Packull 1975:64). Implicit in it was Hut's allegiance to adult (believers) baptism (Snyder 2010:73). Yet, it was Hans Denck (1495-1527), an outstanding Anabaptist leader, who introduced Hut the practice of adult baptism and made him an apostle of Anabaptism (Williams 1962:162). On Pentecost 1526, Hut was baptized by Hans Denck (Williams 1962:80) and this

baptismal experience was so decisive even to the extent of distinguishing Hut from his previous life and activity (Klassen 1965:177-78). Nonetheless, this did not mean that Hut's baptism led him to the total transformation from a disciple of apocalyptic Müntzer to an apostle of peaceful Anabaptism (Stayer 1965:181-91). Since Hut's theological and eschatological framework was already complete before his baptism (Seebass 1972:198 quoted by Packull 1975:59), Hut tried to make this experience of baptism as an extension and elevation, rather than as a separation and relegation, of Müntzerite point of view (Packull 1975:66). There was of course a dynamic link between Hut under Müntzer and Hut under Denck, mediated from his baptismal event (Packull 1975:66). But Hut's theology of baptism was essentially more compatible with Hut the apocalyptic revolutionary than Hut the nonresistant Anabaptist (Stayer 1965:185). Just as Hut's teaching on eschatology had eventually served not to sheathe, but to sharpen his teaching on the sword, his theology of baptism urged Hut not to eschew, but to espouse Müntzer's revolutionary ideas (Seebass 1972:402 quoted by Packull 1975:59).

At any rate, after his own baptism, Hut was carried along by the eschatological baptism, mediated from both Müntzer and Denck (Armour 1966:76, Packull 1973:333-35). On the one hand, Hut developed his baptismal theology from Müntzer's "confirmationist" point of view (Seebass 1972:481 quoted by Packull 1975:61).<sup>98</sup> Taking a cue from Müntzer's stress on Christian confirmation through the impartation of the Spirit (Rupp 1969:270), Hut began to apply it to baptism (Seebass 1972:478-79 quoted by Packull 1975:61). Not only did Hut himself be baptized at Pentecost, he also baptized his followers using the cross as a sign of TAU upon the forehead in seeking to recruit the 144,000 saints (Schornbaum 1934:90-93 quoted by Packull 1973:332). From this vantage point, some of his followers argued that they had only received a sign on the forehead with the traditional rite of confirmation, not baptism (Packull 1973:332-33). In overtone reminiscent of Müntzer, Hut set a peculiar mode of baptism, namely, baptism sealed with and by the Spirit as a rite of confirmation (Rupp 1969:272).

On the other hand, Hut was also greatly indebted to Hans Denck.<sup>99</sup> Like Denck, the basic premise of Hut's theology of baptism was the Great Commission of Matthew 28 and of Mark 16:15;

The word which stands in Mark 16:15 had moved him [Hut] to preach, namely, that preaching was first, afterwards faith, and thirdly baptism. And man must let the word of the Lord stand. [He is] not to do anything apart from it, [and] also shall depart neither to the right nor the left, according to the last of Matthew [ch. 28:19-20], that one shall first teach and afterwards baptize (Williams 1962:162-63)

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<sup>98</sup> In this light, G. Rupp has proposed the necessity of considering Müntzer as a confirmationist rather than an Anabaptist (Rupp 1969:271-72).

<sup>99</sup> Hans Denck saw "the prerequisite for a genuine baptism" as "the oral confession of faith" (Kiwiet 1958:21).

To Hut, the Scripture gave no example of infant baptism (Meyer 1874:223 quoted by Klassen 1959:192-93), except but the clear order in the preaching-faith-baptism sequence (Packull 1975:64). Hut, therefore, had unfurled a three-fold baptism –that of the Spirit, of water, and of blood –based on 1 John 5:6-8 (Williams 1962:163, Packull 1975:61);

Baptism consists of three things, Spirit, water and blood. They are in essence one and give testimony on earth. The Spirit refers to trust in the Word of God and commitment to live according to it. The Word calls this the covenant of God that He makes by His Spirit in the hearts of men. Beyond this God gave water as a sign or the covenant that a man might reveal himself openly and testify of his desire to lead an irreproachable life in true obedience to God and all Christians. Whoever transgresses and sins against God and brotherly love should be disciplined orally by the others. This is the ban that God refers to as the witness before the Church. Blood is the baptism that Christ mentioned to His disciples when He asked them, ‘do you desire to receive the baptism with which I have been baptized?’ This is the baptism that gives testimony throughout the world when the blood of one who has received it, is spilled (Meyer 1874:227 quoted by Klassen 1959:195)

Echoing Denck’s Anabaptist cause, Hut saw baptism through the concept of covenant (Klassen 1959:193).<sup>100</sup> The first type of baptism (Spirit) was the inward covenant, sealed a contract between the believer and God through the action of the Holy Spirit (Williams 1962:163). This baptism, according to Hut, manifested in “the water of all affliction” (*Wasser aller Trübsal*) not only as the power of true baptism, but also as the means by which “man sinks into the death of Christ” (Schornbaum 1934:21 quoted by Klassen 1959:194). Through this process, men indeed became washed, purified and justified (Klassen 1959:194). Hut declared preeminence of this baptism; it was not begun with Christ, but with all the elect friends of God from Adam (Schornbaum 1934:21 quoted by Klassen 1959:194). To Hut, the second baptism (water) was the external covenant as a commitment of obedience to God and his fellow Christians (Williams 1962:163). This represented Hut’s understanding of baptism as a dual covenant; (1) between the believer and the *Gemeinde* (community), and (2) between the believer and God (Packull 1975:61). The sign of baptism was given and offered by the Christian community, so that whoever would desire to be a disciple of Christ must be baptized before a Christian congregation, the Body of Christ (Klassen 1965:193-94). Hut, however, did not consider both Spirit and water baptism as a separate unit, but understood them as an integrated one; outward baptism of water must witness to internal struggle of Spirit baptism (Finger 2004:27).

The third baptism in blood made Hut’s baptism most unique. This was the culmination of his baptism that true Christians should experience. In his schemata, Spirit and water baptism enabled believers to accept baptism in blood, “consisting of daily mortification and perhaps literal martyrdom” (Finger 2004:27). For “true baptism is nothing other than a struggle with sin for the whole of life” (Liechty 1994:78). Hut, thus, expanded his concept of baptism in the concept of suffering. It was the baptism

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<sup>100</sup> Hans Denck also defined baptism as “covenant of a good conscience with God” (Kolde 1887:408 quoted by Kiwiet 1958:21).

with which Christ was finally baptized, but his saints still shed their blood in this world (Williams 1962:163). So then baptism was suffering (Rupp 1969:395). Since Hut saw suffering as the real essence and power of baptism (Rupp 1969:390), the emphasis came to be placed on baptism in blood, namely, outward suffering in the world. When Hut's baptism in blood became tied with his end-time expectations, it began to be seen as an outward expression of the apocalyptic sign of the elect: the suffering of the righteous remnant (Seebass 1972:138-64 quoted by Kim 2013:133). All represented then that Hut's three-fold baptism should be understood as a coherent whole which attributed to the final point, namely, baptism in blood.

This once again showed a dynamic interconnection between Hut under Müntzer and Hut under Denck (Kim 2013:132-23). At the first stage, Hut's baptism was grown under Müntzer's inner baptism of the cross (suffering). Then it was linked with Denck's covenantal baptism as the external sign of inner baptism (commitment) and finally it became integrated into a baptism in blood as the provisional suffering pacifism (Williams 1962:163). Hut under Denck recognized that suffering itself was inseparable from God's justifying process (Packull 1975:62). Christians must willingly follow Christ in suffering, affliction, distress, and persecution (Klassen 1965:186). Yet, Hut under Müntzer enabled him to defend the suffering pacifism not in a passive, but in an active manner. It was to be more than a confirmation of elect faith, which sought out in persecution and martyrdom from worldly Christians.<sup>101</sup> Rather this came to be included within the pattern of violent eschatology so as to verify the eventual compensation or vindication against worldly power (Williams 1962:226). To be sure, Hut's baptism in blood represented "a fiery hope of a compensatory and divinely sanctioned belligerence" in a bloody eschatology (Williams 1962:226). Anyhow, it became clear that Hut, in justifying his theology of baptism, had created an intriguing synthesis between Müntzer's internal and Denck's external covenant (Williams 1962:163). Indeed, both Müntzer's apocalyptic and Denck's covenant emphasis gave Hut's baptism a special character, which is, baptism in blood as the culmination of baptism in Spirit and water.

To be summarized, Hut had an explicit and coherent baptismal theology even in his transitional period from a disciple of revolutionary Müntzer to an apostle of non-resistant Anabaptism (Seebass 1974:161 quoted by Packull 1977). Indeed, the significance of Hut's own baptismal experience in 1526 was two-fold. It was to foretell his new connection with Anabaptism, and to forth-tell his old relationship with

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<sup>101</sup> G. Williams, however, hesitated whether or not Hut had adhered to the suffering pacifism to such an extent in his ministry (Williams 1962:226).

Müntzer. To be more specific, this experience had materialized Hut's advocacy of an adult (believer's) baptism, based on the Scriptural order of the preaching-faith-baptism, within the Anabaptist cause (Armour 1966:92-93, Packull 1975:64), while at the same time having served as an extension of, not as a separation from, the lingering influence of Müntzer (Kiwiet 1958:25). It never prevented Hut from screening Denck's teaching on baptism through Müntzer's lens. Rather this enabled Hut to see Müntzer's inward baptism anew (Seebass 1972:567 quoted by Packull 1975:66). That was why Hut, like Denck, had differentiated three kinds of baptism, namely, baptism of the Spirit, of water, and of blood (Friedmann 1959:36), but had readjusted them under Müntzer's apocalyptic frame of reference (Packull 1975:66). This made Hut's baptismal theology idiosyncratic (Williams 1962:226). In his priority of Müntzer, Hut did re-baptize Denck's external covenant through Müntzer's inward baptism in prospective violent eschatology. Characteristic was then Hut's open espousal of the eventual vindication of the suffering saints (Anabaptists) whose blood had the power to baptize.

### **3.1.2.3 Conclusion: Hut the Radical Reformer as Being-in-the-Restorative Common Men**

On the one hand, Hut's eschatology was substantially indebted to the medieval apocalyptic tradition in general and Müntzer's violent chiliasm in particular (Seebass 1972:341-44 quoted by Petersen 1993:84).<sup>102</sup> Much of Hut's specific end-time program was borrowed from Müntzer even to the extent that the defeat of Müntzer in 1525, rather than the conversion experience at his baptism, had been more responsible for moving Hut's thought pattern toward the revolutionary goal (Packull 1976:90). This made Hut to identify Müntzer and Pfeiffer with the two prophets of Revelation and their ministry and tragic end with the fulfilment of prophecy (Seebass 1972:180-81 quoted by Packull 1975:60). Just as Scriptures said, their ministry lasted 3½ years and their bodies were unburied. "Only another 3½ years remained before divine judgement would fall upon Christendom" (Meyer 1874:239 quoted by Klaassen 1981:320). Thus, in retrospective, the crucial seven last years of the world began around December 1521 when the Zwickau Prophets began their ministry (Stayer 1991:140). What was striking was the fact that Hut gave the Peasants' War of 1525 apocalyptic significance by placing it at the centre of the last seven years (Packull 1976:82). From this timetable, Hut awaited the end of the world some time in 1528 (Schornbaum 1934:188, 198 quoted by Stayer 1965:186). Thus was created by Hut's confident prediction that in 1528, 3½ years after the Peasants' War, the Kingdom of God would come.

Other details included the prediction that the judgment of the godless would set in five months before the *parousia* (Seebass 1972:367 quoted by Packull 1975:60). The Turk would invade, but the faithful

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<sup>102</sup> Yet, some scholars have argued that while Hut expected the end of the world, Müntzer expected a new age, not the end of the world (McLaughlin 2004:98-131).

remnant would survive. Hut left the impression with his followers that he and his followers would then play an active role in punishing the wicked (Seebass 1972:402 quoted by Packull 1975:61). When Hut considered himself the end-time Elijah who had been especially commissioned by God to seal the faithful remnant (Seebass 1972:21 quoted by Packull 1975:61), his followers even wanted him as leader on earth and Christ in heaven (Seebass 1972:219 quoted by Packull 1975:61). Notably, Hut's tendency to identify the godless with the *Obrigkeit* added to keen interest of veterans of the Peasants' War, many of whom had been fugitives (Packull 1975:60). For his proclamation of the threatening judgment of the godless was powerful enough to rekindle the fervency of "remarkably many" of the comrade-in-arms at the peasants' uprisings, who wished to participate in it once again (Seebass 1972:202 quoted by Packull 1975:60). In essence, while Müntzer had justified his participation in the Peasants' War, Hut had justified his escape and survival from the debacle of Frankenhausen. This resulted in Hut's re-adaption of Müntzer revolutionary idea by assuring an interim ethic as a sign of patient revolutionary.

On the other hand, Hut's baptismal theology was influenced by the Anabaptist teachings (Kolde 1887:408 quoted by Kiwiet 1958:21). Hut, like other Anabaptists, saw baptism as a covenant sign that incorporated believers into the fellowship of the Christian Church, followed by preaching and faith (Klaassen 1981:170, Armour 1966:92-3). This three-step formulation –preaching, faith and water baptism (Armour 1966:77) –led to a three-fold baptism, which is, baptism of spirit, water and blood (Schornbaum 1951:43 quoted by Klaassen 1981:169, Friedmann 1959:36). Yet, Hut went further. For him, the essential or true baptism began with knowledge of God and deepened in a process of suffering through the work of the Spirit (Armour 1966:83-4). Nobody could find the sweet Christ unless he had first tested the bitter Christ in justification (Classen 1972:101). Thus, baptism was to be seen as the sign of the self-conscious willingness to suffer according to God's will as part of the "Gospel of All Creatures," primarily drawn from Müntzer's idea (Gregory 2007:472). This allegiance to Müntzer led Hut to espouse the so-called "eschatological baptism," having its root in apocalyptic mysticism (Spinks 2006:86, Clasen 1972:100). Hut, in this way, linked water baptism to the sealing of the 144,000 elect of the Last Days (Revelation 7:3) (Klaassen 1981:320-21, Clasen 1972:101). This was a sort of the traditional rite of confirmation, associated with the impartation of the Spirit (Seebass 1972:478-79 quoted by Packull 1975:61). By baptizing his followers on the forehead with the sign of the cross, Hut gave them a conviction that they had received the sevenfold gifts of Spirit as the special Christian elect (Packull 1975:61). Hut, in so doing, made his practice of baptism both a sign of confirmation and eschatological symbol, which led his followers to participate in the violent eschatological event as the passionate reactionary (Packull 1976:80).

To sum up, Hut was, in a sense, a fully disciple of Müntzer and a fully apostle of Anabaptism. The former position manifested in the rationalization of his predecessor, while the latter in the radicalization of his antecedent. Hut had deliberately sought to make a synthesis of two positions, not taking the role of a mediator between the two, but transforming the two characters in a new way. Hut's critical awareness of the vital context made this possible. From the precarious life of the common people in the wake of the foiled Peasants' War, Hut had performed the dual function of rationalizing Müntzer's radical revolution and radicalizing Anabaptism's non-resistance. Since Hut wished to rekindle the dying embers of Müntzer's enthusiasm through Anabaptism, his concern was not either-or, but both-and distinction. In this schemata, Hut believed that the followers of Müntzer were to be rationalized, while the adherents of Anabaptism were to be radicalized. Thus was created by Hut's dual function. Hut took the interim ethic as a sign of the patient revolutionary for the former (the followers of Müntzer), while at the same time developing his baptismal theology as a sign of the passionate reactionary for the latter (the followers of Denck). This, in the end, made Hut, the radical reformer as being-in-the-restorative common men, distinct from both Müntzer's confirmationist and Denck's covenantal point of view.

### **3.1.3 MELCHIOR HOFFMAN (1495-1543)**

#### **3.1.3.1 Biographical Sketch**

Although, in the sixteenth-century context, a number of radical religious leaders were, like Luther, renegade Catholic priests, there were others who had no formal religious training before embarking on the propagation of the new faith as they saw it (Stayer 1965:181). One such man was Melchior Hoffman (1495-1543). "As an artisan and lay preacher, Hoffman naturally denigrated the higher education which his more learned opponents had openly turned against him" (Waite 1988:297-98). Born in around 1495 in Schwäbisch Hall in south-western Germany, Hoffman was a furrier by trade, a vocation in which he took great pride throughout his life (Neff 1956:778-85). Indeed, he saw himself as following in the footsteps of the apostle Paul (Deppermann 1987:35).<sup>103</sup> It was in 1526 when Hoffman burst onto the historical stage as one of the Lutheran lay missionaries of Livonia (Krahn 1968:82).<sup>104</sup> This had marked the start of Hoffman's wandering life for the next ten years as "the prophet against the learned" (Waite 1990:90). From then on, Hoffman got himself into trouble as a lay

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<sup>103</sup> Hoffman asserted his right to preach without official training, or knowledge of Latin on the basis of the fact that many types of builders helped to erect Christ's temple (Pater 1984:209).

<sup>104</sup> At that time, Hoffman was granted the required certification to preach. Luther had generously published Hoffman's letter, along with his own and Bugenhagen's letter to the Livonians (Bailey 1990:175-90).

preacher in assorted German towns along the eastern Baltic in which his preaching resulted in an iconoclastic riot (Noll 1973:48-9). Hoffman's lower social status came to his aid in the time of troubles; occasionally, only his popularity among the common people prevented his immediate arrest (Greschat 2004:119).

While Hoffman had proclaimed Luther's gospel of the righteousness by faith alone in Wolmar, a small city of the Teutonic order (Noll 1973:48),<sup>105</sup> his lay sermons distinguished him from the Wittenberg Reformers. Hoffman used to combine his message with threats of imminent judgement on the monks, knights, and prelates (Lindberg 1983:89). This inevitably caused Hoffman's expulsion from the city (Deppermann 1987:36, Pater 1984:310-66). But, he soon found asylum in Dorpat, where the magistrates supported the evangelical movement (Packull 1990:146). Here Hoffman found himself surrounded by the most violent iconoclastic outbursts (Deppermann 1987:36).<sup>106</sup> Regardless of his direct involvement, the situation proved that Hoffman was in trouble (Pater 1984:190). The councilors of the cities and the official Lutheran preachers called for tough measures against the religious radicalism in the cities and hammered the lay preacher who had kindled it (Bailey 1990:177). The differences in background, training, and personality served to divide a gap between the lay preacher Hoffman and the other learned Lutheran pastors (Krahn 1968:82, Pater 1984:174).<sup>107</sup> Fearing that the simmering social revolution in the cities might spread to the peasants, the landed aristocrats withdrew their support to Hoffman (Pater 1984:173). This forced Hoffman to leave Livonia against his will (Deppermann 1987:87-8).

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<sup>105</sup> Hoffman's earliest activities were summarized by Karlstadt; "The furrier spent some time in Livonia. He was visited by God with grace, and his eyes were opened unto him with the recognition of the Word of divine truth and of Christ. Thus he began to preach the Word of God in a town called Wolmar under the jurisdiction as they call it of the master of the Teutonic Order. There he suffered much persecution until, at least, he was expelled at the lord master's command for the sake of truth" (Pater 1984:173).

<sup>106</sup> At that time, the whole city revolted because in the futile attempt to arrest Hoffman by the provost of the bishop, the mercenaries killed four of his followers and wounded twenty others. In revenge, armed masses stormed every church in the city on January 10, 1525, demolishing images and altars (Pater 1984:190). Yet, no blood was shed in the course of the iconoclastic outburst itself and no evidence that Hoffman had called for the destruction of churches or for the expulsion of the canons before his attempted arrest (Deppermann 1987:87).

<sup>107</sup> With regard to the differences, the controversy in fact brought into the open. The learned scholars laughed at Hoffman because he was an artisan. They thought it impossible for "a layman or a furrier to be able to expound God's word as truly as their own scribblings, because they have been taught Scripture since childhood. A furrier should have spent the same amount of time in study as a Cathedral priest or monk if he is to preach" (quoted by Deppermann 1987:64). This disagreement between them did not die down even after Hoffman went to Wittenberg (June 1525) to be testified to his orthodoxy by Luther and Bugenhagen. There was indeed no reason that the Reformers could have refused to testify to Hoffman's theological orthodoxy. For Hoffman's eschatological speculations were, to a larger extent, an expression of the views of the Wittenberg Reformers and his works clearly stressed all of Luther's most important ideas, such as, justification by faith alone, faith as a gift of divine grace, the need for the Christian to renounce the use of force and any vengeful desires (Deppermann 1987:61-2).

By 1526 Hoffman held a new position as a preacher in Stockholm where he found the audience among the German merchants. There Hoffman was supported by the rich townsmen who had interest to his radicalism to protest the king's "half-hearted" religious reform (Deppermann 1987:93-4). With the help of these wealthy German merchants (Deppermann 1987:91), Hoffman's first major publication, a work that charged against Livonians, had been made (Pater 1984:203). Since Hoffman's preaching caused rioting and the king saw him as a threat to the public order, he was expelled from Stockholm in 1527 (Pater 1984:174).<sup>108</sup> When Hoffman took up residence in the Baltic port city of Lübeck as a new refuge, this lay preacher already found himself in violent followers (Deppermann 1987:84, Pater 1984:218). Once the municipal authorities became aware of the radical nature of his preaching, they too sent him packing (Bailey 1990:177). Thus, Hoffman sought to establish himself, with his wife and child, in Schleswig-Holstein, at that time a part of Denmark. Surprisingly, he received a letter of safe conduct from Frederick I, the king of Denmark (Pater 1984:174, Bailey 1990:177). By this recommendation, Hoffman was appointed deacon at the church of Nikolai in Kiel and received a permission to preach in this area (Krahn 1968:83). As the king used the untiring itinerant preacher to undermine the Catholic Church in the territory, Hoffman temporarily attained riches and honour (Deppermann 1987:96).<sup>109</sup> Under this favourable circumstance, Hoffman became the proprietor of the first printing press in Kiel and utilized it to defend himself against the attacks of his opponents (Bailey 1990:176, Fudge 2007:246-47). Yet, Hoffman's involvement in doctrinal dispute with the Lutheran preachers had forced him to travel to Wittenberg in 1527 for approval by Luther (Pater 1984:174). Luther, however, repudiated Hoffman.<sup>110</sup> He no longer sanctioned Hoffman's ministry but rather responded warning him (Pater 1984:174)<sup>111</sup> that his iconoclasm and allegorical interpretation of

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<sup>108</sup> On January 13, 1527 the King forbade Hoffman from continuing to preach publicly with the following decree; "It appears from the experience of those who have heard his preaching that Hoffman has been very fanatical and that his words have been indiscreet. Thus he is ordered to stop his public preaching before the general populace" (Deppermann 1987:92).

<sup>109</sup> "The same furrier arrived in the country of Holstein with his wife and child. There he was summoned to King Frederick of Denmark, who wanted to hear his sermons. As he rightly preached the Word of God, the King appointed him as his servant, giving him a letter and seal that permitted him to preach God's Word in the whole land of Holstein. The King loved him and established him as a preacher in Kiel and granted protection to all his possessions. He protected his wife, child and all he owned in a just and Christian way" (quoted by Deppermann 1987:96).

<sup>110</sup> Luther at first was willing to sanction Hoffman's ministry in 1525 when he began his evangelical mission in Dorpat. But, this time he warned the authorities to stop Hoffman from preaching (Krahn 1968:82). Luther must have felt embarrassed by his earlier endorsement of Hoffman as orthodoxy; "I gave it to him, being foolishly deceived" (quoted by Pater 1984:175).

<sup>111</sup> Hoffman's account in Wittenberg shows that he felt insulted after a sharp exchange over his exegesis; "When I revealed such an explanation to my teachers in Wittenberg and clearly wanted to follow Scripture, I –poor worm –was considered a great sinner and a dreamer, and thus I was terribly mistreated, maligned, and despised" (quoted by Pater 1984:174).

Eucharist were not orthodox (Deppermann 1987:67, Lindberg 1983:90).<sup>112</sup> Above all things, to Luther, Hoffman sounded like little Müntzer in his apocalyptic visionary expressions (Klaassen 1986:15).

Thus was set up in the duchy of Schleswig-Holstein (Flensburg) in 1529 to test Hoffman's views (Bailey 1990:179). But it was clearly intended to provide an authoritative venue in which to reject Hoffman (Pater 1984:175). To better prepare for himself, Hoffman requested help from Karlstadt (Bailey 1990:183-84). This great theologian followed the invitation of Hoffman to defend his view, but received no permission to be present (Krahn 1968:84). Hoffman's condemnation was then predestined (Deppermann 1987:127). In April, this radical lay preacher was ordered to recant and was duly banished (Lindberg 1983:90). As a result, Hoffman was expelled from the city, leaving his entire belongings as well as his valuable printing press behind (Deppermann 1987:136, Bailey 1990:184).<sup>113</sup> This gave Hoffman a bad image on Lutheranism as a whole. He considered it as the new "papacy," no less tyrannical and blasphemous than the old church (Deppermann 1987:136-37). Hoffman's next stop was the city of Emden in East Frisia, where he found Karlstadt who also expelled from the Kiel (Lindberg 1996:135). Success was immediate to the extent that Hoffman re-baptized about three hundred persons (Snyder 1996:249). This success caught the attention of Emden's clergy. A growing tension between them brought Hoffman into temporary alliance with Karlstadt under the protection of Ulrich von Dornum, the influential counsellor (Krahn 1968:85-6).<sup>114</sup> In June 1529, when Hoffman once again ran into trouble with the Lutherans, he fled his oppressive situation to the city of Strassburg, one of the great centres of Reformation thought (Williams and Mergal 1957:209-10).

Hoffman found himself in relatively favourable conditions in Strassburg. In fact, the city local leaders appreciated the limit of their authority unless there was major social unrest (Lienhard 1977:204-5). This Strassburg city policy remained appealing to many religious dissents, including the Anabaptists, and also made Hoffman easy to find attachment and followings (Deppermann 1987:218). At the

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<sup>112</sup> Krahn, in particular, sees what brought Hoffman into disfavour and led to the final break with Lutheran pastors was, above all, his anti-Lutheran position –a spiritualization of the meaning of the Eucharist –on the Lord's Supper (Krahn 1968:84).

<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, Hoffman still retained the delusion that he had simply been the victim of the new Lutheran orthodoxy but not of the new princely church government. Hoffman continued to trust Frederick I and after his banishment he dedicated the commentary on Revelation to the King. Here Hoffman presented Frederick as one of the two Christian kings who would protect the suffering church from annihilation at the hands of the beast (the Emperor) in the course of the apocalyptic disturbances (Deppermann 1987:137).

<sup>114</sup> Karlstadt and Hoffman had joined the "Court of Emden." There they had written a book about the Flensburg Disputation. Even if both agreed on the issue of the Eucharist and thus opposed to Lutheranism, the collaboration of the two men was only temporary due to some differences, such as, the different hermeneutical weight on Revelation. Most of all, Karlstadt was not comfortable with Hoffman's apocalyptic ideas (Deppermann 1987:159).

beginning, this lay preacher must have made a good impression there. Martin Bucer, the leader of city's reforming clergy, introduced Hoffman to his co-workers, including Schwenckfeld who was a guest in the home of Wolfgang Capito at that time (Krahn 1968:88). But soon Hoffman's radicalism was earned the enmity of local Zwinglian religious leaders (Haude 200:92). They had advised him to stop preaching and to return to his profession, a furrier (Deppermann 1987:160). This disappointed Hoffman greatly. To him, the Strassburg Zwinglians and the Wittenberg Lutherans were all cut from the same cloth, namely, Scripture wizard (*schriftgelerten*), who knew the Scriptures but lack of the Holy Spirit (Greyerz 2008:164). After being rejected by the religious authorities, Hoffman had consorted with the Strassburg radicals, a group of lower class individuals (Brady 2009:204). These "poor in spirit lying in the dust" (Friesen 1984:158) were the so-called Strassburg Prophets, centring on the married couple of Lienhard and Ursula Jost, who had claimed to receive direct visions from God (Deppermann 1987:178-80, Waite 2013:496). Hoffman was convinced by the Strassburg Prophets that the last days were upon them and as a result, his apocalyptic excitement had become heightened (Deppermann 1987:218-19).

Since the Strassburg Prophets also began to believe Hoffman as the prophetic Elijah-figure, whom they had been awaiting, this radical lay preacher had soon held the most esteemed position in the apocalyptic strand of Strassburg Anabaptists (Deppermann 1987:218). In April 1530, Hoffman identified himself with them and rashly petitioned the Strassburg city council to grant the Anabaptist a church for public worship (Krahn 1968:90). What really made Hoffman become an Anabaptist?<sup>115</sup> Much of it was probably attributed to the Anabaptist view, pertaining to the covenant or the fellowship of believers and their dedicated Christian life and witness (Krahn 1968:90). At any rate, the magistrates within the city of Strassburg gave a flat refusal to this request (Pater 1984:176). By the next month, Hoffman was back in East Frisia, where he began to spread the doctrine of Anabaptism (Deppermann 1987:218). He acquired several hundred followers in this area, especially figures like John Matthijsson, a baker from Haarlem, and David Joris, a glass-painter from Delft (Snyder 1995:212). But, shocked by the news that his followers –ten of them –were beheaded in The Hague in December 1531 due to the practice of rebaptism, Hoffman ordered a halt to adult baptism until the end of 1533, when the world was to end anyway (Deppermann 1987:226-31, Snyder 1995:212).<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Pater, in this regard, has suggested that Karlstadt may have had renewed impact on Hoffman when both met in East Frisia. After this encounter, he adds, Hoffman revised his view of baptism, repudiated predestination and began to teach the typically Karlstadtian combination of a universal offer of salvation by God (Pater 1984:175-76). But, this question still remains open.

<sup>116</sup> Thus is followed by the critical question whether or not Hoffman had really regarded rebaptism as the central point of his teaching. This goes further, to the extent that whether or not Hoffman did give his followers the suspension order. Here

In March 1533, Hoffman returned to Strassburg with full of expectations. He officially declared that Strassburg would be the centre of resistance against the godless in the impending cataclysm that would mark the end of the world in 1533 (Klaassen 1992:86).<sup>117</sup> The city council, which had recently been taking a turn toward Lutheranism, was not at all pleased with this restless prophet's declaration (Packull 1983:98). Thus ordered Hoffman's arrest when he was accused in May of plotting rebellion (Snyder 1995:213). Hoffman welcomed it as part of the apocalyptic last days, believing that his stay in prison would be brief (Pater 1984:176). One report stated that Hoffman, encouraged by the prophecy of an old man, "went willingly, cheerfully, and well-comforted to prison" (Deppermann 1987:293).<sup>118</sup> Hoffman, however, had to spend much longer jail term than he had expected (Deppermann 1987:380). For the city authorities, this recent Anabaptist convert Hoffman was a person on the blacklist. Even if there was no proof of any plot to rebel, Hoffman had large numbers of ardent followers, who honoured him as the second Elijah, one of the two witnesses in the last days (Barrett 1992:278-79). Furthermore, Hoffman's apocalyptic faith in the world's demise was not only theologically flawed, but also dangerous to the city welfare (Packull 1983:98). They had eventually declared a shocking ruling: a life sentence for Hoffman (Packull 1983:95, Deppermann 1987:380). Hoffman as a result remained incarcerated in close and isolated prison cell until his death in 1543 (Deppermann 1978:165-66 quoted by Packull 1983:94). Neither a chance to leave nor to become an outright martyr was given to Hoffman; the only way that allowed this great lay preacher was to be perished as a dying victim.

### **3.1.3.2 Theological Perspective**

#### **3.1.3.2.1 The Prophet against the Learned**

Without a formal theological training, Hoffman had to drink from his own spiritual wells (Deppermann 1987:69). He in particular drew theological water and wisdom from those apocalyptic texts<sup>119</sup> –Daniel,

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some scholars/historians have argued that Hoffman never "ordered" a suspension of baptism but suggested it. To them, it is, therefore, highly probable that there might be never an actual suspension of the administering of baptism (Krahn 1968:134).

<sup>117</sup> Before Hoffman proclaimed it, there were already prophecies, which identified Strassburg as the place where the last great battle of the end-time would be fought (Peuckert 1976:159, 161 quoted by Klaassen 1992:86).

<sup>118</sup> Obbe Philips (1500-1568), one of Hoffman's followers, related later on; "He [Hoffman] beat his hat from his head, threw his shoes away, raised his fingers to heaven, and swore by the living God that he would not enjoy any other food or drink but water and bread until his stretched arm would point to the one who had sent him; this is the way in which he entered the prison, prepared, joyous and comforted" (quoted by Jelsma 1998:52-3).

<sup>119</sup> Here, the attention should be made to the different use of the concepts of eschatology, apocalyptic, and millennialism. Eschatology is that part of Christian doctrine which deals with the last things inclusively. Apocalyptic denotes the understanding that the great cosmic struggle between good and evil is about to be concluded in cataclysm. It includes a

the fourth book of Ezra and Revelation –which were obscure to the official Reformers, but fascinating to the common people (Packull 1986:32). The Book of Revelation among them held a special place in Hoffman’s canon. It indeed served him as a keyhole to see through the rest of the whole Scripture (Packull 1986:32). Hoffman believed that the written word concealed the mystery of God’s revelation (Waite 1988:302). So, this concentration to spiritual discernment to be his distinguishing mark as “the prophet against the learned” (Deppermann 1987, Waite 1988:297). Against more learned opponents, Hoffman asserted that “God’s wisdom is not perceived with fleshly eyes, but only with spiritual eyes, which do not look upon the person, nor upon the position of rank” (Deppermann 1987:58). Thus was created by Hoffman’s spiritual hermeneutics on the premise of a sharp distinction between letter and spirit (Waite 1988:298, Klaassen 1986:22). In this Spirit-oriented hermeneutics, Hoffman boldly affirmed that the church needed people of the Spirit, not of the letter, who were called by God rather than by a human agency (Pater 1984:209). On the strength of the popular anticlerical sentiment of the time, Hoffman found ready supporters among the lower classes (Waite 1988:298). To them, this lay preacher’s different type of Bible reading and interpretation was marked by a voice from the wilderness against the pope, the emperor, and the university theologians (Bailey 1990:189-90).

In contrast to learned opinion, Hoffman played up “the spiritual sense which lay concealed under the letter” (Waite 1988:298). Since Hoffman gave more weight to a hidden meaning behind the Scripture and that it disclosed itself only to the persons who were led by the divine Spirit (Goertz 2008:593), a true meaning must be a “comprehension of the spiritual [hermeneutics] as a whole” (Waite 1998:298). In other words, the spiritual meaning could offer a new angle of approach to a literal meaning, which had become encased in a conceptual system of this or that tenet (Waite 1988:298). For Hoffman, the axiom was, therefore, that one should open, allege, argue, enforce and apply the biblical message from the mind of the Spirit; for “without the Holy Spirit, every figure was nothing but empty letter” (Goertz 2008:593-94). The zeal for this spiritual exegesis then became a trigger for Hoffman’s Christocentric hermeneutics (Waite 1988:298). Hoffman saw the hermeneutical key in the “mystery of Christ’s work in history, which revealed in Scripture, particularly its prophetic passages predicting the course of events, past, present, and future” (Waite 1988:298). Here, the Old and the New Testament had one grand meaning and conveyed one leading message in the midst of full of allegory, symbols and images (Deppermann 1987:216). In Hoffman’s view, this culminated in a return of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom in an apocalyptic expectation (Packull 1986:32-61). Thus, the deepest ontological basis

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precise identification of times and time periods, as well as of actors in the drama. Millenarianism is the expectation of a reign of peace, plenty, and justice on earth before or after the Second Adventure of Christ (Klaassen 1986:18).

of Hoffman's Christocentric hermeneutics, by nature, included the idea of apocalyptic calamity, namely, the coming judgment on the evils in the church and Christendom (Deppermann 1987:212-13, Packull 1986:32).

Under this "spirit-under-the-letter motif," Hoffman's famous use of the "cloven hoof" was born (Waite 1988:298). The cloven hoof method had resulted from Hoffman's observation that "all God's words are doubled or twofold, the one against the other" (Goertz 2008:594). By applying this method to his hermeneutical metaphor, Hoffman sought to resolve outward contradictions in Scripture (Goertz 2008:594). This was the reason why, despite the cloven hoof analogy did not actually assist his typological/allegorical exegesis (Deppermann 1987:214), Hoffman remained obstinate in seeing the rest of Scripture through this distinctive method (Waite 1988:298). Indeed, Hoffman attempted to arrive at a clear understanding of the Word of God by "finding the middle" between the two opposing statements in Scripture (Waite 1988:298, Goertz 2008:594). The apocalyptic key of David played an important role in this purpose (Waite 1988:298). Hoffman combined the key of David into what he referred to as the cloven hoof method in order to unlock the secrets of Scripture, especially the apocalyptic passages (Packull 1987:363-74). In so doing, Hoffman set himself up as the prophet against the learned, with the key of David, who could open up the true meaning of Scripture (Deppermann 1987:216). This conviction enabled Hoffman to take an active part as the prophet against the learned throughout his ministries (Visser 2006:100).

### **3.1.3.2.2 The Prophet of the Last Days**

#### **3.1.3.2.2.1 The Restitution**

Hoffman's role as the prophet against the learned implied that his theology was shaped by his identification with the lower classes in a significant way (Kühles 1969:377-90 quoted by Packull 1985:134). In fact, "Hoffman saw, in the poor, God's instrument for historical change" and his primary support also came from them (Packull 1985:134).<sup>120</sup> This role was bolstered when Hoffman had encountered the Strassburg Prophets who held a strong apocalyptic bent (Stayer 1971:268). Here, the role of the prophet of the last days was added Hoffman another overlapping role (Waite 2013:485-506). Since Hoffman, like many radical Reformers of his time, believed that he lived in the last days, the theme of restitution –the restoration of all things –became central leitmotif of his theology (Waite

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<sup>120</sup> This does not mean that Hoffman was a "class-conscious revolutionary" as Kühles had argued (1969:377-90). Rather, in his reformation, Hoffman had consistently sought to the revolution *from above*; he attempted to work though the authorities. "Nevertheless, voluntarily or involuntarily, [Hoffman] found himself on the side of the common person" (Packull 1985:135).

1990:94). This was epitomized by his idea of apocalyptic conception of history (Deppermann 1987:60). Following by Joachim of Fiore and radical Franciscans, Hoffman used a Trinitarian division of history as his basic scheme (Deppermann 1987:217), namely, (1) the Old Testament age of the Law (Father), (2) the New Testament age, beginning with Christ (Son), and (3) the present age, empowered by the Holy Spirit (Reeves 1969:491-92). According to him, “the second and the third ages were even subdivided into seven periods, corresponding to the visions of sevens in the Apocalypse” (Packull 1986:29).

Thus was created by his expectations of reform of church and society. Hoffman, at first, anticipated “the church of his own day to be restored to its New Testament condition” in all aspects (Packull 1986:31). This was nothing but the end-time church “to be completed with the sixth seal in his own day” (Packull 1986:53). Furthermore, in his schemata, Hoffman was too convinced that the age of the Spirit was now beginning with him (Klaassen 1986:21) and he was coopted as the promised prophet who possessed the spirit of Elijah for its sake (Deppermann 1987:218). This led him to boldly predict that the world would be end in 1533 (Klaassen 1986:17). Hoffman’s views in the breakthrough of the Spirit in three stages appeared to have enhanced this belief all the more (Packull 1986:16). To be sure, Hoffman saw that the first outpouring of the Spirit lasted only one hundred years; the second outpouring took place at the time of John Hus; and the third and last began in 1526, when he wrote his commentary on Daniel (Packull 1986:40). Thus, for the next years, the preaching of the two witnesses, Enoch and Elijah, and with them, the great persecution of the believers could be expected (Barrett 1996:278-79). “At the conclusion of this time, 1533, would occur the final judgement” (Deppermann 1987:67). Indeed, Hoffman held this assertive belief until the time proved it false (Deppermann 1987:180).

At any rate, Hoffman’s role as the end-time prophet had been harnessed and internalized by both the Anabaptists and the radicals in Strassburg. On the one hand, the Strassburg Prophets –Lienhart Jost, his wife Ursula and Barbara Rebstock –served to legitimate Hoffman’s prophetic role. They affirmed Hoffman as Elijah and even accepted him as their leader (Barrett 1996:278-79). Hoffman also granted their visions and pneumatology as authentic and published the visions of both Josts,<sup>121</sup> despite there were some bizarre and ecstatic forms of prophecies (Goertz 2008:28). He equated their prophecies

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<sup>121</sup> Hoffman in fact published and promoted accounts for the two Jost prophets; in 1530 for Ursula Jost and in October 1532 for Lienhart Jost (Clasen 1972:130).

with those of Isiah and Jeremiah (Klaassen 1986:23).<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, the Strassburg radicals' vision provided the springboard for Hoffman's role as the prophet against the learned. From the beginning, Hoffman was proud of his laity as the distinguishing mark of God's special revelation (Waite 1990:90, Goertz 2008:593). To him, God loved to reveal His secret to the lowly and despised (Klaassen 1986:21, Bailey 1990:180-81). Hoffman's belief in God's preferential option for the poor was even enhanced by the Strassburg Prophets, mostly found in the lower-class circles (Mackay 2007:14).<sup>123</sup> They saw God imbuing the poor with dignity and meeting their needs (Nafziger-Leis 258-72, Snyder and Hecht 1996:273-87). In their vision, God did not simply promise the poor a heavenly rewards, but promised to judge their wealthy oppressors (Deppermann 1987:210). Such deep affinity for the Strassburg radicals had promoted Hoffman's apocalyptic prediction in a more radical way (Clasen 1972:130). Hoffman eventually identified the city of Strassburg as the New Jerusalem, in which king and prophet would reign in harmony (Deppermann 1987:211, Klaassen 1986:24). According to Hoffman, the council of Strassburg was chosen for this global theocracy (Deppermann 1987:388-89). Thus, it was the godly magistrates who were forced to mobilize war against the hellish trinity, namely, the pope, the emperor and the false teachers, while the Anabaptists, the elect, should not soil their hands with blood (Stayer, Packull and Deppermann 1975:118). They instead must support such the military struggles through their prayers (Deppermann 1977:217).<sup>124</sup> Here Hoffman attempted to desire a revolution from above in which a military breakthrough would occur with the help of the ruling magistrates (Deppermann 1977:218). The council, however, accused Hoffman of inciting rebellion and ordered his incarceration in a Strassburg prison (Snyder 1995:213). Hoffman was willing to contrive his own imprisonment in 1533 as a necessary step to usher in the last days (Klaassen 1986:24).

On the other hand, Hoffman further developed his role as the end-time prophet through the acquaintance with the Strassburg Anabaptists, especially Hans Denck, influenced by Müntzer

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<sup>122</sup> It is, however, to be reminded that while Hoffman granted Ursula the gift of vision, he did not find her capable of interpreting those revelations. According to Hoffman, this was the only distinction of the prophetess: "so then it is apparent that this lover of God [Ursula]...has a high gift of godly Spirit; visions of divine revelation, but not an understanding of their interpretations, other than what the Spirit reveals to her and teaches. And this will be offered farther to another" (Barrett 1992:65-66). Presumably, it seems evident that Hoffman saw himself as the chosen exegete of such divine visions (Haude 2007:436).

<sup>123</sup> Notably, the Strassburg Prophets belonged to the lower class. The prophetic couple, Lienhard and Ursular Jost, were engaged in the butchery work (Mackay 2007:14).

<sup>124</sup> From this came to Hoffman's ambiguous view of political ethics, which had affected his followers, namely, the Melchiorites, in serious ways. It will be discussed later with more details centring on the event of Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster.

(Deppermann 1987:181-84, Snyder 1995:126-27).<sup>125</sup> Denck advocated the mystical theology of synergism, stressing the cooperation of man's will with God's inner Word (Packull 1977:191-99). Hoffman's adaptation of Denck's ideas was real enough to set him apart not only from the major Reformers but also from the Swiss Brethren (Stayer, Packull and Deppermann 1975:85).<sup>126</sup> By replacing Luther's doctrine of predestination with Denck's universal grace and human free will (Packull 1982:185), Hoffman blurred the lines between justification and sanctification (Deppermann 1977:217). To him, both were seen as one single process that could "be accomplished through cooperation between the divine illumination and the striving of the human will" (Deppermann 1977:217). Hoffman now believed that God not only desired all men to be saved, but also enabled the people to do salvific good works (Deppermann 1987:190). In this way, Hoffman's doctrine of the divinized man, purified by suffering, came into being (Deppermann 1987:83-4). He saw the goal of process of salvation as a deification of man (Deppermann 1977:217, Stayer, Packull and Depperman 1975:121); man could become a divinized man in this life, who was taught directly by God (Deppermann 1977:217). This was manner of the Swabian furrier's attack on the Reformation's discovery of the justification by faith alone, *sola fide* (Goertz 1996:41-43, Packull 1977:35-61). This was followed by Hoffman's open denunciation of infant baptism and the affirmation of believer's baptism (Williams and Mergal 1957:193). Since Hoffman saw baptism as a sign of betrothal between God and man (Williams 1962:447), the only baptism worthy of a mature free human being was a baptism upon confession of faith, namely, believers' baptism (Stayer 1995:267). Thus Hoffman rejected infant baptism and was himself re-baptized (Dppermann 1987:259-63, Friesen 1984:158). Taking a cue from this covenantal relationship, Hoffman even saw the Lord's Supper as the marriage of the believer to Christ and bread and wine as the wedding ring (Williams 1957:193-95, Krahn 1968:99).

Hoffman's sojourn in the city of Strassburg, in this light, was a turning point in his theological stance (Goertz 2008:28). Here, Hoffman's apocalyptic instincts were confirmed and consolidated by the Strassburg Anabaptists in general and the Strassburg Prophets in particular (Deppermann 1987:218-19). From the Anabaptists, Hoffman accepted the idea of baptism upon a confession of faith as the inner purification. At the same time, he outwardly resorted to the militant-activist apocalypticism held

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<sup>125</sup> This has triggered the scholarly concern that there might be the strongest link between Hoffman and Hut, who was baptized by Denck (Packull 1973:322, Stayer 1986:143-59, and Isaak 1986:66-82).

<sup>126</sup> His followers in Strassburg even appeared to have been distinguished from other Anabaptist groups (Stayer 1971:267).

by the Strassburg radicals (Goertz 2008:28).<sup>127</sup> In fact, these two ideas were hard to be reconciled, for the Anabaptists inclined to wait peacefully for God to bring about His justice, while the radicals maintained that “world had to prepare itself for the return of Christ through an act of great cleansing” (Friesen 1984:158). The role as the prophet in the last days assisted him in this purpose. Hoffman connected the Anabaptist pacifist idea with the violent apocalyptic vision of the Strassburg radicals (Packull 1985:146). In this way, the idea that the destruction of the godless would precede the last judgement came into being (Deppermann 1987:390). To be sure, Hoffman’s desire to see the righteous avenged and the godless judged left open the possibility of the violence; the elect (Anabaptists), through baptism, would “invulnerable” and “invincible” to usher in God’s Kingdom on earth (Deppermann 1987:390). This was an entirely new conception of the final stage of history. The previous notion of establishing the reign of God non-violently through suffering (Barrett 1996:15) was muted by the cosmic transformation, accompanying the volatile military defense of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Strassburg) against the powers of darkness (Deppermann 1977:217, Klaassen 1981:326-28).

All in all, both peaceful Anabaptism and radical apocalypticism that Hoffman acquired in Strassburg did not displace, not even subordinate, either one. Rather they were integrated into a new form of his theological *leit-motif*: restitution. In this way, baptism was seen as the eschatological sign marked the elect in preparation for the last days; Strassburg as the New Jerusalem, the prophets of Strassburg as the 144,000 “apostolic messengers” (Isaak 1986:79). Hoffman’s message of restitution had sparked lost hope of the poor and the oppressed, while the magistrates, whom Hoffman himself sought the approval, opposed to his program. In particular, his idea of the extermination of the godless before the final judgement and his prediction of earthly reign of saints until the return of Christ gave the suffering Anabaptists a new dignity, as the faithful remnants who “were about to inherit the earth carried a potentially peaceful as well as volatile revolutionary legacy” (Packull 1985:146).

### 3.1.3.2.2 The Political Ethics: the Doctrine of the Sword

What Hoffman distinctively appeared to have done in Strassburg was to have integrated two different elements into one; like a cloven hoof method, he combined both the peaceful (McLaughlin 1985: 265-78, Stayer 1971:268, Clasen 1972) and the radical (Boyd 1989:58-76, Stayer 1991) Anabaptist tenet

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<sup>127</sup> Among them, Lienhard Jost (husband of Ursula) announced that “from this city the 144,000 elect would go forth into the whole world as apostolic emissaries. After a futile attempt of the emperor to besiege Strassburg, the emissaries will rule the godless with an iron rod. The blood of the martyrs will be avenged and the new covenant will be established by baptism upon confession of faith” (Deppermann 1987:193).

into his conception of restitution (Goertz 1996:105). This remained ambivalently in his teachings on the sword (Packull 1985:130-46). To be sure, Hoffman's political ethics did not submit itself to *either-or* category of necessity. It rather stood closer to *both-and* type (Isaak 1986:77). This dialectic of peaceful and revolutionary legacy inevitably made Hoffman's political ethic controversial and ambivalent (Stayer 1971:266, Deppermann 1987:22). In one sense, Hoffman's teaching on the sword stressed pacifism. He never approved of the use of the aggressive violence (Isaak 1986:79); "the sword existed to punish evil, [but] it had no authority over the church, which followed Jesus' suffering way" (Finger 2004:297). This led to Hoffman's consistently peaceful teaching, "enduring all suffering for Christ until his expected second coming" (Krahn 1968:118). Thus, it seemed quite evident that Hoffman had taught his followers (Anabaptists) not to participate in the "slaughter of the prophets of Baal," not even during the holy war the Anabaptists to bear arms (Klaassen 1981:329, Deppermann 1977:218).

But, in other sense, Hoffman's apocalyptic conviction stirred up this pacifism from the bottom (Stayer 1971:268). In Hoffman's teaching on the sword, a ruler can be a Christian, so that the use of force and Christianity were not mutually exclusive (Deppermann 1987:10, Stayer 1971:271). Despite Hoffman denied the militarization of believers to transform the world into the Kingdom of God, his political ethics left open the possibility of use of the worldly sword by the pious magistrates (Stayer 1971:271). To him, the sword was given by God to rulers to punish evil (Isaak 1986:79). This was the reason why Hoffman provoked the Strassburg magistrates to arm themselves in the expectation of a New Jerusalem. If the godly authorities were given the right to carry out the office of the sword in order to secure the military victory of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Strassburg) against the Hellish Trinity (Stayer, Packull and Deppermann 1975:118), the Strassburg council was also called to fulfil this apocalyptic mission (Deppermann 1977:217). Once they defeated "bloodthirsty hordes of Zwinglians and Lutherans," the baptized apostolic messengers from Strasbourg would spread the knowledge of Christ and believers' baptism throughout the whole earth (Deppermann 1987:211).

This led Hoffman to advocate an "eschatological revolution from above" (Goertz 1996:105), a revolution "conducted by a pious king, instructed by a prophet" (Stayer 1991:124). In this light, his revolutionary ideas presupposed a military breakthrough with the help of the legitimate political authority (*Obrigkeit*) (Goertz 1982:187); "by order of the perfect, who do not defile themselves with blood, the faithful (the pious magistrates of the free imperial cities) must seize the sword of vengeance and exterminate the godless" (Goertz 1996:105). Hoffman's desire for a revolution from above was

not new.<sup>128</sup> In fact, during the whole life –from his early days as a follower of Luther even to his last days in prison, Hoffman longed for recognition by the authorities (Krahn 1968:116). But, his catalytic role which often led iconoclastic riots by the common people, hardly recommended him to the magistrates (Deppermann 1987:42- 49). Hoffman’s consecutive imprisonment and exclusion from the city magistrates (Dorpat, Stockholm, Kiel and Strasbourg) also proved that he lacked the approval of the magistrates (Packull 1985:136). On the contrary, “[Hoffman] was perceived as a madman, fanatic or dangerous revolutionary” by the authorities (Negru 2016:188). To be sure, there was fat chance for this uneducated lay preacher whose messages were defiant and subversive against bishop and magistrates (Packull 1985:139). Only “religiously chaotic and socially agitated situations” received Hoffman in a piecemeal fashion. In their power struggle, the powers of the new faith –“ruling princes, urban magistrates, nobles, Protestant clergy” –had given their tactic approval for his message (Deppermann 1977:218). Thus, Lutherans used Hoffman as their theological arsenal to attack the old Church or Zwinglians against Lutherans, but when they squeezed the orange from him, they abandoned Hoffman without mercy (Deppermann 1977:218-19). Nonetheless, the transitory support from the authorities –especially from Livonian magistracy, the King of Denmark and Ulrich von Dornum, the East Frisian Chancellor –gave Hoffman not only an expectation of a pious *Obrigkeit*, but also a desire of revolution from above, despite his primary support came from the lower orders (Packull 1985:135, Deppermann 1977:219).

In light of this, Hoffman’s revolution from above was closely related to his interim theocracy (Deppermann 1987:211). In his political ethics, “the campaign of vengeance against the godless” to be done before the second coming of Christ (Goertz 1996:105). By supporting this eschatological and revolutionary activity, Hoffman added urgency to his own theme of theocracy, including the tension of living between already-but-not-yet aspects of God’s Kingdom (Deppermann 1987:390). On the one sens, the end was *already* here; Hoffman believed that he lived in the dying hours of the kingdom of the world and age of antichrist, while the word of the Spirit was destroying that kingdom before his eyes (Kyle 1998:59, Deppermann 1987:76-8). This meant, at the same time, Hoffman had received the Spirit of the end-time, so that he now *already* lived in the new age of the Spirit (Williams 1962:260, Klaassen 1986:25). On the other sense, the end had *yet* to be consummated. Thus, Hoffman was waiting for the definite sign from the Lord, “the collapse of the forces of Hell and the establishment of the New Jerusalem” (Goertz 1982:186-87). The pious rulers, instructed by him, had earned the right to judge

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<sup>128</sup> For example, Hoffman asserted that the Lord had chosen Frederick of Denmark to be one of the two kings mentioned in Revelation, chapter 12, who would protect the spiritual Jerusalem. He belonged to the faithful servant of the Lord who helps the pious and is willing to do everything to the glory of God (Krahn 1968:89).

the godless, or to take their vengeance upon them to prepare the way for the return of Christ before the final judgement (Deppermann 1977:217). From this vantage point, a theocratic intermediate kingdom came into being (Finger 2004:532). With a belief that he lived in the overlap of the two kingdoms, which is, the kingdom now and the not yet, Hoffman urged to establish an earthly interim kingdom, prepared by both prophet and king and preceding the *parousia* (Stayer 1991:124).

Furthermore, Hoffman's concept of interim kingdom served to legitimate his revolution from above as a sort of tactic manual. This once again revealed a revolutionary character of Hoffman's political ethic (Boyd 1989:58-76, Stayer 1991). Hoffman sketched a picture of a coming earthly theocracy under the tension between two kingdoms, the present and future kingdom (Krahn 1968:115-16). Implicit in it was there would be conflicts between Christ's first and final comings and between the godly and the ungodly (Goertz 1996:105). This included the annihilation of the ungodly before the day of judgement (Deppermann 1987:390). Here the necessity of establishing an interim kingdom on earth came into being (Deppermann 1977:217). Hoffman saw it as the prefiguration of the kingdom to come, ushered by the cooperation between the inspired prophets and the pious *Obrigkeit* (Stayer 1991:124). Yet, of greater concern to Hoffman, in this regard, was not *who* and *when*, but *how*; "How could this interim kingdom be built?" For him, the main thrust of this interregnum was a revolutionary one: the destruction of the godless (Snyder 1995:204-5). But his relatively less interest about *who* exactly would be responsible for the purging, and *when* the purging was to begin, left his followers the ambivalent legacy (Packull 1985:146). This ambiguous heritage of Hoffman had culminated in Münster. The radical Anabaptists who flocked to Münster wanted to expedite the *parousia* by establishing a global theocracy, a New Jerusalem (Pleysier 2014:59). For the Münster Anabaptist believed that if the pious authority hesitated to play its apocalyptic role, it was their duty, as the apostolic messengers, to take the sword to usher in the Kingdom of God (Snyder 1995:219). Thus was created by Hoffman's fame as the intellectual progenitor of kingdom of Münster, who provided its important ideological presuppositions (Deppermann 1982:187).

To be sure, Hoffman's political ethics was not monotonous (Goertz 1996:105). It crossed the boundaries of pacifism and radical violence (Packull 1985:146). Hoffman, on the one sense, held a strong commitment to non-violence, following the footsteps of Jesus. Thus was followed by his disapprove of the elects to take up the sword (Waite 1988:312). Even in his advocacy of revolution from above, none of the violence occurred at the hands of the elects, the Anabaptists (Stayer, Packull and Deppermann 1975:118). The final vengeance would not be undertaken by the believers, but by the pious rulers who tolerated the Anabaptists (Stayer 1976: xxvii, Waite 1988:312). So, "Hoffman's

apocalyptic message implied peace, not revolution, for his true believers” (Stayer 1972:211-26). Yet, on the other sense, Hoffman’s position on the sword was not silent. Characteristics was rather his open willingness to resort to violence (Boyd 1989:58-76). In his political ethics, the destruction of the godless was certain, although the elects themselves did not commit violence. Claiming to the militant apocalypticism, the godless uniformly experienced violent punishment and Hoffman offered no explicit condemnation of violence that served this end (Stayer 1972:220). Most of all, it was Hoffman himself who encouraged the pious *Obrigkeit* to fully participate in the violent military defense which ushered in the Kingdom of God (Stayer 1991:124). This provided the backdrop for the establishment of the Anabaptist reign of Münster, the theocratic interim kingdom (Goertz 1996:105). Thus, Hoffman’s political ethics was fluid and dynamic enough that “a faithful remnant was about to inherit the earth carried a potentially peaceful as well as volatile revolutionary legacy” (Packull 1985:146, Deppermann 1987:22).

### **3.1.3.2.3 The Prophet against Luther**

There was a tincture of Lutheranism behind Hoffman’s ambivalent teaching on the sword (Stayer 1971:267). No doubt Hoffman had Lutheran period; he had considered Luther as his teacher and had embarked on his ministry as a Lutheran missionary (Packull 1990:146). Luther’s personal sanction of Hoffman’s ministry at Kiel proved how great his loyalty to Luther was (Tinsley 2001:98, 101). Hoffman, in principle, shared Luther’s view “on justification by faith, predestination and even obedience to unjust government” (Packull 1990:147). By using Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms, Hoffman even “permitted Christians to accept official positions in order to maintain general order” (Deppermann 1987:20). Indeed, Hoffman had once fallen within the purview of Lutheran loyalty to government (Deppermann 1982:178-90). Yet, Hoffman’s strong apocalyptic tendency, which was latent from the beginning, and his later conversion into Anabaptism had gradually put him off from Lutheran camp (Snyder and Hecht 1996:247). Soon the polemical dispute between Hoffman and the Lutheran clergy frequently occurred. Hoffman no longer did fit the Luther’s reform movement, but rather he was opposed to Lutheran doctrines (Bailey 1990:57).

Hoffman’s open break with the Lutheran reformers centred on the issues of baptism and the Eucharist (Lindberg 1983:94-5). According to Hoffman, baptism was an internal rebirth accompanying purification through the blood of Christ (Deppermann 1987:341, Pater 1977:184, 186). To strengthen his cause, Hoffman described baptism in covenantal term, as the sign of the betrothal of the believer to the heavenly bridegroom, that is, believer’s baptism (Williams and Mergal 1957:188-89). Its religious counterpart was pedobaptism which was taken for granted by the Lutheran reformers.

Hoffman rejected it due to its no biblical evidence;

Pedobaptism is absolutely not from God but rather is practiced, out of willfulness by anti-Christians and the satanic crowd, in opposition to God and all his commandment, will, and desire. Verily, it is an eternal abomination to him. Woe, woe to all such blind leaders who willfully publish lies for the truth and ascribe to God that which he has not commanded and will never in eternity command. How serious a thing it is to fall into the hands of God and willfully to mock and desecrate the Prize of God the Highest? Yea, all who do this will be stricken with heavy, great, and eternal blindness, and they will inherit the eternal wrath of God. For God is the enemy of all liars, and none of these inherits or has a part in his Kingdom. Their inheritance and portion is rather eternal damnation (Williams and Mergal 1957:193)

Like baptism, Hoffman gave the Lord's Supper the covenantal understanding and denied the doctrine of real presence of Christ (Bailey 1990:183). The Lord's Supper for him was the marriage feast in which bread and wine symbolized the ring (Williams 1957:193-95, Krahn 1968:99). He plainly stated that Christ cannot contain in the bread or the wine. Rather the earthly elements were only signs for the spiritual food which acted as a remembrance (Snyder 1995:211). Hoffman thus affirmed that Christ;

takes bread (just as a bridegroom takes a ring or a piece of gold) and gives himself to his bride with the bread (just as the bridegroom gives himself to his bride with the ring)...so that just as the bride eats a physical bread in her mouth and drinks the wine, so also through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ she has physically received and eaten the noble Bridegroom with his blood in such a way that the Bridegroom and the outpouring of his blood is [one] with hers... She [is] in him and, again, he is in her, and they together are thus one body, one flesh, one spirit, and one passion (Williams and Mergal 1957:193-94)

From this viewpoint, Hoffman developed his distinct doctrine of the heavenly flesh of Christ (Lindberg 1983:95). Here he held that in the incarnation, Christ had indeed become flesh, but this must have had heavenly origin, since all human flesh had been corrupted because of the fall (Pleysier 2014:33). Hoffman reasoned that Jesus received his physical substance not from Mary but rather directly from heaven, so that "there existed only one nature, and a heavenly flesh" (Backus 2003:191).

Jesus Christ is alone the Word of God, who himself became flesh through his divine power, and received nothing from the Virgin Mary; else she would not have remained a virgin. He is along [from] the seed of the Spirit. Even as the water in the jars at the wedding of Cana became wine through divine power, and took into itself no wine from the jars nor from any other wine. As the bread from heaven, he [Christ] fell from heaven and became himself a seed [corn], but received nothing from the earth (Beachy 1977:80)

This doctrine had resulted from his belief that "only heavenly flesh was sufficiently strong enough to overcome the powers of evil" (Klaassen 1991:27-8, Williams 1962:330). Yet, the consequence of Hoffman's doctrine of heavenly flesh of Christ was the return to monophysite Christology, as opposed to a Chalcedonian Christology, affirming both Christ's deity and humanity (Deppermann 1987:201). In Hoffman's Christology, Jesus was more divine than human being (Tinsley 2001:106). This departed from the orthodox Christology and Hoffman moved further away from Luther (Pleysier 2014:33).

Hoffman's radical thoughts, however, were well received and even advocated by the Strassburg Anabaptists and radicals (Snyder and Hecht 1996:273-87). Under the influence of Hans Denck,

Hoffman rejected the Lutheran doctrines of predestination and justification (Lindberg 1983:92). By emphasizing man's part in the relationship with God, Hoffman rather held a synergistic view which assigned human will a place in the acquisition of salvation (Rainbow 1990:53). Although God's saving grace was a gift, its acceptance, according to Hoffman, was up to human beings (Finger 2004:126, Deppermann 1987:223-24). Thus was stressed by the human cooperation with the divine grace in the process of salvation (Lindberg 1983:92). Hoffman's soteriology in this sense was a forerunner of Arminianism (Rainbow 1990:53). To sustain the link between divine grace and human free will, Hoffman turned to the notion of deification (Stayer, Packull and Depperman 1975:121), which "had implication for believers and their transformed status" (Koop 2016:255). Hoffman believed that "divinization came through participation in Jesus' flesh" (Finger 2004:35); with God becoming human, humanity could become divine, experiencing a form of divinization (Koop 2004:100). Here, salvation for Hoffman was divinization, or to be more specific, becoming a perfected and spiritual man, who had free will (Deppermann 1987:240).

Hoffman's doctrine of divinization became more spiritual and radical by the contacts he made in Strassburg, especially with so-called the Strassburg Prophets, who had strong enthusiastic and apocalyptic overtones (Deppermann 1987:218-19). Hoffman, harnessed by their militant-activist ideas, expected his divinized converts to be nearly invulnerable as the apostolic messengers, foretold in the book of Revelation (Deppermann 1987:211). Thus was created by Hoffman's twofold apocalyptic scenario. The first-stage was full of the great cosmic struggles between the godly and the ungodly (Goertz 1996:105). Yet, in it, the strategic role, the use of the sword, to be played by the pious authorities, not by the elects (Petersen 1993:92). The appointment of Strassburg as a spiritual Jerusalem, an earthly theocracy, was the climax of a military campaign before the *parousia* (Krahn 1968:115-16). The second stage was, however, characterized throughout by grace, victory, and hope (Rublack 2017:112). Only when the triumph of the godly was complete, the baptized 144,000 apostolic messengers (divinized converts) would go on a mission both invulnerably and irresistibly to fill the world with the light of the true Gospel (Deppermann 1977:217). Hoffman's apocalyptic vision was confirmed by the Strassburg Prophets and his popularity was enhanced by the common people (Packull 1985:136). Yet, Hoffman's apocalyptic enthusiasm greatly distressed Luther, especially owing to its lingering legacy of Müntzer and the Peasants' War (Bailey 1990:180). When Luther even considered Hoffman a dangerous *schwärmer* who hindered his reforming movements (Williams 1962:388), his break with Luther was complete. Hoffman now became an independent sect leader whose apocalyptic enthusiasm expected for the necessity of a final Elijah mission by force (Petersen 1993:94).

Nonetheless, Hoffman's warning of the divinized converts (Anabaptists) against revolutionary activity suggested that his apocalypticism had still fallen within the purview of Luther's two kingdoms theory (Deppermann 1987:10, 20). Although Luther distinguished between two kingdoms as the "worldly regiment as the left hand of the kingdom and the spiritual regiment of God's right hand" (Sanders 1964:29), he purposed to show not two different kingdoms, but the "organic unity of both realms," that is, of gospel and of law (Bauman 1964:49). This meant "all *Obrigkeit* is of God and therefore *under* God" (Horsch 1951:38), so that the Christians should offer the obedience to the civil community and its officials (Barth 1960:159). Like Luther, Hoffman saw the closer relation between the two kingdoms and a more positive role for secular *Obrigkeit* (Deppermann 1987:10). Indeed, Hoffman's upholding of Luther's doctrine of obedience to the secular authority made his apocalyptic program less lurid (Deppermann 1977:216). With a hope of the cooperation with pious *Obrigkeit*, it even served as a sort of deterrent to his militant apocalypticism (Goertz 2004:81).

Hoffman's revolution from above, in this sense, was a winning alternative to the antithesis of his peaceful and radical strand (Deppermann 1987:57-75). By limiting the use of force to the pious secular rulers, Hoffman's followers kept themselves from joining the military campaign (Goertz 2008:28). In this way, Hoffman's political ethics could meet the needs of both believers' non-resistance and the false teachers' punishment; Luther's incompatible and his compatible view on Christianity and the sword (Stayer, Packull and Deppermann 1975:117-18, Packull 1985:146). In that sense, there is an interesting parallel between Hoffman and Hut's political ethics in terms of the dynamic interplay between the patient revolutionary and the passionate reactionary. The difference, however, was that Hut tried to integrate both of them into one for taking the dual function. Instead Hoffman sought to separate them to assign a different role for each other. To Hoffman, the pious magistrates took the role of the patient revolutionary, who participated in the violent punishment, while his divinized converts, or apostolic messengers, remained as the passionate reactionary, who should not soil their hands with blood, but "support the military struggle by work on the fortifications and through prayer" (Deppermann 1977:217). With such bizarre mixtures, Hoffman's apocalypticism became something unique, and even ambivalent. From the revolutionary point of view, it was radically conservative, but, from the reactionary viewpoint, it was conservatively radical. Indeed, Luther's doctrine of obedience to the secular *Obrigkeit* for Hoffman was a double-edged sword which served for not only the radicals, but also the reactionary (Packull 1985:146).

In sum, despite Hoffman began his career as a Lutheran and an active participant in Luther's movement of reform, he did not remain himself as little Luther. In fact, Hoffman's exodus from Luther was already

lunched during his early time (Bailey 1990:175-90). Hoffman's favorite identification as the prophet against the learned hinted that Hoffman did not fit the "Lutheranizing trend" (Bailey 1990:179). Since Hoffman was influencing common opinion against Luther, he was considered a hindrance to his reform and thereby was rejected by him, on whom he had set his hopes (Snyder and Hecht 1996:247). But in Strassburg, Hoffman was hailed as the second Elijah by the Strassburg Prophets, who were mostly despised by the world (Barrett 1996:278-79). Hoffman's radical thoughts –his challenge against the doctrine of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist; his adaptation of a monophysite Christology, namely, a heavenly flesh of Christ, his supremacy of believer's baptism over infant baptism, and his idea of man's divinization by suffering –comprised a significant theological front against Lutheran reformers (Tinsley 2001:98-122). Hoffman's break with Luther was complete when the militant-activist idea penetrated into his apocalypticism through the Strassburg radicals (Deppermann 1987:218-19). Apocalyptic excess in Hoffman's political ethics largely run its course. Hoffman shared a strong commitment to violence to usher in God's kingdom, despite he was aware of Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms and obedience to the secular *Obrigkeits* as a safeguard against crusade (Packull 1990:147).

### **3.1.3.3 Conclusion: Hoffman the Radical Reformer as Being-in-the-Revelatory Common Men**

Hoffman's budding career made it clear that he was a Lutheran missionary (Williams 1962:387). Hoffman's open espousal of the central doctrines of the Wittenberg Reformers was clear indication of his loyalty to Luther (Packull 1990:146). In most all areas, he defended Luther's theological positions, such as, justification by faith alone, predestination and the duty to obey the secular authorities (Knoll 1973:49-50). But Hoffman under Luther was not powerful enough to win over his own particular followings. It was rather his different ideas which put the populace into a wave of enthusiasm (Packull 1985:135-37). Indeed, Hoffman's merciless attack on the existing church as the whore of Babylon; his prophecies of the imminent end of the world and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God and his promise on God's preferential option for the poor and the oppressed in salvation, not the mighty or the learned, attracted to the attention of the lower orders (Finger 2004:35, Snyder and Hecht 1996:273-87). Encouraged by it, Hoffman channeled his hopes for change in an apocalyptic direction. A group of radical Anabaptists in Strassburg became his strongest support to solidify his apocalyptic program (Balslerack 2014:36). Their militant-activist ideas inspired violent actions in Hoffman (Deppermann 1987:218-19). This manifested in his apocalyptic calculations on two three-and-one-half-periods as constituting the messianic cataclysm and the last judgement in 1533 (Deppermann 1987:67). Then, Hoffman declared the Anabaptists as apostolic messengers, or divinized converts, and the city of Strassburg as the spiritual New Jerusalem (Isaak 1986:79). Thus was created by Hoffman's revolution from above, whose military breakthrough was assigned to the ruling magistrates, while the re-baptized

apostolic messengers should not take up arms themselves (Stayer, Packull and Deppermann 1975:118).

Nonetheless, the shadow of old Hoffman still remained in new Hoffman. Lutheran obedience to the pious *Obrigkeit* put his apocalyptic program under the umbrella of the legal authorities (Packull 1990:147). From this was born of Hoffman's ambiguity in terms of his teaching on the sword (Stayer 1971:266). On the one sense, Hoffman's political ethics was revolutionary (Boyd 1989:58-76, Stayer 1991). Hoffman's followers in Livonia, Stockholm, Eastern Holstein, Holland and Westphalia, in so far as they belonged to the lower classes, found in his message a beacon of hope for a total transformation of the world (Packull 1985:135-37). It included the necessity of enacting vengeance on religious and secular tyrants (Goertz 1996:105). On the others, it was reactionary (McLaughlin 1985:265-78, Stayer 1971:268, Clasen 1972). Those who had wielded political power began to interpret Hoffman's message to their own advantage (Deppermann 1977:218). They just wanted to exploit him either as a powerful arsenal to help attain their own limited political goals, or merely a cannon fodder when the occasion demanded (Deppermann 1987:383). Therefore, as soon as the political leaders realized the revolutionary undercurrent in Hoffman's activities, they quickly withdrew their support (Deppermann 1977:218-19). At any rate, this eventually oscillated Hoffman's political ethics between the two spectrums: peaceful and revolutionary. From this ambivalent position, Hoffman lost his iron grip on the common people (Deppermann 1987:382-83) and two diverse followers came into being; the peaceful and militant Melchiorites (Krahn 1698:118, Petersen 1993:97). Its division had fateful consequences. In 1534, the latter group actually led the political takeover of the city of Münster to usher in the New Jerusalem (McDaniel 2007:66). Hoffman's ambivalent teaching on the sword, as a result, made a significant contribution to the establishment of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster (Pleyster 2014:59, Deppermann 1982:187). All in all, Hoffman's life and theology constituted a natural transition; from that of the prophet against the learned to that of the prophet of the last days, which eventually led into that of the prophet against Luther. Thus was created by Hoffman, the radical as being-in-the-revelatory common men.

### **3.1.4 John Bockelson (John of Leiden) (1509-1536)**

#### **3.1.4.1 Biographical Sketch**

John Bockelson, better known as John of Leiden, was born in 1509 as the illegitimate child between the burgher-master of a village near Leiden in Holland and a bond woman from Westphalia (Bax 1903:114). His educational opportunities were limited. Young Bockelson, rather, had learned the tailor's trade and travelled in various provinces of the Netherlands as well as in England (Bax 1903:115). In Leiden, he married the widow of a boatman and opened a tavern (Baring-Gould

1891:254, Arthur 1999:70). Bockelson had also engaged in mercantile enterprises, but without success (Krahn 1968:134). In the literary societies, called the Chambers of Rhetoric at Leiden,<sup>129</sup> he became a prominent figure and was popular as a player and poet (Verduin 1960:196, Horsch 1935:135). In consequence of his failure in business, Bockelson secretly left his family in the summer of 1533 and went to the city of Münster where he remained a few weeks (Arthur 1999:70). There Bockelson refocused his efforts on theology, specifically studying Thomas Müntzer and John Matthijsson's writings (Bax 1903:115). Having returned to Leiden, young Bockelson made common cause with the prophet John Matthijsson and was baptized by him (Bax 1903:115).

Following his baptism, Bockelson was sent out as an apostle by Matthijsson to Münster (Krahn 1968:134). In Münster Bockelson established the significant contacts with the prominent figures; he associated with Knipperdolling, a wealthy merchant, and Rothmann, the famous Lutheran pastor and theologian, and later married a daughter of the former (Arthur 1999:70-1). Bockelson had witnessed crucial days in the development of the religious, social, and political life of Münster. This enabled him to give Matthijsson an eyewitness account of the changing condition in Münster (Krahn 1968:134-35). When Bockelson again arrived in Münster along with his companion on January 13, 1534 the Anabaptist fervor had already taken over the city (Cohn 1961). Under the initiative of Matthijsson's two emissaries –Bartholomeus Boekbinder and Willem de Kuitper, mass conversions and rebaptism had swept the city of Münster itself and in its wake, Rothmann, together with other prominent leading figures in the city, had become re-baptizer (Krahn 1968:135). John Matthijsson's arrival in early February 1534 was the climax of the Anabaptist campaign of Münster; he gave the city "a fierce militancy" (Cohn 1961:260). By drawing an enormous amount of charismatic enthusiasm (Krahn 1968:138), Matthijsson enforced many of his policies with divine authority; all property was held in common and the Catholic and Lutheran population in Münster were expelled, while all who remained in the city were forced to be re-baptized (Klötzer 2007:234). He finally identified Münster as the New Jerusalem (Bax 1903:143).

However, the power of gravity fell into John Bockelson, Matthijsson's second in command, owing to the sudden death of Matthijsson on April 5, 1534 (Goertz 1996:30-1). At first, Bockelson's credentials were actually not impressive compared with his predecessor (Rammstedt 1966:75 quoted by Eichler

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<sup>129</sup> Bockelson was known as an active rhetorician in his early years. On the basis of the fact that there were several groups of radical Reformers who had used some of the forms of Dutch popular drama, performed by the Chambers of Rhetoric, some scholars have suggested that the Chambers of Rhetoric had something to do with the rise of Anabaptism, especially of Dutch Anabaptism (Verduin 1960:192-96, Waite 1991:227-55).

1981:47); he was of a secondary rank compared with other prophets, starting his career as a tailor, a salesman, and an amateur actor, all of 25 years of age (Klaassen 1992:82). Nevertheless, Bockelson had boldly claimed that God had told him in a dream that he was to be John Matthijsson's successor (Horsch 1935:135).<sup>130</sup> By invoking God, Bockelson stressed divine nature of his ordination (Arthur 1999:69-72). This convinced the Münsterites who came under attack from the Prince Bishop and thereby prepared for resistance under a new leadership (Dawson 2010:113-132). Following a vision, Bockelson proclaimed himself king of the New Jerusalem (Vidmar 2005:204). Immediate actions were essential to solidify his authority. The city council then would be dissolved into the twelve elders of Münster –most of them were friends of Bockelson –in order to rule the new Israel (Horsch 1935:136, Baaker 1986:114). Since Bockelson began instituting other changes in the city's organization, primarily along the Old Testament line, Münster became transformed into a theocracy, even practicing polygamy (Stayer 1972:255-74). Although Bockelson, for this matter, faced an angry backlash from within (Williams 1962:372),<sup>131</sup> his leadership was even more strengthened than before after this opposition had been settled down (Williamson 2000:29). Bockelson himself eventually took sixteen concubines and among them were a daughter of Knipperdolling, as well as his leading wife, Divara, Matthijsson's widow (Horsch 1935:138).

In the aftermath of military successes against bishop's mercenary army, Bockelson had established his authority all the more (Klaassen 1992:83). In September of 1534, after another great victory against the army of siege, Bockelson used this triumph as a chance to make his position secure (Rothbard 1990:151-52). This manifested in deification, identifying himself as the Messiah (Rammstedt 1966:79 quoted by Eichler 1981:51). Dusentschur, a self-proclaimed prophet in the city, anointed Bockelson, son of David, who was to rule over the whole world (Snyder 1995:149). Now Bockelson became both Messiah and king (Rothbard 1990:152). Yet, as the siege of Münster by bishop became intensified, this tailor King came to realize that Münster, despite its successful defenses, could be saved only by outsider help (Mackay 2016:4). Twenty-seven apostles, mostly prominent ministers, were sent forth to

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<sup>130</sup> This implies that Bockelson's act, consciously or unconsciously, served as both a religious and political manoeuvre. One episode proved how Bockelson's religious behaviour had affected on and appealed to the people in Münster politically. Early in May, 1534, Bockelson, in a frenzy, ran naked and then fell into a silent ecstasy for three days. When speech returned to him, Bockelson, before the population, announced God's revelation to him, namely, the replacement of the old constitution of the town by a new one under his leadership (Cohn 1961:291-92).

<sup>131</sup> Not only did Rothmann and other preachers at first persistently resist Bockelson on this point. Many common Münsterites had testified publicly against this proposed offensive practice. Among them, a group of citizen led by Henry Mollenhecke had even imprisoned King Bockelson on 29 July in an effort to force him to abandon polygamy. Yet, Bockelson was freed again by the aid of his followings and Mollenhecke and forty-eight others were cruelly put to death. So polygamy was introduced without any further hindrances (Williams 1962:372).

new Anabaptist sympathizers in other towns to help defend Münster (Cohn 1961:276). Most of them, however, fell into the hands of the authorities and were executed (Williams 1962:374-75). In addition to the failure of the promised deliverance from outside, famine obtained the besieged Münsterites by the end of that winter (Rothbard 1990:154). The situation worked against Bockelson; there was widespread discontent which mitigated his earlier success (Mackay 2016:4).

In the midst of this terrible situation, for the amusement of the people, King Bockelson gave feasts in the market place, followed by dancing in which he himself took part till late night (Rothbard 1990:154). Theatrical plays were also given. But all failed to satisfy the starving people of the city: “the famine increased from day to day” (Horsch 1935:142). Despite Bockelson’s last ditch attempt to maintain control and loyalty, thousands of Münsterites were driven to escape the city due to “starvation and terror” (Arthur 1999:208). Under these circumstances, Münster’s formidable city wall was collapsed not by outside forces, but by inside treason, reveling weaknesses in the city’s defense to the bishop’s army (Mackay 2016:4-5). As a result, the New Jerusalem finally came to a bloody end on 25 June, 1535 (Rothbard 1990:154). Almost all of the inhabitants were promptly and ruthlessly slaughtered (Cohn 1961:279-80, Kirchhoff 1962:77-170 quoted by Driedger 2016:17).<sup>132</sup> Among the Anabaptist leaders taken were King Bockelson and his close collaborators, Bernhard Knipperdolling and Bernhard Krechting (Williams 1962:574). After a period of questioning and imprisonment, they were tortured to death with red-hot tongs on February 1536 (Horsch 1935:143). Eyewitnesses to this bloody drama were the bishop, who was sitting at a special armchair, as well as a large crowd (Hsia 1988:51-70). Their remains were placed in iron cages and hung from the tower of St. Lambert’s Church as a warning against heresy and rebellion (Mackay 2016:5, Snyder 1995:150). The name Bockelson, a legendary tailor king, became a byword of scorn and opprobrium attached to the fanatical criminal.

#### **3.1.4.2 Theological Perspective**

The sudden death of Matthjisson provided Bockelson both opportunity as well as challenge. He assumed to fill the leadership vacuum, but realized his lack of charismatic authority.<sup>133</sup> Bockelson was nowhere close to his predecessor, Matthjisson, whose acts were “sanctioned by his pneuma”

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<sup>132</sup> In fact, some 3,500 to 4,000 women and an unknown number of children survived the conquest of the city. But a year later there were 216 women and nineteen men in the city who had renounced their vices and had proven to be innocent (Keressenbroch 2007:700, 736, 833-56, Krahn 1968:159-60).

<sup>133</sup> Since it had been specifically suggested by O. Rammstedt, based on Max Weber’s theory of the routinization of charisma (1966), this line of interpretation was seconded by K-H. Kirchhoff (1973), J. M. Stayer (1986) and R. Klötzer (2007). Whereas many scholars tended to consider John Bockelson as a charismatic leader. Magrit Eichler (1981), in particular, has emphasized Bockelson’s prophetic leadership by revising the aspect of Weber’s theory.

(Rammstedt 1966:75 quoted by Eichler 1981:47). The problems of succession must be solved. Thus was promoted by a process of bureaucratization and “routinization of charisma” (Weber 1978:249); “prophecy [was] completely in the service of institution” under Bockelson (Eichler 1981:49). He then attempted to work through the Münster citizen, especially Bernhard Rothmann, who had never received much attention under Matthijsson (Eichler 1981:47). In this light, Matthijsson’s simple division of people as the godly and ungodly was no longer beneficial for legitimating his position (Eichler 1981:47). Bockelson rather reconfirmed the earlier categorizations of natives and immigrants (Rammstedt 1966:75 quoted by Eichler 1981:49). This meant Bockelson’s legitimacy involved considerable give and take between the immigrant radicals and the native reformers (Klötzer 2007:244). Indeed, Bockelson was caught in the middle between the power of Matthijsson, the representative of immigrant prophetic group, and Rothmann, that of native civic elites (Klötzer 2007:234).

From this vantage point, Bockelson’s theological perspective found its rightful place in his mediatory role between the immigrant radical prophets and the native reactionary reformers in the city of Münster. Thus, the conjuring of Bockelson’s extraordinary powerful leadership does not make for sound interpretation. A much closer to his real figure was, rather, to be seen in his parasitic relationship with the dual power structure. Since Bockelson suffered from a lack of his authority, he became dependent on his eclectic leadership; political, socio-economic and religious tactics were inevitably designed to appease the concerns of both the radical prophets of Matthijsson’s group and the reactionary reformers of the Rothmann’s group (Kirchhoff 1973). The question, then, arises whether he was really a genuine charismatic leader, or an ordinary successor whose legitimation derived from the charisma of the preceding leader. If he was an eclectic leader, how is it that John Bockelson was maintaining his balance between the two different groups? How is that important for his deification, which culminated in the recognition of him as the Messiah, as it related to the people’s recourse to the Münster Kingdom? The response to these questions is to be considered in chapter 5.3.3 in greater depth. This chapter is particularly to deal with the relationship of Bockelson with John Matthijsson and Bernhard Rothmann, and further with details of his with the common people in Münster, to arrive at a clearer understanding of his role as the radical reformer, as being-in-the-rhetorical common men.

### **3.2 CONCLUSION: THE RADICAL REFORMERS AS BEING-IN-THE DIALECTIC OF GURU-AVATAR**

It becomes evident that these four radical Reformers had inexorably set them up in a certain way of being-in-the-common men. To be sure, so-called the bastard line (*sic*) of radicals were willing to share their lot with the common men with different emphases. Thus was created by the distinctive

characteristics of each of them, namely, (1) Thomas Müntzer as being-in-the-retributive common men; (2) Hans Hut as being-in-the-restorative common men; (3) Melchior Hoffman as being-in-the-revelatory common men; and (4) John Bockelson as being-in-the-rhetorical common men. This means there was close tie between four radical Reformers and the common men; the former can be conceived of only in their relationship with the latter and vice-versa. This mutual and dynamic correlation proves then that both are no longer bound to the dualistic principle of *either-or*, but are to be put in *both-and* categorization. In this light of understanding, the radical Reformers and the common men are neither two, nor one, but are more than one and even more than two.

Furthermore, such mutual interdependence between the two attends to a new connecting thread: the dialectical unification of *guru-avatar*. On the one sense, what is unique about the sixteenth-century four radical Reformers was not their *guru*-ship, but their *avatar*-hood, that is, the incarnation of the common men. As the eyewitnesses to the oppressive conditions of the simple folk, the radicals could not neatly separate the religious world from the secular one (Matheson 2007:4). They rather found the need for the reformation in the reality of the suffering common men. This organic solidarity, or identification, with the common men led the radicals to become the *avatars* of the common. On the other sense, the common men, too, were changed in a significant and innovative way; they were “becoming visible,” or “wising up” though this close encounter with the radicals (Matheson 2007:260). In this way, the common men came to the forefront in the Reformation as well. They critically and creatively began to accommodate their own self to the Reformation as the *avatars* of the radical Reformers. This eventually led to the dynamic interconnection between the two agents as a coherent whole; the radical Reformers as the *avatars* of the common men and the common men as the *avatars* of the radical Reformers. Like the Möbius strip, *guru* and *avatar* are not juxtaposed, nor is the one absorbed by the other, but rather remains in a reciprocal and dynamic relation. Therefore, depicting the radical Reformers as the *avatars* of the common men does not diminish their practical *guru*-ship, or characterizing the common men as the *guru* of the radical Reformers does not dispense with their potential *avatar*-hood. Here, the principle of *guru-avatar* underlines the mutual interpenetration and interdependence of the two agents who must paradoxically be regarded together as the focal co-agent of the Reformation.

From this vantage point, Thomas Müntzer, Hans Hut, Melchior Hoffman, and John Bockelson (John of Leiden) were a whole that, to put it in a simplistic way, consisted of a *guru*-ship element and an *avatar*-hood element. These bastard line (*sic*) of four radical Reformers were, therefore, *guru* of the common men, and at the same time they were the *avatars* of the common men. Significantly enough,

since each of them, in their chain of connection, left an indelible imprint on the rise of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, this dialectic of *guru-avatar* existed in symbiosis with radical Anabaptism in Münster

## CHAPTER 4

### RE-READING KOREAN MINJUNG THEOLOGY AS BEING-IN-THE-KOREAN MINJUNG

#### 4.1 KOREAN MINJUNG THEOLOGY AS THE KEYHOLE TO THE RADICAL REFORMERS

Taking a cue from the dynamic interplay between the radicals and the common people, this chapter revisits Korean Minjung Theology, a fully contextualized form of theology, which has taken seriously a combination of Jesus and minjung (common people) in favour of Christian social responsibility. It in this way integrates and expands this non-dual relationship between Jesus and minjung (minjung and minjung theologians) in Korean Minjung Theology into that of the radical Reformers and the common men in Münster both critically and creatively. Here, Korean Minjung Theology conversely serves as the keyhole to look at the radical Reformation and the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster anew. In so doing, it may open a new path for a creative synthesis, namely, a double-mirror reading<sup>134</sup> from the *avatar*-hood of the radical Reformers (the first mirror reading) to that of the minjung theologians (the second mirror reading). By seeing the radical Reformers (the first mirror) through the minjung theologians (the second mirror), or by seeing Anabaptist Münster Kingdom through Korean Minjung Theology, it alerts one to the need for critical reflection about the portrayal of Münster Anabaptism, in which its dark images have been reproduced frequently and uncritically.

#### 4.2 KOREAN MINJUNG THEOLOGY

##### 4.2.1 The Rise of Korean Minjung Theology

Korean Minjung Theology<sup>135</sup> was “a contextual theology of the suffering people in Korea” (Moltmann 2000:252). It is a doing theology includes the suffering minjung<sup>136</sup> as its central subject. Korean

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<sup>134</sup> The term ‘mirror-reading,’ as its letter indicates, refers to looking at an ‘image’ (part of a conversation) and trying to discern the original ‘object’ (the original discussion or context)” (Gupta 2012:362). The mirror-reading New Testament is well recognized as a necessary since John Barclay has made a key contribution to the practice of interpreting Paul’s letters (Galatians) (1987:73-93). Here the researcher draws this approach to rediscover the nature and role of minjung behind the radical Reformers. The four radical Reformers, in their relation to Münster Anabaptism, may especially serve as a test case of the re-applied this approach, namely, the double-mirror reading.

<sup>135</sup> The peculiarities of Korean Minjung Theology can be characterized primarily the discovery of the minjung and their *han* (unresolved inner wounds or bitterness). Its description can be epitomized by five categories, such as, methodology/hermeneutics (minjung as the hermeneutical key), exegesis (minjung as the biblical reference), Christology (minjung as the messiah), ecclesiology (*Missio Dei*/Minjung church), and political theology (minjung as the subject of history).

<sup>136</sup> The term *minjung* carries a constellation of meanings and its definition is a still debating point even among minjung theologians. “Minjung cannot be defined by objective and socioeconomic conditions...thus, Minjung is, first of all, a

Minjung Theology was born out of an experience of faith in the midst of Korea's pressing socio-political problems in the 1970s (Daniel Park 1985, Lee 1993:63). The portrait of 1970s in Korea was two-fold (Kim 1995:3). It was a time when the Korean economy had developed very quickly by the government and also a time when the Korean people (minjung) had engaged in socio-political struggles against Park's military dictatorship (Kim 1998:53). Minjung's struggle, slowly but surely, laid bare the truth of brutal reality of development dictatorship. Indeed, there was inwardly malicious sacrifices of the lower strata of society behind the outwardly miraculous economic growth under Park's regime (Na 1988:139). The famous miracle of *Han* (large) river<sup>137</sup> was but another name for the misery of *han* (unresolved bitterness), which deprived of the welfare of urban workers and rural peasants (Chang 2007:208). Based on a bogus justification, the military government had continued to impose a fiercely exploitive pattern of economic development (Sin and Kim 2003:127-8). This unbalanced expansion had only aggravated the social conditions in Korea (Hwang 2013:105); the rich-poor disparity became more increased and the pain of dehumanization upon minjung became more intensified (Kim 1995:3). Now the Korean society plunged into a serious pitfall –the further experienced the economic booming, the further impoverished the life of labourer (Chang 2007:29-30). Being stuck in the middle, the minjung became scapegoats to this dilemma (Kim 1995:39-60).

The event of Chun, Tae-II, a young labourer, had been a catalyst for great minjung movement in Korea (Kim 1995:3). In November 13, 1970 Chun set himself on fire in protest against the dehumanizing working conditions and his death became a symbol of resistance all over the country (Chai 2003:540). In its wake, many workers and students staged protest movements against the political oppression and the economic deprivation (Sebastian Kim 2007:46). Yet, Korean Christian leadership had responded differently. A majority of churches denounced their interference with politics for not conforming to the gospel, while only a minority of progressive Christians felt the need to take it seriously as the voice of Christ for their time (Ryu 1976:171, Hwang 2013:108-9). Since the latter began to interpret the meaning of Christian faith from the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung, they soon stood for and with the poor, oppressed and despised (Yoo 1984:258-59, Eckert 1990:365). This spurred the Christians' participation in the activities for human rights and liberation (Lee 1988:7). Thus was created by "Theological Declaration of Korean Christians" as the theological basis for Christian involvement in society (Kim 1995:7, Lee 1996:69). To them, "in the salvation of human beings, individual or spiritual

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political concept, which should be differentiated from the proletariat defined by socioeconomic conditions.... Minjung, whoever they become, are the people who are placed on the side of the oppressed under the powers that be" (Kim 1982:372).

<sup>137</sup> "South Korea was unrivalled, even by Japan, in the speed with which it went from having almost no industrial technology to taking its place among the world's industrialized nations" (Vogel 1991:59).

salvation is not to be separated from social and collective salvation, and it does not have any priority” (Kim 1995:7-8). The declaration became the starting point of Minjung Theology, which shed new spotlight to the church’s involvement in politics “as a matter of faith in action” (Lee 1996:69, Clark 1995:89). It affirmed that the mission of church is to follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ, “living among our oppressed and poor people, standing against political oppression, and participating in the transformation of history, for this is the only way to the Messianic Kingdom” (Billings 1983:79, 81).

This gave greater momentum to the Christians’ use of the term minjung (Grayson 2006:21, Yoo 1997:43). Such a progressive theologians started to use it as the master symbol in the construction of their version of liberation theology (Chang 2007:197), and through this theological reformulation, the populace identity of minjung, or “minjung imagery,” became the rhetoric of Christian protest (Abelmann 1996). From it emerged the truth of Korean Minjung Theology. A group of Korean theologians, who had embroiled themselves in a fight for human rights and social justice, began to focus on “minjung as their concern and the theme of a new theology” (Kim 1996:168). To be sure, Minjung Theology was born from the solidarity with the suffering minjung and became a rhetorical weapon of the Christian dissenters in the discursive struggle against the socio-political problems (Chang 2007:197). The culmination of Minjung Theology was a conference in 1979 (Oct. 22-29), co-sponsored by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the National Council of Churches of Korea (NCCCK) (Niles 1981:6, Küster 2010:25). The papers presented there were published in English and German and this served as a momentum to let Korean Minjung Theology be internationally known (Kim 1996:168). Indeed, “the 1979 conference volume had become something like the manifesto of the movement” (Küster 2010:26). The centerpiece for the publications were Ahn, Byung-Mu (1922-1996), Suh, Nam-Dong (1918-1984), Hyun, Young-Hak (1921-2004) and Kim, Yong-Bock (1938- ), the forerunners of Korean Minjung Theology. “All they wanted was to function as mediators, by learning from the minjung themselves. Their theology was simply supposed to give the minjung a voice” (Küster 2010:25). Here “Minjung Theology set up the decisive frame of reference for doing theology” as an attempt to find an answer to the socio-political problems of Korea (Kim 1995:9, Park 2003:197).

Taking a cue from the perspectives of the Bible and church history for the poor and oppressed, Korean Minjung Theology had further come to grips with the predicament of the people in its theological frame (Suh 1981:171). In it, as God’s revelation cannot be limited to the Bible, the suffering minjung and their struggle for liberation became “the setting of the revelation event” here and now (Chai 2003:540). This was a critical attempt which highlighted the synchronic nature of the minjung tradition

and the biblical tradition of liberation (Suh 1981:171). From it, Korean Minjung Theology depicted the minjung as gradually transforming themselves from “those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated socially, and kept uneducated culturally and intellectually” (Han 1969:63-77) to “the oppressed Korean people who have been fighting for their liberation” (Kim 1995:2). The role of the minjung, then, became evident. In their struggles, “the minjung have risen up to be subjects of their own destiny, refusing to be condemned to being objects of manipulation and suppression” (Moon 1985:72). This gave the minjung new dignity; the minjung as subjects of history, having their own power and authority not only in making and sustaining their destiny, but also in opening up a new history (Suh 1983:34, Kim 1990:157-78, Moon 1985:72). Thus, the subject-hood of minjung became “a key theme of Minjung Theology” (Kwon 1990:23) as “a theology by the people, for the people, and of the people” (Lossky 2002).

#### **4.2.2 The Development of Korean Minjung Theology**

No doubt, Korean Minjung Theology is a Protestant affair, found its strongest support in the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK; *Kichang* in Korean) (Küster 2010:131). The development of unique identity of Minjung Theology can be largely divided into three periods: the 1960s through the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s (Suh 2000:143, Chang 2002:125). This distinction of generations, however, fluctuates due to a “more thematic than biological” categorization (Küster 2010:131). For each generation of minjung theologians have done theology through the reading of the contemporary conditions with critical and distinctive foci (Kim and Lee 2002:158). This resulted in different interpretations of minjung in each generation (Kim 1993:21-47). Although the first generation regarded minjung as a living essence and refused to define it in the Western sense of making a definition (Choi 2008:213), they generally interpreted minjung as the “deprived people” (Kim and Lee 2002:158). But, the second generation of the minjung theologians tried to define minjung with a new knowledge of Marxist social method (Choi 1992:78-99). In this sense, their understanding of minjung tended towards “class solidarity” (Kim and Lee 2002:158, Cho 1996:4, 11-14). Thus was created by a new synthesis of minjung as both Christians and Marxist (Kim and Lee 2002:164). Unlike both the first and the second generations, the younger generation rather gives much attention to a subjective existence (normalistic being) of minjung (Choi 2008:214). By stressing the importance of diversity and changeability in minjung’s new post-modern reality, the third generation of minjung theologians has wrestled with a new task; how minjung can claim their subjectivity under this drastically changed reality (Kang 2000). From it, the main question has been changed from “Who are the minjung?” to “How are the minjung as historical subject being made up?” (Kim and Lee 2002:158). Thus, the task of third generation is to search for a new Christian identity in a new changed situation and Korean

Minjung Theology, in this light, is in the making.

## 4.2.3 The Background of Korean Minjung Theology

### 4.2.3.1 Historical Background

From the rediscovery of the minjung as the subject of history, Korean Minjung Theology provides a new perspective for understanding history, namely, a minjung historiography (Kim 1995:9, Suh 1983:155-82). To the minjung theologians, the subject-hood of minjung cannot be understood apart from Korean people and history because it was a reflection on minjung movement in Korean history (Lee 1988:4). Giving the word minjung a new meaning, Korean minjung theologians tried to find the minjung movements in Korean history a basis for their theology. In Korean Minjung Theology, three major events are in particular regarded as historical antecedents for Korean minjung movement, which is; (1) the *Donghak* Peasant Revolution (1894-95), (2) the March First Independence Movement (1919), and (3) the April nineteenth Student Revolution (1960) (Suh 1983:233-34).

#### 4.2.3.1.1 The *Donghak* Peasant Revolution of 1894-1895

*Donghak* (Eastern Learning) was a typical religion of the oppressed Korean people of low during the late nineteenth century (Ryu 1967:62-3, Shin and Lee 2008). The late period of the *Yi*, or the *Choseon*, dynasty (1392-1910) in Korea was characterized by social turmoil resulted from the class struggle between the powerful (the privileged, or *yangban* in Korean) and the powerless (the underprivileged, or *cheonmin* in Korean) (Kim 2007:1020, Nahm 1988:100-101). In the Confucian-structured society, which emphasized on hereditary nature of social status, all the ruling powers and privileges became centralized in the hands of a few elite groups, namely, the *yangban* classes (the gentry) (Cho 2010:55, Adams 1985:193). Thus, the poor masses were completely exploited and constantly threatened for the sake of the noble bloods (Moon 1998:25). The corrupt government officials, all the more, had imposed heavy taxes on the peasants<sup>138</sup> and it even exacerbated the lives of the Korean lower class people (Lee 1996:53, Noh 1987:49). Thus, the social and economic oppressions became more of the norm among the poor (Moon 1988:151). This fermented a revolutionary backlash among the oppressed peasants against the autocratic and hierarchical society (Kim 2002:279-97). The unfair economic extraction, as a corollary, had mitigated the escalation of class tension and turned to more of a class struggle (Kim

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<sup>138</sup> One Korean historian explains the oppressive and absurd tax system at that time; “even dead people and small babies were expected to pay taxes. People were responsible for paying taxes of their relatives and their neighbours who did not, or could not pay. According to one report, a village of less than 100 households was forced to pay 108,900 sok of grain (about 450,000 bushels) for governmental loans, plus the interest which had accumulated over several years. It would take the villagers about 20year to produce the grain. Tax exploitation on the various levels was too heavy for people to survive and many peasants died of hunger every year” (Noh 1987:49).

1981:78-152). Yet, the causes of the confrontation between the *yangban* (the elite groups) and the *cheonmin* (the grassroots) were much more complex and dynamic that should not be simply subscribed to the theory of class struggle. It explained only a part of the whole (Kim 2007:1021). There were larger social and economic changes which were important in making the popular rebellions in *Choseon* Korea (Pak 2005:18, Kim 2007:1020-21).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Korea was no longer safe from the expansion of Western imperialism (Bretzke 1991:114). The competitions between the foreign superpowers, particularly Japan and Western colonial-oriented countries, had turned the Korean Peninsula into an arena of proxy war for their own benefits (Moon 1998:25). The primary prey of such hostile changes was none other than the ordinary, rank-and-file members of society, namely, the Korean *minjung* (Paik 1998:32). From this inherent and long festering oppression, a number of Korean *minjung* found themselves in the *de facto* slavery (Ahn 1997:69-71). This sense of blockage urged them to lean toward a violent struggle (Kim 2007:1019). For when the oppressed people decided to take the matter into their own hands, an open resistance/rebellion seemed the last remedy against the current malicious conditions (Kim 1981:116). The *Donghak* Peasant Revolution aroused in these circumstances. The *Yi*-dynasty was already on the verge of disintegration (Ahn 1997:71). The rise of a series of peasant rebellions –from *Hong Kyung-Rae*'s rebellion (1812), the *Chinju* uprisings (1862) and the *Donghak* Peasant Revolution (1894) –was a counter-proof of the existing regime's inability to rule well (Moon 1998:24).<sup>139</sup> Western colonial expansion just added fuel to an already deteriorated situation. Now the peasants and others were in desperate need of new teaching which could channel their grievances into radical action (Ahn 1997:71). At that very moment, *Donghak* came into being as a "New Way" to resist the cynicism of power (Ahn 1997:73-5). By challenging the injustice caused by both the internal aristocracy and external imperialism (Hong 1968:45), *Donghak* could justify or legitimate the rebellion from below against the abuse of power by twin Empires (Hong 1968:47). Then, the initial cause of *Donghak* against the oppression of the helpless, was soon converted to its final Cause for the liberation of the hopeless (Ahn 2001:66-7). This explains why *Donghak*, from the beginning, evolved around a form of political protest and even populist nationalism, even if it was actually initiated as a new religious movement (Bell 2008:85).

*Donghak* was founded in 1860 when a man named Choi, Jae-Woo (1824-1864) experienced the divine

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<sup>139</sup> The peasant uprisings became the hall mark of the nineteenth century in Korean history, which is often called, "the age of rebellions." Even the late nineteenth century saw revolts on average of about twenty each year, but most of them were not successful (Kim 2007:1020).

revelation that compelled him to form his new religion (Choi 1997:106).<sup>140</sup> Distinct was that Choi formulated his own version of religious salvation through a critical synthesis of different elements (Chung 1969:118-32, Kang 1968:39). He took ethical aspects from Confucianism, pure-mind from Buddhism, incantation and ecstasy from Shamanism and monotheism from Catholicism (Ryu 1967:76, Kim 1977:114-15, Noh 1992:218-19). All would serve as the conceptual basis of *Donghak* that all human beings bear God (*Si-Cheonju*) (Ahn 1997:82). This theme later became an epitome of *Donghak's* teaching, namely, *In-Nae-Cheon* (human and Heaven are one) (Ahn 2001:62-7, Ryu 1965:117). From the identification of human being with Heaven, the doctrine of egalitarianism came into being (Ryu 1967:77); all humans have right of freedom and equality – gentry, peasants and slaves are all the same in their essential nature (Ahn 2001:66-7). Thus was created by the radical reinterpretation of human and society. Since Choi found inequality and corruption in the current autocratic and hierarchical structure, he had sought to a new order wherein all could enjoy equality and prosperity (Moon 1998:28). The teaching of *Donghak*, in this sense, showed in stark contrast to that of Confucianism, which justified the class system as a state ideology (Han 1970:356-57). In a highly status-oriented society of the late *Yi*-dynasty, one's social and economic station was determined by one's social status (Choe 1974:611-31).<sup>141</sup> This meant the lower class, who were arbitrarily distinguished by their birth, had almost no hope of social advancement (Kim 2007:994). Not surprisingly, *Donghak's* doctrine of *In-Na-Chun* had great appeal to the disaffected mass (*cheonmin* class) as a hope for the new world order based on human equality (Lee 1996:118). Whereas from the ruling class (*yangban* class), they were now political rebels beginning to send clear messages of violent uprising (Bretzke 1991:118).

Choi's sense of calling to change the contemporary social conditions became acute by the influx of enormous Western imperial influence (Ahn 1997:75). Choi came to realize that the common people had been doubly oppressed by both the elites of their own Confusion regime and the Western colonial powers (Bell 2008:85-6). For him, an individual equality was inseparable from a nationalistic equality

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<sup>140</sup> Choi, Jae-Woo was born to a disgraced noble family as an illegitimate child and thus occupied a lower position in the social hierarchy (Ahn and Park 1980:283). From this background, Choi rejected both Confucianism and Buddhism as means to the improvement of the lot of the mass and sought a way of salvation from the woes of the personal life. A crisis of Choi's personal affairs coincided with the reception of his spiritual revelation. In the fourth moon of 1860, Choi received the revelation of the Doctrine which was most unexpected to him (Clark 1932:265).

<sup>141</sup> Even in comparison with China, Korea's stratification system was far more rigid. In it, there was almost no social mobility. For example, regarding the examination system, which led directly to office holding, eligibility for examinations was not open to the *cheonmin* class – slaves, entertainers, outcast groups, shamans and illegitimate sons of *yangban* (the gentry). In practice, eligibility appeared to have been confined almost exclusively to those of inherited *yangban* status (Choe 1974:611-31). Furthermore, even if members of the *yangban* failed examination, they still belonged in the *yangban* class (Hong 1968:45).

(Moon 1998:28-9). The peasant liberation, therefore, should coincide with national liberation (Kim 1963:232-33). Choi, in this light, strongly rejected West's encroachment into Korea, considered it as the intrusion of foreign economic exploitation and ideological domination on Korean society (Bell 2008:85-6). This resulted in the very naming of his new religion as *Donghak*, meaning, "Eastern Learning" (Clark 1932:262). The name was intentionally chosen by Choi in explicit opposition to *Seohak*, "Western Learning," which threatened to supplant earlier Korean religious traditions (Bell 2008:86, Ahn 1997:75). Choi ascribed the power of the West to the Christian belief (Roman Catholicism) as the Heavenly Way and believed that there would be another Heavenly way for the East, in particular, revealed in Korea; "I was born in the East and received the teachings of the East. The *do* ("Way") is *chondo* ("the Heavenly Way") but the *hak* ("Learning") is *Donghak* ("Eastern Learning")" (Paek 1956:13). Yet, Choi and his new teaching was a pain in the neck for the ruling class. The aristocrat saw Choi's egalitarian ethic –humanity is heaven –as a treasonable plot in disguise; he deluded the poor peasants by this false doctrine so that they took action against the *yangban* elite group (Flaherty 2004:30). This led to Choi's arrest and execution at *Taegu* on March 10 in 1864 for "agitating the public with impure thought" (Ahn 1997:101, Bell 2008:86). A cruel irony was that Choi was beheaded as a Catholic whom he had strongly criticized as a propagandist of Western imperial power (Weems 1964:7-12).<sup>142</sup>

Against all expectations of the elite group, the blood of Choi was a catalyst for political change of *Donghak* movement.<sup>143</sup> After Choi, Jae-Woo's death, his nephew Choi, Si-Hyung (1827-1898) succeeded him as the second leader, whose efforts made *Donghak* to live on as an underground movement (Ahn 1997:105). It was Chun, Bong-Joon (1854-1895),<sup>144</sup> a member of *Donghak* in *Kobu*, who actually led the radical uprising, known as *Donghak* Peasant Revolution of 1894 (Kim 2007:1020).<sup>145</sup> A generation later, in 1892, the followers of *Donghak* had united in protest against the

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<sup>142</sup> It is because *Donghak*, in its initial state, was suspected of being another form of Western Learning (Roman Catholicism) due to the use of the same name of the deity, namely, *chun-ju* (the Heavenly Lord) (Bucknell and Bierne 2001:204).

<sup>143</sup> Yet, this campaign seemed a sort of petition movement that the *Donghak* leaders beseeched the government for religious tolerance (Palais 1979:103). Choi, Jae-Woo, in fact, did not suggest any specific program for revolutionary action. Although his new teaching appealed greatly to the downtrodden masses under the severe conditions, salvation was rather promised in the form of a mystical millennial renewal, rather than a direct revolution against the oppressive government. Before his execution, Choi even said that *Donghak* was not essentially different from the Confucian idea of love (Kim 1977:60).

<sup>144</sup> Chun, Bong-Joon was known as the son of a local *yangban* who had been beaten to death by an official (Lew 1990:149-80).

<sup>145</sup> There was a split within the *Donghak* leadership between the northern and southern parishes. The southern parish, located in *Chulla* province, under the leadership of Chun, Bong-Joon had been more activists and involved in peasant

government, demanding the official vindication of Choi, Jae-Woo, their religious founder (Yi 1960:345, Clark 1932:149). Over against ongoing government persecutions, this drive took a more political direction under the leadership of Chun, Bong-Joon (Lee 1993:79, Lee 1996:122). In the wake of the unequal treaty with Japan in 1876,<sup>146</sup> the unjust and violent oppression of the poor peasants by the *yangban* class became intensified and *Kobu*, the most fertile land for rice production, became a main object of exploitation (Kim 2008:39). The arbitrary and sudden tax increase became widespread and people paid taxes even without knowing why they had to pay (Bell 2004:127). When the peasant plea that heavy and illegal taxes should be lifted was rejected, the accumulated anger of the peasants had finally exploded (Ahn 1997:106). Soon, the protest developed into an uprising. Some 600,000 peasants gathered around Chun and he led them to victory (Park 2004:643-47, Kang 1968:41). This tax-riot, then, became the spark that set off subsequent waves of popular revolt on the Korean peninsula in the late nineteenth century (Weems 1964:37-41).

The *Donghak* peasant army conquered most of the cities in the south and marched on Seoul, the capital city (Kang 1997:33, Bell 2004:127). The panic-stricken government officials proved unable to cope with such fearless peasants,<sup>147</sup> so that they called upon China for aid in suppressing the rebellion (Ahn 1997:107). Japan, fearing a Chinese monopoly in Korea, also sent in troops without being asked (Ahn and Park 1980:317, Kim 2008:39-40). The battle nearby *Kongju* in December 1894 was a fatal blow to Chun and *Donghak* peasant army; it was a crushing defeat whom they were never able to recover the initiative (Young 2016:102, Lee 1984:281-90). Yet, this SOS-call for foreign powers would soon prove suicidal for both the *Donghak* peasant army and the government ruling party. By providing an excuse for the foreign powers to conduct brutal crackdown, not only the *Donghak* peasant army, but also the central government itself faced a humiliating defeat to the advanced foreign military forces (Ahn 2001:67-9, Kang 1968:38-42). After the violent suppression of the *Donghak* peasant army and Chun, the leader of revolution, with a help of foreign powers (Lee 1996:120-27),<sup>148</sup> “Korea soon found itself caught between two Asian superpowers” –Japan and China (Bretzke 1991:118). The Sino-

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politics than the northern parish, in *Chungchong* province, led by Choi, Si-Hyung. The northern parish was more committed to religious than political objectives and this made them less active to join in the fighting (Lew 1990, 101).

<sup>146</sup> By signing this unequal treaty, Korea was forced to sell rice with cheap price to Japan, who was also forced to buy the goods from the western nations (Ahn 1997:106).

<sup>147</sup> For the *Donghak* believers, Choi’s sign and formula, namely *jumun* –a 21-syllable incantation, and *yeonbu* –a magical talisman, were supposed to protect them against bullets of the enemy (Bucknell and Beirne 2001:201-22).

<sup>148</sup> Government and Japanese troops defeated the *Donghak* peasant army near the city “Kobu” in *Chulla* province. In March of 1895, Chun, Bong-Joon, the leader of the revolution, was executed in Seoul. Yet, the *Donghak* Revolution lasted about a year and is estimated to have had 300,000 to 400,000 slain *en masse* in this rout (Yi 1960:345).

Japanese War in 1894-95 was a product of this new confrontation between the two (Ahn 1997:107). Japan's exclusive grip on the Korean peninsula was guaranteed when the final victory was given to Japanese imperialism (Bell 2008:86). This was followed by a Japanese protectorate over Korea in 1905, which effectively terminated Korean political sovereignty (Bell 2004:127). An inevitable corollary was the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, which formally marked her end as an independent country (Park 1989:55-7, Son 2000:22-6).

The way to see the *Donghak* movement is divided. On one sense, the *Donghak* peasant uprising was unsuccessful as an abortive rebellion (Ahn 1997:107-9). It failed to bring forth a new way, a new world and new humanism that all could live as equals in dignity and prosperity (Kang 1997:33, Chongsan 2012:3). Rather, in its aftermath, the economic disaster, religious persecution, and official exploitation became even more intense (Lee 1963:33), so that the poor and the lowly were left completely destitute (Bell 2008:86). Furthermore, its goal to change the contemporary social status quo ended in failure and its ideas of egalitarianism and social justice went underground (Kang 1968:38-42). The *Donghak* revolution, as a result, made Korea too vulnerable to aggressors like Japan (Cumings 1997:115-20). Yet, on the other, the movement was successful (Lee 2007:56). The *Donghak* belief – equality, freedom, and justice –not only awakened, but also instilled a sense of calling to transform a corrupt society in the oppressed (Ryu 1965:103). In fact, the recognition of each and every being as the bearer of the divine (*In-Nae-Cheon*) had revolutionary potential (Ryu 1965:103). It became the spearhead of minjung revolution against the double predicament –internally the corrupted Confusion regime and externally the covetous Western imperial power (Kang 1997:34). The *Donghak* Peasant Revolution was, therefore, a clear manifestation of self-consciousness of the suffering minjung, whose aim laid primarily on their liberation from all men-inflicted sufferings (Lee 1984:287-88). Furthermore, the idea of *In-Nae-Cheon*, in its advocacy of an integration of Heaven (universe) and human beings, was the attainment of the new messianic kingdom of heaven on earth (Han 1970:356-57). It had boldly proclaimed that man –especially the powerless and the marginalized –was his own saviour, who would bring holistic salvation, namely, the religio-socio-political (national) salvation (Ahn 1997:103). This made the *Donghak* movement an unending outcry in the suffering history of Korea (Joe 2000:96). The legacy of this minjung revolution, despite its fearful losses, was bequeathed to the next generations, awaiting new opportunity and new leadership which could rekindle another grassroots movement, particularly the minjung democratization and human rights movements of the 1970s (Choo 1981:69-77). From it, minjung theologians regarded the *Donghak* revolution as the first indigenous minjung movement and thus important sources for their theology (Kim 1981:188-89, Suh 1981:170-71).

#### 4.2.3.1.2 The March First Independence Movement of 1919

The changed situation had changed *telos* of *Donghak* movement. In the wake of Korea's annexation to Japan in 1910, the adherents of *Donghak* were motivated to take anti-Japanese action over anti-government resistance (Palais 1979:105). At that time, leadership of *Donghak* passed to its third revered founder Sohn, Byeong-Hui (1861-1922) (Bell 2008:86). Since Sohn inherited mental leadership from a moderate Choi, Si-Hyung rather than from a revolutionary Chun, Bong-Joon (Hong 1968:49), his concern was more committed religious reforms than political activities (Bell 2008:88). In 1905 Sohn renamed *Donghak* (Eastern Learning) as *Chondogyo* (Religion of the Heavenly Way) (Oh 1959:135-36) and took the title *taidoju*, Ruler or Head of the Faith (Beaver 1962:118). The priority was then given to the religious revival of the *Donghak* (Bell 2008:88). Thus was followed by the standardization of both *Donghak's* theory and practice (Oh 1959:135-36, Ko 2007:33-49). This meant, on the flip side of the coin, *Donghak's* political and revolutionary component against the existing government paled into relatively insignificance (Flaherty 2011:335). Rather, under Japanese rule, activities were more and more oriented toward nationalism (Kang 1968:41). This explained why Sohn, despite his emphasis on religious activities over against political action, became the first signer of the 1919 Declaration of Independence (Flaherty 2011:333). Sohn, as a religious leader, inserted himself into the political struggle for the national independence (Chung 2007:58-9). Here *Donghak* (*Chondogyo*) once again played crucial parts in inaugurating the mass demonstration against the Japanese rule in Korea, namely, March First Independence Movement of 1919 (Young 2002:65, Kang 1968:41).<sup>149</sup>

The movement actually began with a group of Korean students, studying in Japan (Baldwin 1969:38-9). On February 8, 1919 they assembled in the Tokyo YMCA, demanding the independence of Korea (Lee 2010:37-8). This Tokyo student demonstration was a prelude to the mass participation in the Korean peninsula (Lee 1993:79). Emboldened by it, and also encouraged by the US President Wilson's theory of self-determination, leaders within the homeland organized a nationwide Independence Movement (Baldwin 1969:45-6, Chung 2009:160). Thirty-three of the top religious leaders – Protestantism, *Chodogyo* (*Donghak*), and Buddhism – decided to share their efforts (Kim 1989:17-

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<sup>149</sup> An official Japanese source proved the significant role of *Donghak* (*Chondogyo*) in the 1919 Independence Movement. According to this report, "the independence disturbances principally owed their origin to the theory of self-determination as enunciated by President Wilson of the United States of America. This theory strongly appealed to the imagination of *Sohn Byeong-Hui* [sic]...and other leaders of the sect, who were discontented with the annexation of Korea by Japan and hope for opportunity to recover the independence of their country" (*italics* is mine; Nakarai 1921:8-10 quoted by Kang 1968:41).

24).<sup>150</sup> The triumvirate of the religious leadership, as representatives of the people, inscribed their names on a Declaration of Independence (Lee 2010:38). Then, on 1 March 1919 the Independence Movement finally broke out. Shortly after the Declaration of Independence was read in the *Pagoda* Park in Seoul, thousands of Koreans –regardless of man and women, young and old –became a great wave of the protest for liberation and independence (Lee 2009:84). Every single participant, without exception, was in a happy delirium, shouting, “*Taehan Tongnip Manse!*” (Long live Korean Independence!) (Lee 2010:38). Within days, the movement spread like a wildfire in every corner of the country and over two million people voluntarily participated in this people-oriented movement (Lee 1984:344). Indeed the March First (*Samil* in Korean)<sup>151</sup> Independence Movement was the pan-Korean phenomenon to which all segments of the Korean society had involved (Robinson 2007:48, Baldwin 1969:231).

Yet, it did not take too long to turn such a joyful shouting into a tragic crying. Taken by surprise, the Japanese authorities committed bloody atrocities against the non-violent demonstrators to suppress Korean people’s hope for the national liberation and independence (Lee 2009:84).<sup>152</sup> The Japanese blind crackdown on the protestors had continued for the rest of the year with tragic figures (Lee 2000:137).<sup>153</sup> According to a report on the Japanese authority, 19,525 demonstrators were arrested,<sup>154</sup> 7,645 killed and 15,961 wounded (Lee 1984:344, Baldwin 1969:232-35). Thanks to their in-depth involvement, both *Chondogyo* (*Donghak*) and Protestantism became proportionately the prime target for the Japanese persecution (Kim 1989:17-24, Yi 2000:335-55). Of those who arrested during the demonstrations, 14.89% were Chondogyoists, 14.80% Presbyterians, 3.4% Methodists, 0.35% Roman Catholics, and 5.74% other religions (Osgood 1951:292, Palmer 1986:66). The charges against them by Japanese authorities, by return, created a sense of public credibility and support for both religions: Protestant and *Chodogyo* (Min 1999:119). People looked them as comrades in spirit even though they

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<sup>150</sup> Among them, sixteenth were Protestants, fifteenth were Chondogyoists, and two were Buddhists (Lee 2009:83).

<sup>151</sup> *Samil* is simply Korean-Chinese for 3-1, which is how dates are rendered. So, the 3<sup>rd</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> day is March 1<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>152</sup> The March First Independence Movement was meant to be nonviolent. It started that way but failed to remain so in the end. When the Japanese authorities had indiscriminately beaten and shot at the demonstrators, the peaceful demonstrations soon turned into a violent uprisings (Timothy Lee 2000:134).

<sup>153</sup> A pamphlet under the title *The Korean Situation: Authentic Accounts of Recent Events by Eye Witnesses*, published by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ of America (FCCCA) in July 1919, proved how the Japanese government used brutal tactics against the demonstrators (Lee 2000:137).

<sup>154</sup> Against it, Korean nationalists claimed that about 45,000 arrested (Rees 1988:66-7, Cumings 1997:154).

sometimes took a nonpartisan stance (Kim 1985:24-40).<sup>155</sup>

It goes without saying that the March First Independence Movement of 1919 was people's movement for freedom and human rights (Choi 2015:55). Of the people who constituted the movement, the common people, especially the poor and the lowly class, were 59% (Kang 1995:33). Certain religious affiliations paled into insignificance besides public ecumenical participation of the movement (Choi 2015:55). It was evident then that the leading people of the movement were neither Protestants, nor Chondogyoists, but rather the nameless common people, suffered from social distress and political oppression (Ahn 2013:92). Given this condition, characteristic of both *Chondogyo* and Christianity was found in the open espousal as the religion of the oppressed people (Lee 2009:67). This meant both were the agents of hope in the hopeless people (Koschorke, Ludwig and Delgado 2007:131). Against the Japanese harsh rule, the March First Independence Movement of 1919 was the desperate effort of the Korean common people to gain their self-identity as an independent nation and people (Lee 1984:342-43). Indeed, the movement was the final cry for liberation from below, as the culmination of "the common people nationalism" (Suh 1981:172).

Contrary to people's expectations, the March First Independence Movement failed in its immediate intent to secure Korean independence. But, it exposed the hidden impact of the common people in Korean history (Ahn 2013:92). This uprising of people, like the *Donghak* revolution, would result from people's self-awakening, self-consciousness, and self-determination (Robinson 2007:47). The Korean

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<sup>155</sup> The March First Movement was the culmination of the political awakening of Korean Christians, despite the foreign missionaries had been taking a politically neutral stance (Baldwin 1973:197). This is a historical irony that although there had been strong religious intentions of Christian mission, many people in Korea, from the first, responded to the Christian message as embodying a social and political hope for liberation from the Japanese rule (Choo 1981:69-70, Park 2003:5). The March First Independence Movement, in this sense, was an unintended gift of missionary teaching (Lee 2003:153-57). This nation-wide uprising, at first, had alarmed the missionaries and made them apolitical (Ryu 2003:174-203). They had attempted to depoliticize the Christian message and activities with a pessimistic view of any political action undertaken by Christians (Min 1974, Park 2004:252). It was in this vantage point, most Protestant missionaries to Korea had espoused a policy of political neutrality and thus became pro-Japanese (Hutchison 1974:110-31); "We (missionaries) felt that the Korean church needed not only to repent of hating the Japanese, but a clear vision of all sin against God, that many had come into the church sincerely believing in Jesus as their Saviour and anxious to do God's will... We felt... that embittered souls needed to have their thoughts taken away from the national situation to their own personal relation with the Master" (Paik 1970:369). Such a non-political stance was made in the following revival movements, emphasizing personal and spiritual relation with God as purely religious experiences (Kim 2002:242-67, Moon 1985:16). But it is quite doubtful if this policy was really politically neutral. Though espousing political neutrality, the missionaries actually did more than disallow political activities within the church (Lee 2009:82). They discouraged their flocks from harbouring nationalistic sentiments and thus eventually welcomed the status quo, namely, the Japanese rules over the Korean people. This as a result made many Koreans conceived the church politically institutionalized and thus led their exodus from the church (Min 1983:111). In its irony, the missionaries' efforts to depoliticize the church had succeeded in galvanizing many Korean Christians into political action (Lee 2009:83). There were, however, some exceptions among the missionaries. A few missionaries had supported the Koreans in their struggle for independence (Moffet 1962:200-201). Homcer B. Hulbert, a Methodist missionary, for example, served as a royal emissary to Washington in 1905-1906 and to The Hague Peace Conference in 1906-1907 for the sake of Korea's independence (Han 1970:450-51, Yun 1997:219-20).

people became aware of their plight in society and start to get together to fight for their liberation and independence from the Japanese colonial power (Kim 1981:191). Here, the movement marked an important moment for a genuine people's movement from within (Ahn 1971:2-3). The oppressed and exploited Korean people consciously determined to become involved in the life and death struggle against the diabolical powers of inhumanity and destruction (Lee 1988:70-75). The March First Independence Movement then paid homage to the numberless and nameless grassroots who were playing the leading role in the struggle for justice (Yun, Sin and Ahn 1977). Furthermore, the movement mobilized the awareness of Christianity (and *Chondogyo*) as a “politically oriented faith and a religion of hope and power for the oppressed and suffering people” (Moon 1985:13, 17). From this vantage point, minjung theologians began to see it as a landmark event in the people's movement (Lee 2009:83). It paved the way for the recovery of “People-o-logy” in Korean history, which began to reinterpret the reality and history from the perspective of the powerless and the poor, not from the powerful and the rich (Suh 1983:41). Thus was came to the minjung as subjects, not objects, of their own history (Kim 1981:194). In this process, “minjung transformed Christianity into its own grassroots color and created a Koreanized Christianity” (Choi 2008:209).

#### **4.2.3.1.3 The April Student Revolution of 1960**

In the wake of consistent struggles for independence, Korea could set itself free from the 36-years-yoke of Japanese rule (Lee 2009:86). It was officially ratified when a Japanese emperor signed an unconditional surrender to the Allied Forces in August 1945 (Wainstock 1999:3). But, the happiness of its independence did not last a long time. Korea was again pitched into a crisis (Millett 2004:21). When the Cold War ensued, the Korean peninsula, once again, became the battlefield for proxy war waged by the superpowers: Soviet and US (Bretzke 1991:114). This new confrontation had culminated in the Korean War (1950-53),<sup>156</sup> which resulted in the tragic division of the country into two different states –a communist North Korea and a South Korea as a US ally –until the present day (Kim 2008:88 Cyhn 78-9). The civil war helped Rhee, Syng-Man, relying on the US aid, to seize the power as President of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) (1948-1960) (Millett 2004:44, 51). Rhee, as both a descendent of the royal family of the *Yi*-dynasty and a Presbyterian minister (Kleiner 2001:107), was too reactionary to deal with a Korean bourgeois class that prospered by collaborating with the Japanese colonial power (Eckert 1996). Most pro-Japanese collaborators went unpunished because the newly

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<sup>156</sup> It is estimated that during the Korean War, nearly one million South Korean civilians and 320,000 South Korean soldiers were killed; about 25% South Korean people became refugees; five millions were forced to live on relief (Rees 1988:441, Cole and Lyman 1971:22). Also, much of Korea's infrastructure and productive capacity were almost in ruins (MacDonald 1986:258).

elected president Rhee needed their help both in safeguarding his position and in setting up a pro-US regime in South Korea (Cumings 1990:208-18). Rhee's strong desire for power caused him to make a false step (Chang 2015:50, Kleiner 2001:111-12). Not only did Rhee decree a New National Security Law on Dec. 24, 1958 to eliminate his political rivals and he also even led crooked elections through ballot rigging to prolong his stay in power (Kim 2000:30, Han 1975:92-4). This enraged people and succeeded in mass demonstrations (Kang 1984:182). Soon strong and widespread protests took place against electoral corruption of the Rhee regime all over the country (Kern 2009:307).

The discovery on April 11 in Masan Bay of the body of young student, Kim, Chu-Yol, allegedly killed by police in demonstration, added fuel to such public protests (Kleiner 2001:126).<sup>157</sup> On April 19, 1960, thousands of young students peacefully marched from Korea University to the Blue House, the presidential mansion, demanding Rhee's resignation (Oh 1961:62, Han 1980:143-61). Yet, Rhee's response was the declaration of martial law to suppress the demonstrations (Kern 2009:307). In Seoul alone, about 180 people died and at least 1,000 were damaged when the police opened fire on unarmed student protestors (Kang 1984:182-84, Cumings 1997:344). The government's violent response with force backfired on Rhee's regime (Stone 1974:136). Far from quenching protest, this only sharpened the crisis. Indeed, the blood of young students sparked a chain reaction that led to the large-scale of people's movement (Park 2008:65). Volcanoes of wrath and anger against the unjust and undemocratic authorities beat the heart of all Korean people (Woo 2011:66). Protests mushroomed and demonstrations continued in every city, despite Rhee and the government's crackdown on the protests (Kim 2000:36). The street student demonstrations escalated into mass protests for freedom and democracy and eventually led to US withdrawal of support for Rhee's regime (Kluver 2014:220). Rhee finally took a white flag when some 250 university professors joined students to prepare another mass protest (Kim 2000:36, Kim 1964:83-92). The martial-law command, contrary to expectations, were even reluctant to intervene in the student demonstrations (Cole and Lyman 1971:20, Stone 1974:137). Rhee finally stepped down from power on April 26 and left for Hawaii where he spent his last days in exile (Lee 2009:128-29, Oh 1968:63-5).<sup>158</sup> Here the common people emerged as the leading force in the formation of anti-regime groups, demanding urgent actions (Choi 1993:33). This April uprising was, then, considered another touchstone of people's movement by the minjung theologians (Choo 1981:76). To them, The Student Revolution of 1960 was an heir to the spirit of the March First

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<sup>157</sup> Kim, one of the missing protesters, was found with a tear gas cartridge embedded his right eye and this instigated the populace of *Masan* to protest against the government (Oh 1968:61).

<sup>158</sup> After resigning, Rhee never returned to Korea. He died of stroke Hawaii on July 19, 1965 (Kleiner 2001:128).

Independence Movement of 1919, “inspired by the ideals of equality, justice, liberty, and democracy that were taught by Korean Christians” (Suh 1981, 29).

In sum, the minjung theologians have considered and accepted these three events as the paradigmatic people-oriented movement in Korean history (Lee 1993:65, Kim 1981:187, Suh 1983:63). First, minjung theologians take account of the *Donghak* Revolution in 1894 as their touchstone in bringing about the transformation of the Korean history (Kwon 2008:62). In this movement, the oppressed minjung defined themselves as the subject of their own history, who could not only deconstruct the unjust reality, but also reconstruct the new future (Suh 1981:171). Second, this minjung-based movement reappeared in the March First Independence Movement of 1919. To minjung theologians, the March First Movement was nothing but the heir of the *Donghak* Revolution, which heard the outcry and protest of minjung and rose up together in solidarity with them in spirit to decry Japanese colonialism (Kim 1981:189). It was the minjung who were the motivating force of the movement (Kim 1981:189). Third, minjung theologians have also seen the resurgence of the March First Movement in the April Student Revolution of 1960 as the eruption of the minjung’s rage against the corrupt and unjust ruling government (Suh 1981:29). In essence, the minjung theologians begin to rediscover minjung-oriented movements in the Korean history and see the mission of the church as being a church for and of the minjung (Choo 1981:76). They have found the historical root in the *Donghak* Revolution of 1894-95, the March First Movement of 1919 and the April Student Revolution of 1960 as the best examples of minjung’s struggle for self-liberation (Ahn 1984:223). To them, these movements prohibit the framework of historical subject-hood of the minjung; “[minjung] may be conquered, trampled upon, enslaved, but cannot be perish”; “[minjung], like the sun that dies every morning, will rise again from the dead” (Costa 2002).

#### **4.2.3.2 Socio-Economic-Political Background**

The victory of the April Student Revolution of 1960, which toppled the corrupt and incompetent Rhee regime, was short-lived (Minns 2001:180). Rhee’s abdication was followed by the period of transition to democracy, not by the direct installation of democracy (Chang 2007:199). In these confusing times, the blossoming of political liberalization had abruptly ended when General Park, Chung-Hee, a former Japanese imperial officer, took power by a military coup on May 16, 1961 (Küster 1994:109-110, Kern 2009:294). Park began a discursive campaign to justify his political upheaval (Kim 1987:251). First, Park had emphasized the necessity of a strong authoritative government for the sake of national security under threat of invasion by North Korea (Chang and Kim 2007:332). Second, he continued to advocate political dictatorship as a means of achieving for national economic growth (Oh 1999:52).

The result was then the open espousal of collectivist nationalism, which justified both politically authoritarian rule and economically state-led development (Glassman, Park, and Choi 2008:351). Based on these logics, the Park's regime had tactically combined national security with economic growth for the purpose of justifying its illegitimate seizure of power (Vogel 1991:51, Chai 2003:540). President Park immediately sensed that the result of economic growth would affect the very existence of his political fortunes (Jang 2004:140). To this end, the state-led developmentalism was established to facilitate the intensive mobilization of capital and labour (Chang 2007:195-96). Favouring economic growth at all cost, the authoritarian leader Park had aggressively deployed an outward-looking strategy (Chang 2007:195). This manifested in export-oriented industrialization by granting favours to Korean big businesses, namely, the "chaebols" (Minns 2001:180, Caiden and Jung 1981:303-4).<sup>159</sup>

The concentration of economic gigantism worked for a while. Under the Park's regime, the pace of industrialization in South Korea was so rapid and its economic growth rate was extraordinary, even called it as "miracle on the Han River" (Lee 1992:36-45).<sup>160</sup> Park's uneasy alliance of state and *chaebol*, on the one sense, led South Korea's transformation from an agricultural society to a leading capitalist nation in East Asia (Shin 1998:1309-51). Yet, this miracle –the economic success of Korea –did not come cheaply (Lie 1998:285-300). Park's propagation of a growth-first model, on the other side of the coin, had provided bogus justification for its continued promotion of a distribution-latter (or, inequality) strategy (Minns 2001:181). In fact, rapid economic growth in South Korea resulted mainly from an abundant supply of cheap disciplined rural migrant labour, who were flocked to urban centres (Jang 2004:140, Leggett 1997:64-76).<sup>161</sup>

This government policy, which favoured the urban sector at the expense of the rural sector, had inevitably accompanied many social problems, such as the prevalence of unemployment, crime, and urban poor (Light and Bonacich 1988:111-2). In particular, large groups of urban labours –especially women factory workers –found themselves working under brutal conditions, which made themselves

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<sup>159</sup> The term "chaebol," which is equivalent to Japanese "zaibatsu," literally means "financial clique" (Minns 2001:193). It generally represents large, private business conglomerate but also has negative connotations in relation to greed and corruption. Hyundai, Samsung, and LG are typical examples of it in Korea (Hwang 2003:364).

<sup>160</sup> Upon seizing the power, General Park established the so-called "Five-Year Economic Development Plan." Under this government-led program, South Korea's economy had continued to grow; at the first-five-year plan (1962-1966), its GNP increased 7.8%; and the second-five-year plan (1967-1971) resulted in 10.5% rise (Chang and Kim 2007:332). But it was achieved mostly at the expense of the numerous Korean minjung.

<sup>161</sup> Indeed, there was a rapid decrease in rural population in a relatively short period. It formed 58.3% of the population of Korea in 1960 but only 28.9% by 1979 (Cho 1984:13).

another “urban under-classes” (Chang and Kim 2007:337). The destruction of their dignity as human beings was ignored; their individual values, needs, and interests were seen as appropriately sacrificed for the sake of state-*chaebol*’s profits (Choi 1989:127-28). Indeed, rapid industrial change over a short period of time began to give priority to material goods over human value (Lee 1996:17). In its wake, the Korean society became vulnerable to the wide disparity between the employers and the employees; haves and have-nots; and the powerful and the powerless (Cho 1984:13). Driven to get more profit, human rights and justice for the Korean people had aptly been subordinated to the economic growth (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990:24). Increasingly economic development itself had become less concerned with people as people (Choi 1989:127-28). Since the military dictatorship/*chaebol* power elites, who were being obsessed with expansion and development on the capitalist system, continued to create and implant the image of mammon in public sphere, social disparities, the growth of poverty and inequality had become pressing issues in the Korean society (Kim 1987:251, Lee 1996:17).

Soon, the powers and principalities of “the invisible hand” of capitalism were even crouching at the Korean churches’ door. The rapid industrialization and urbanization under Park’s dictatorship had devoured of the powerless (Chang 2007:208). It forced them to be alienated from society under the principles of “Social Darwinism” (Robinson 1988:28-37).<sup>162</sup> Out of this sheer desperation, the people, especially labourers, began to seek some form of relief in the churches (Suh 1984:246). This, in one sense, explained why the explosive growth of Korean churches was timed to coincide with the rapid expansion of national economy in 1970s (Jang 2004:140, 143). When the fate of alienation was fostered by materialism, the mass of grassroots people, as the primary victims of this economic development, sought to see the church as an alternative community to relieve their sense of insecurity (Buswell and Lee 2006: 195, Kim 1985:71). Yet, these urban fringes soon found out that the church was no longer a refuge for them. For the church already shared “a rigid dichotomous belief system and a conqueror’s attitude” with its fast growth and it prevented the church from standing with the least of the people (Jang 2004:141). A “bigger-is-better” mentality had already penetrated deep into many Korean churches its interest was now in the pursuit of materialism (Kang 1983:385-6, Lee, Lee and Park 2012:7). In a more simplistic way, since the rapid-but-uneven modernization had forcefully planted extreme materialism in every inch of the Korean society, the churches, too, had become contaminated with its sweet poison: greed and self-centredness (Jang 2004:143, Han 1999:71). By

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<sup>162</sup> Here, “Social Darwinism” means the social version of Darwin’s evolutionary theory –evolutionary selection of the fittest. It, as a step child of the spirit of capitalism, regards inequality in social classes as natural differences among people and thus reinforces people to worship profit (Sumner 1883:167-68).

moving hand-in-hand with the “religio-economic entrepreneurship,”<sup>163</sup> the Korean Protestant churches at that time, had attempted to serve two masters –God and money (Han, Han, and Kim 2009:334).

Under this condition, “the church was not a refuge from materialism, but rather another institutional embodiment of it” (Han 1997:60). Instead, a single-minded devotion to mammon became ingrained in many Korean churches (Kim 1985:62). In other words, the rapid industrialization drive under a military dictatorship had aggravated not only the social orders in Korean society generally, but also the social responsibility of the churches particularly, asserting the separation of church and politics (Han, Han, and Kim 2009:336, 353). The Korean churches in the times of modernization were, indeed, the churches that were strangers to the poor, indifferent to political, social, and economic oppressions; not many volunteered to involve (Jang 2004:142). As such, it was a “bigness syndrome” (Kim 1985:71-2) of Korean churches, which stopped its ears from small voices of the suffering people (Buswell and Lee, 2006: 195). The Church joined the powers and the principalities of the times to beat the drum for “a healthier and richer life” (Cho 2014:315). Soon, the church as the place of defense of the little ones turned into the place of offense against them (Pak 1983:19-21, Hong 1986:11). However, there were some more critical and progressive Christians who refused and resisted to fall into this web of compromise (Park 2003:188-99). When they had seen the legitimate resentment and grievance of the suffering people on the underside of economic miracles in Korea, these progressive Protestants had begun to awaken the church’s socio-political responsibility (Kim 2003:75). By stressing the social and political dimension of sin, rather than its individualistic view of sin (Ryu 2000:309-10, Ucko 2002:76), a group of theologians, allied with activists, had participated in protests to defend human rights and social justice (Clark 1995:96-7). This struggle to find an answer to the socio-political problems of Korea soon became the starting point of Minjung Theology (Park 2003:197). Ironically enough, the religio-economic-political repressions gave birth to the prophetic protest of Korean minjung theologians, the Reformers as being-in-the-suffering Korean minjung.

### **4.2.3.3 Philosophical Background**

#### **4.2.3.3.1 Hegel and Feuerbach**

Korean minjung theologians, who became very active in questions of political freedom, and labor conditions, owed the modern concept of God to Hegel and Feuerbach (Lee 1993:84). Hegel’s concept of God was deeply indebted to Spinoza’s pantheism; God is in the world and the world is in God (Spinoza 1957:167). From this vantage point, Hegel (1770-1831) emphasized the historicity of God,

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<sup>163</sup> The term has been firstly used by Dearman (1982:175) in her study of the Korean church in the United States.

who externalized himself to the world throughout history. For Hegel, God is living God, always active in history (Hegel 1900). It came no surprise then that Hegel saw in history the foundation of theology (Küng 1978). Characteristic of Hegel's God was the open espousal of "a pantheistic historical God," leading the world to Himself (Kim 1987:3). However, Hegel tended to give a spotlight to ideas (Pippin 1989:16). This triggered a negative backlash from the Young Hegelians (Wartofsky 1977:175). Feuerbach (1804-1872) especially challenged the Hegelian idealism, considering it as a reduction of man's essence to self-consciousness (Wartofsky 1977:216-17). He rather sought increasingly to develop an anthropological, rather than theological, essence of religion (Feuerbach 1957:75). For Feuerbach, theology is anthropology because it is man, not God, who is the essence of religion, which is, Christianity (Feuerbach 1980:19) and because it is man, not God, who created God in his own image (Küng 1978:200). Thus it was Feuerbach's central claim that "man was already in God, was already God himself, before God became man (Feuerbach 1957:50). Indeed, against the Hegelian concept of a historical God, Feuerbach had insisted on an "anthropological atheism" (Kim 1987:250-95), which interpreted God as an imaginary projection of man. Yet, both Hegel and Feuerbach's concept of God influenced minjung theologians to understand the doctrine of synergism –a partnership of man with God in salvation –which emphasized both God's active involvement in the Korean history and the Korean's minjung's struggles for self-liberation from the structural violence (Kim 2009:21).

#### 4.2.3.3.2 Marxism

Feuerbach had inspired deeply another Young Hegelian, Karl Marx (1818-1883). In fact, Feuerbach's critique of Hegel's absolute idealism set the agenda for Marx's future path (Mark 1978:145). Marx, at first, presented himself as a pupil of Feuerbach, who restored materialism to its right, but soon turned away from his master, who still remained in the traditional idealist fetters (Marx and Engels 1975:652-54). For Marx, matter is primary and the material world is the only reality (Chaurasia 2001:523). Marx extended this materialism to the study of the contemporary society and applied it to the practical activities of the proletariat, the working class (Granter 2014:536). The sufferings of the workers in the present phase of capitalism, in particular, urged Marx to sharpen the concept of materialism.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, vivid experiences of social and economic realities of his day had transformed Marx; by lending a sympathetic ear to them, he turned himself from the proponent of Feuerbach's anthropological atheism to the progenitor of his own socio-political atheism (Lee 1993:86). For Marx, human beings are the

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<sup>164</sup> Engels, Marx's lifelong friend, witnessed the misery of working class in Manchester, UK as follows; "He [Engels] saw the working people living like rats in the wretched little dens of their dwellings, sometimes even without beds to sleep on when all the furniture had been sold for firewood, sometimes living in the same room with the pigs; spending their lives, without a sewage system, among the piles of their excrement and garbage; spreading epidemics of typhus and cholera" (Wilson 1972:160).

creator of a society as well as history (Patterson 2009:39-57). It was human beings who could not only create the world, but also transform it by changing the circumstances in which they lived (Fromm 1961:26). To be sure, this critical analysis of the active role of human beings in history and society was the foundation for Marx's historical materialism (Tabak 2012:25-50). Marx understood that human society was the outgrowth of collective economic activities (Patterson 2009:103). Each economic system, or mode of production, in human history contained within it a contradiction that eventually led to its demise so as to be replaced by another, more advanced stage of economic and social life (Tabak 2012:50-52). In Marx's view, an epoch of new social change therefore only begins in the womb of the old society itself (Patterson 2009:57).

Yet, Marx did not see changes proceed smoothly, without conflict, without upheavals. Rather it may usually take place by means of the revolutionary overthrow of the old relations of production and the establishment of new ones: history, according to Marx, could only progress by eliminating "bad side" (Callinicos 1983:85). This meant, to be more specific, that current capitalism was pregnant with revolution (Marx and Engels 1975:174). The main feature of capitalist system was most acute class struggle between the exploiters (those who own the means of production; the bourgeoisie) and the exploited (those who do not; the proletariat) (Callinicos 1983:106). Here there stood out in bold relief in tremendous role of the working class as a new political power, whose mission was to abolish the existing relations of production and their upholders (Callinicos 1983:183). The exploited and oppressed working class, then, became welded into a new revolutionary power to sweep away the old conditions of production (Marx and Engels 1975:183, 187). To Marx, "force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one" (Marx and Engels 1975:603). From this outlook, Marx's historical materialism turned capitalist fetishism on its head. Marx not only forth-told the human history as a result of class struggle, derived from its relationship to the means of production (Marx and Engels 1975:9). He also foretold the economic breakdown of capitalism, characterized by exploitation of the bourgeoisie, the owning class, and alienation of the proletariat, the working class.<sup>165</sup> The final goal of Marx was then the creation of a new man in a classless society through revolution, culminating in communism where the means of production would be owned by all (Berghoef 1984).

Marx's insight to the reality of class struggle was reincarnated in the liberation theology of Latin America (Miranda 1974: xv). Under a context of continuing economic exploitation, Liberation

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<sup>165</sup> "Alienation" means, for Marx, that man does not experience himself/herself as the acting agent in his/her grasp of the world, but the world remains alien to him/her. "Alienation" is essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object (Fromm 1961:44).

theologians had tried to put theological flesh on the Marxist bone (Nunez, Emilio and William 1989:252-58). With a conviction that Marx's analysis helped them to understand their world better (Brown 1978:64-7), Latin American Liberation theologians unfolded Marxism as an indispensable tool in understanding their society on the one sense (Gutierrez 1973:273-74). They also upheld the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) as a refuge for their theological liberalism on the other (Verkuyt 1978:289). This new way of doing theology had influenced Korean minjung theologians both theologically and practically (Lee 1988:47). Taking a cue from Latin American liberation hermeneutics, minjung theologians began to "drink from its own wells." They had acknowledged that a political reading of the Bible was not only legitimate, but also highly desirable in the Korean context (Kim 1990:150-51). The methodology of liberation theology as socio-economic analysis of Christian truth resonated powerfully with Korean minjung theologians who lived in a similar socio-political troublesome situation (Kim 1992:28-9).

Yet, Korean minjung theologians were careful not to be called themselves Marxist-lite, owing to the Korean minjung's suffering from Marxism trauma during the Korean War (Lee 1993:87). The absence of ideological language, therefore, made Korean Minjung Theology exceptional (Son 2000:36-7). It, thus, distinguished characteristically from the liberation theology of Latin America, which pronounced an essential identity between Marxism and Christianity in terms of interpreting the Bible in the category of class or class struggle (Bonino 1988:157-68, Chae 1994:72).<sup>166</sup> In Korean Minjung Theology, a liberation-theopraxis in Korea that used only the Marxist tools of social analysis would remain un-Korean and ineffective, despite there had been a certain degree of mutual interaction and impact (Pieris 1988:80). In fact, the problem and oppression from the unjust society and structure even prevailed before the introduction of capitalism into Korea (Park 1984:9). Thus, Korean Minjung Theology went its own separate way as a distinctively Korean style of doing theology, deeply rooted in the pathos of the Korean minjung and their will to power in Korean history (Park 1984:9-10). To be sure, it was the suffering and struggles of the Korean minjung –or, minjung's "social biography" – which made Minjung Theology a distinctively Korean contextual theology (Kim 1984:66-78).

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<sup>166</sup> However, this stance to keep a distance from the Marxist language of class struggle was not in dispute among minjung theologians. It was greeted with self-criticism by the so-called second-generation minjung theologians who had called for a close look at the dialogue between Minjung Theology and Marxism. These younger theologians had maintained the need of the ideological stance, or materialistic paradigm, of Minjung Theology in a scientific way (Kim 2009:21, Choi 2008:214). Some elaborations on this matter will be followed in later chapter.

#### 4.2.3.4 Theological Background

Despite Korean Minjung Theology is a theology contextual to the core, it is also influenced deeply by various modern theological thoughts and perspectives. Indeed Korean Minjung Theology, like a sponge, began to absorb theological distinctive of the secular theology,<sup>167</sup> theology of hope,<sup>168</sup> process theology,<sup>169</sup> theology of history,<sup>170</sup> liberation theology,<sup>171</sup> political theology,<sup>172</sup> ecumenical theology<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Secular theology, sounds like even oxymoronic, has its root in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Tillich and Neo-Orthodoxy. In the wake of 1960s “the death of God theology” and Robinson’s theory of “Honest to God,” secular theology argues that theology must address the immanency, secularity or shared world of human experience over transcendence (Crockett 2001:1-2). In this sense, secular theology rejects the idea of “God up there,” but recognizes the idea of God to be “the ground of our being” (Robinson 2013:1-40). In it, God’s continuing revelation to humanity goes beyond the confines of religion or church. One advocate maintains that “in a pluralistic world it is not religion [humanity] has in common. What [humanity] has in common is the secular.” In essence, secular men rather requires a secular theology (Vahanian 2005:21).

<sup>168</sup> “Theology of Hope” is one of the modern theological perspectives, which takes faith in God and expectation of the future seriously. Its main task is to rediscover the “logos of hope” inherent in Christian eschatology (Moltmann 1967:28). In this perspective, Christian hope itself is born from contradiction, from the contradiction of the resurrection to the cross (Moltmann 1967:14). This idea has been developed by both Pannenburg (1928-2014) and Moltmann (1926- ), who see the future as a divine mode in the light of the eschatological message and history of Jesus (Braaten 1967:224). Here, the “theology of hope” is both a “theology of the resurrection” and a “theology of universal history” (Braaten 1967:218). It therefore urges church to take its “practical eschatology or eschatological praxis” as mission in world history, but that transcends this world (Braaten 1967:226).

<sup>169</sup> Process theology is a theological movement influenced by “process philosophy” of Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) and Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000) and later John B. Cobb (1925- ). As its term “process” indicates, this theological movement rejects static actuality and affirms that all actuality is process. In this light, process theology denies, at least, five (5) kinds of the common connotations of God’s existence; (1) God as Cosmic Moralizer; (2) God as the Unchanging and Passionless Absolute; (3) God as Controlling Power; (4) God as Sanctioner of the Status Quo; and (5) God as Male (Cobb and Griffin 1976:7-11).

<sup>170</sup> “Historical theology is the branch of theological inquiry which aims to explore the historical development of Christian doctrines, and identify the factors which were influential in their formulation and adoption. Historical theology therefore has direct and close link with the disciplines of church history and systematic theology” (Mcgrath 2013:8). It is generally agreed that the origins of historical theology lies in the sixteenth century in the wake of an intense debate over Christian authenticity between both the Protestant and Catholic reformations (Mcgrath 2013:9).

<sup>171</sup> Liberation theology appears as the responses to suffering. This theological perspective, therefore, holds the affirmation of the significance of experience and social location in one’s theological formulation and identifies theology with liberating praxis for the poor and oppressed. In a variety of forms, Latin American Christians demands this liberating praxis on the history of colonialization; Feminist Christians on the male dominance of ecclesiastical structure and theological system; Black Christians on the white picture of Jesus and the segregation of Christian fellowship; and German political theologians the bourgeois gospel of apathy and consumerism (Chopp 1986:2-3).

<sup>172</sup> Political theology is the analysis and criticism of political arrangement, which is relate to politics, society, and economics (Scott and Cavanaugh 2004:1). It as an academic discipline began during the latter part of the 20th century, partially as a response to the work of both Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), German jurist and political theorist, and the Frankfurt School (Schmit 1922:64-66). The theme of revolution, liberation, and minjung can belong to this category.

<sup>173</sup> Ecumenism is the quest for unity among Christians now divided by denominations, and in this sense it is to be distinguished from religious pluralism, even if it is sometimes called a “wider ecumenism.” As Ecumenism “is not the effort to find some generic essence of religion that might minimize conflicts between the religions,” it is far from a “relativistic pan-religious pluralism,” but, to be understood as the quest for specifically Christian unity (Harmon 2010:3).

and practical theology<sup>174</sup> both critically and creatively (Kim 1980:19, Na 1988:139). From Karl Rahner (1904-1984) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), for example, minjung theologians have learned a new perspective on both Christ presenting in “anonymous Christians” (Suh 1976:78, Rahner 1983:288-95), and history incarnating in the reality of the suffering people (Bonhoeffer 1971:17). Jürgen Moltmann (1926- ), the Protestant theologian of Tübingen, had also left an indelible imprint upon the development of Korean Minjung Theology (Kim 1998:55). He helped minjung theologians to take issue with the “history of God” in Trinitarian formula (Moltmann 1992) and to decipher the underside of “the crucified God,”<sup>175</sup> or “the pain of God,”<sup>176</sup> in light of the hope of a future, namely, an eschatological resurrection (Moltmann 1970:8, 23). In addition, Alfred North Whitehead’s (1861-1947) thesis that “God creates the World, as that the World creates God” (Whitehead 1978:343) also proved helpful to minjung theologians. It served as a springboard for the advent of holistic humanism, namely, the elevation of man as the centre of evolutionary process of development (Lischer 1979:2-3, 9). In Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014), Korean Minjung Theology also found not only an interpretation of God’s revelation in human history but also guidance of how to negate the effects of transcendentalism (Pannenberg 1970:15, 19, 98).

It was, however, liberation theology, which encouraged minjung theologians to apply socio-economic hermeneutics into the social situation and thus turned them to stand against the current exploitation and injustice towards the Korean suffering minjung (Gutierrez 1973:2607). Besides, Paul Löffler (1931-2010), a German political theologian, motivated Korean minjung theologians to interpret the cross of Christ and the Kingdom of God not in substitutionary, but in political terms (Löffler 1979:109-14, Kim 1990:125-29). While Kenzo Tagawa (1935- ), a Japanese theologian, introduced them the political concept of minjung as the keyhole to the socio-political conflict between the rulers and the

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<sup>174</sup> Practical theology can be defined as “empirically descriptive and critically constructive theory of religious practice.” It is once considered only as the application of the so-called foundational theological disciplines, such as exegetical, historical and systematic theology, but now presents itself at the academic level as a separate branch of theology. The term practical theology serves as a “theological theory of action” (Heitink 1999: xv-xviii). Don S. Browning (1934-2010) succinctly defines a fundamental practical theology “as critical reflection on the church’s dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation” (Browning 1991:36). In its wake, the main focus of practical theology has been broadened to include on a common good, on a personal as well as structural-societal level (Osmer & Schweitzer 2003:216).

<sup>175</sup> The idea of the passibility of God has been condemned as heresy (patripassianism, or Sabellianism) in the orthodox tradition of church. However, many theologians have held the idea of God’s pain and suffering, despite their denying of patripassianism (the belief that since Father had become incarnate in Christ, he had suffered). Among them are Saint Anselm (*divine wound*), Martin Luther (*theologia crucis*), Kazoh Kitamori (*the pain of God*), and Jürgen Moltmann (*the Crucified God*) (Park 1993:111-27).

<sup>176</sup> Like Moltmann, but prior to him, Kazoh Kitamori (1916-1998), a Japanese Protestant theologian, saw the very essence of the gospel in the idea of the pain of God. Thus, Kitamori’s book “The Theology of the Pain of God,” published in 1946—one year after the Japanese surrender to the Allies in the World War II—was used by Moltmann.

ruled (Tagawa 1983:13-4, 272-74). Furthermore, the Korean Minjung Theology took as its subject matter ecumenical theology when the World Council of Churches (WCC) began marshaling its forces to the social issues of human rights and political injustice (Lee 1993:93). The *Missio-Dei* theology of the Bangkok Conference (“Salvation Today,” 1972-1973), which was even hailed as the new interpretation of Calvin’s sovereignty of God (Kim 1981:148), was crucial to minjung theologians for redefining church’s mission as “the catalyst of God’s saving work in the world...not merely the refuge of the saved” (Moltmann 2007:173).

All seem to prove that Korean Minjung Theology had been influenced heavily by various modern theological perspectives and thoughts (Kim 1998:61-2). But this does not mean that it was formed as a mosaic product of theologies through a process of blind synthesis. Rather, the Korean Minjung Theology came as being independent of other theologies not only by constituting significantly a critical challenge to the modern theological stream (Chung 2010:156-57), but also by seeking authentically Korean expressions of Christian faith (Choi 2008:213). In short, Korean Minjung Theology was emerged not as a spin-off of western version of modern theologies, but as a spearhead of Korean version of contextual theology.

#### **4.2.4 The Contextualization of Korean Minjung Theology**

Korean minjung theologians had learned and accepted various modern theological views not to be imitators but to be initiators of their own theology. They had continued their search for the theological identity with its own unique background. This enabled them to sublimate explicit and implicit theological influences from outside into the inner core of the relevant theology, deeply rooted in the concrete reality of Korean society (Chung 2007:1). In this pursuit of Korean version of contextual theology, distinctive characteristics of Korean Minjung Theology, namely, theology of *minjung* (common people), theology of *han* (unresolved bitterness), and theology of *Hyun-Jang* (life-field/*Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung) came into being (Park 1985).

##### **4.2.4.1 Theology of *Minjung* (Common People)**

The term “‘minjung’<sup>177</sup> is a dangerous word” (Suh 1981:15). It has its own connotation and history, which is solely peculiar to Korean context. There is therefore no single equivalent in other language

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<sup>177</sup> As already mentioned, minjung is a Korean word composed of two Chinese characters, “min” and “jung”; the former means “people” and the latter means “the mass.” Combining these two words, thus, can be translated into English as “the mass of people,” or simply “the people” (Moon 1985:1). But, its essence is to be found in its untranslatability due to its thick meanings.

renders all the shades of this Korean word (Lee 1988:3). In this light, a more useful way is to prune out any pseudo terms which cause confusions. Neither “Paik-sung” (subjects in monarchy), nor “Daejung” (mass) is equivalent to minjung due to its impersonal and non-political nature (Suh 1983:225). “In-min” (people used primarily in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) does not fit either for its ideologically and politically biased nuances (Hyun 1985:4). As for its ideological and economic slant, the term “proletariat” is also no good counterpart of minjung (Suh 1983:183, Son 2000:37). Rather, the term minjung demands more personal, dynamic and contextual interpretations in the Korean vernacular usage (Kim 1984:66-78).

By acknowledging of its untranslatability, the general consensus defines minjung as “the common people” literally and “the underdogs” figuratively (Na 1988:138). But, its contextual meaning refers to minjung as “the lower echelon of the Korean society” who have long been marginalized unjustly (Kim 1981:80). From this sense, the closest definition of minjung emerges as the people who are “politically oppressed, economically exploited, socially marginalized and culturally alienated” (Lee 1988:4). Nonetheless, this definition is not enough to render to the essence of minjung. The fact that many efforts have been devoted to defining the minjung proves that none of them truly captures its crux (Kim 1996:168). Indeed, there have been difficulties of identifying minjung with a concrete and tangible group as for black theology, feminist theology and Dalit theology (Kim 2011:121). Rather the term minjung has much broader and deeper meaning in it. It is something that must be experienced to be known (Park 2008:138).<sup>178</sup> From it, the term minjung defines itself indefinable in a paradoxical way (Ahn 1987:27).<sup>179</sup> In other words, the ambiguities and inconsistencies of this definition, conversely, frees itself from its definite categorization and conceptualization (Kim 1996:168-69). Characteristic is then the new characterization of minjung as a holistic, dynamic and changing reality which transcends any fixed formula (Kim 1981:183, Bonino 1988:159). Thus is followed by the indefinable definition of minjung as a living and dynamic reality beyond mechanical conceptualization (Suh 1983:42).

The self-emptying of minjung is closely linked to the self-identifying of minjung (Oh 2015:1105). This implies that “minjung cannot be defined by others but can be defined only by themselves” (Park

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<sup>178</sup> Moon, Dong-Hwan (1921- ), an Old Testament scholar and one of the leading minjung theologians, especially referred that “the term [minjung] came to be used first during the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910) when the common people were oppressed by the *yangban* (the gentry) class, the ruling class...at that time anyone who was excluded from the *yangban* class was a minjung. During the Japanese occupation (1910-1945), most Koreans were reduced to minjung status except for a small group who collaborated with the Japanese imperialists. Today the term minjung may be used for all those who are excluded from the elite who enjoy prestigious positions in the present dictatorial system” (quoted by Lee 1988:4).

<sup>179</sup> Ahn, Byung-Mu, even says that he does not explain who the minjung are, by rejecting its conceptual definition which is separated from the minjung’s reality (Ahn 1987:284).

2008:123). The name of minjung, in this light, has become a powerful symbol of both oppression and liberation (Kim 2011:217-32). Minjung, in one sense, comes as the victims who are oppressed and exploited. But it at the same time comes as the victors who are inspired not only to survive in the midst of misery, but also to act with revolutionary zeal to fight for their own independence (Kim 1981:184). Here the self-identifying of minjung is present as self-liberating (Kim 2009:77). It represents itself as the subject and prime mover of historical development (Lee 1994:140-41), not merely as a byproduct of socio-economic classification, which is primarily identified with the proletariat in Marxist terminology (Kim 1983:184-85). Again this recalls the indefinable and dynamic nature of minjung. In the process of self-emptying, minjung becomes “women who are dominated by men, or to an ethnic group ruled by another group, or a race when it is ruled by another powerful race” (Kwok 1995:15, Kim 1981:136). Here, the minjung movement is characterized by a historical breakthrough led by various group of self-emptying, self-identifying and self-liberating people, such as students, intellectuals, workers, peasants, church activists, writers, and other democratic forces, rather than strictly taking up by a specific social class, especially the proletariat (Koo 1987:103, 112, Kim 1981:185). This once again affirms that minjung could include but should transcend the proletariat, the Marxist idea of the working class (Kim 1996:168). The dynamic correlation of the self-emptying, self-identifying and self-liberating proves that it is not proletariat, but minjung who has both an inclusive and transcendent power that enables people to tell their own story (Kim 1984:66-78). The story of minjung is often expressed in religious hope and aspirations as well as in historical and socio-economic struggles and sufferings (Kim 1981:184-85). From it, three self-nature of minjung constitutes another self-image, namely, the self-transcending nature of minjung. In this light, minjung can refer to not only the oppressed Korean people, but all the people in the world who suffer from inequalities and injustices, regardless of their religion or nationality (Wielenga 1999:48). Indeed, the self-emptying, self-identifying and self-liberating nature enables minjung to transcend as well as include themselves in a dynamic and holistic way (Ahn 1987:116).

This indefinable character of minjung leads to the dynamic and rightful juxtaposition between the biblical and Korean minjung (Ahn 1983:138-51). It is part of a general hermeneutical awakening in search for biblical equivalents to the concept of minjung as God’s people (Park 1984:10). In the Old and New Testament, they are pointed the *am ha’arets* (the people of the land), the *ochlos* (the outcast), the *habiru* (the Hebrew), “my people” of Micah, and *anawim* (*ptwcoi*, in Greek, “the poor”) as the biblical references for minjung (Na 1988:142). In it, the minjung theologians have first found in the *am ha’arets* and the *ochlos* the sociological meaning, referring to the poor and the powerless class as

the victims of the society of that time.<sup>180</sup> They, in this light, clearly resonate with the Korean minjung (Ahn 1983:150). Minjung theologians then have developed the concept of minjung theologically by identifying the *habiru*<sup>181</sup> in Egypt with the oppressed minjung (Moon 1985:4). Here the *habiru* are the objects of Pharaoh's oppression, but at the same time, they are the objects of God's liberation as His specific elect (Park 1982:133-39). Furthermore, when it comes to the Exodus-event, greater concern to minjung theologians is the Hebrew (*habiru*) outcry to Yahweh (Kim 1988:231-32). For they find that there is the outcry of the oppressed *habiru* –the minjung of the time –which precedes the divine action (Croatto 1981:18). This means, in other words, the people's outcry is to be regarded as a prerequisite for bringing God's redemptive work (Kim 1988:233). Here, the outcry of the oppressed *habiru* itself galvanizes Yahweh to take action against the oppressors: "whenever Israel cried in distress God gave relief" (Batten 1972:369). This eureka moment enables minjung theologians to reinterpret God's salvific act in the light of the minjung's struggle against the present situation (Park 1985:142-45). To their eyes, it is the minjung's outcry which actually embarks on their *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history), not vice versa (Kim 1988:232, 236).

This outlook also leads minjung theologians to reinterpret the calling for "my people" in Micah as the calling for minjung in the Korean society (Moon 1985:45, Na 1988:142). Indeed, it has turned the course of their theology. By looking "my people" as the victims of social injustice, minjung theologians begin to recognize that a conflict between "my people" (the oppressed) and "this people" (the oppressors) are still in progress here and now (Moon 1985:35). From it comes to the double-identification; one is my people as minjung and the other is Micah as minjung theologians, who speak as commoner and live among the minjung (Moon 1981:127, 1985:49). Then, minjung theologians, like Micah, has sought to find "my people," the today's suffering minjung (Moon 1982:104-32). They then have tried to share in suffering with the minjung. Rather than fleeing from the suffering of their people,

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<sup>180</sup> Some Western scholars have also held the similar line of argument. Joachim Jeremias (1971:108-113), for example, sees the *am ha'arets* and the *ochlos* (the outcast) are the same. Jeremias even presents that Jesus' opponents could call his followers, under the heading 'the poor,' either sinners or *am ha'arets* (the *ochlos*) without distinction. Yet, others, such as S. Westerhom (1978), E.P. Sanders (1983:32-3, 1985:189) and James D.G. Dunn (1988), have argued that an identification of the *am ha'arets* (the *ochlos*) and sinners (*hamartoloi*) is incorrect. Rather should the sinners be identified with the wicked (*resha'im*), with tax collectors and with others who had renounced the covenant. Here Jesus offended the people, especially Pharisees (*haberim*), and was killed, not because of his association with the *am ha'arets* (the *ochlos*), but because of his inclusion of the sinners in the Kingdom without requiring repentance as traditionally understood (Sanders 1985). However, this claim that Jesus scandalized his fellow Jews due to his inclusion of the sinners in the Kingdom without repentance is also questioned (Allison 1987:57-78).

<sup>181</sup> Originally, the term *habiru* is often considered as mercenary soldiers, people under treaty, and prisoners of war in one sense (Astour 1976:382-85), and as outlaws, outcasts, and those who stood outside the dominant social system in another sense. At any rate, the term suggests antagonistic characteristics against the prevailing social or power structure (Chaney 1983:39-90).

minjung theologians are drawn to them (Moon 1985:47-9). Furthermore, the poor (*anawim* in Hebrew, *ptwcoi*, in Greek) are seen in a new light as another scriptural equivalent of Korean minjung (Suh 1983:109, 356-57). In their eyes, the poor in the Bible are included the captives, slaves, widows, orphans, prostitutes, the sick, and the demon-possessed (Ahn 1990:120). To minjung theologians, they are nothing but the sociologically poor, namely, the exploited and oppressed powerless minjung (Kim 1995:10, Suh 1983:109).

This implies the dual-character of the poor. To the minjung theologians, the poor are not only the oppressed under antagonistic social structures, but also the privileged beneficiaries of the Good News (Kim 1986:280-85, Suh 1983:53-55). In fact, it is the sociologically poor who have learned from their powerlessness and thus placed their whole trust in God (Suh 1983:398-99). In this connection, the sociologically poor are the spiritually poor, namely, the poor in spirit of Matthew's beatitude (Mt.5:3) (Suh 1983:399). They are hunger not only for bread, but also for salvation as the original recipient of the Kingdom of God (Kim 1995:10); they are not invited at first, but eventually become the guests of God's grand banquet (Lk. 14:21-23) (Suh 1981:155-82); they are a pointer to the minjung as both the materially and spiritually poor, who are not the passive victims of history, but the active makers and redeemers in the Covenant Code (Suh 1981:160, Kang 1990:91-4), "the Code of Protection for the weak," or "the Code of Social Justice" (Suh 1983:264-66). What is important here is that all prove positive elements in the poor as the biblical minjung who begins to understand "the mysterious preference of God for the minjung" (Moon 1987:185, Kim 1986:281). In this way, minjung theologians attempt to give the minjung a significant and dynamic role as the poor of God, who should bring their sufferings and struggles into salvation (Sugirtharajah 1993:172-174).

This unity of biblical and Korean minjung as God's people enables minjung theologians to see in the suffering minjung the messianic role (Suh 1983:51, 53, 107-8), that is, the minjung's own power not only to liberate themselves from the suffering reality, but also to become the subject of their own history (Kim 1984:517-35). In this way, Korean Minjung Theology finds the gospel in the Korean minjung and the Koran minjung in the gospel; the story of Jesus in the gospels "is not a personal biography of an individual but a 'social biography'" (Ahn 1982:177). This belief in the minjung's transforming power culminates in the idea of the self-salvation of the minjung (Suh 1983:54, 191, Moon 1998:29). Minjung theologians, emphasizing what they are "saved for" rather than what they are "saved from," (Wilson 2002:186), begin to rediscover both the centripetal and centrifugal force found in the suffering minjung (Suh 1981:179). To them, Jesus and minjung not only met together through suffering as centripetal force, but also set them free from suffering as centrifugal force (Ahn

1987:32-3). In this dynamic connection, Jesus is found in minjung and minjung is found in Jesus (Suh 1983:54, 191); minjung becomes the saviour and the deliverer for their own liberation just as Jesus does (Ahn 1975:17, 50, Yim 2002:99-101).

Yet, this idea of minjung-messiah, in a sense, raises the ontological question in the relationship between the two (Son 1998:87-98). Thus is created by a useful differentiation of “identification” and “identity” (Suh 2010: xiv). Even if minjung theologians identify minjung with Jesus and Jesus in the Bible as minjung, this does not necessarily mean that Jesus and the minjung are the same identity (Suh 2010: xiv). Rather this means that minjung has to be understood as an experiential entity identified with the Jesus-event, Jesus crucifixion and resurrection (Kim 2011:121-22). No doubt, “there is unambiguous distinction between minjung, who is functionally messianic and Jesus as the Messiah” (Kim 2009:52). But, by participating in the life and death of Jesus, minjung becomes part of Jesus-event and in that sense they are Jesus (Ahn 1987:19, 96, Choi 1998:345-69). In this way, minjung theologians have discovered “Jesus as minjung and Jesus-event as minjung event” (Suh 2010: xiv). This further indicates that Jesus-event is not the only messianic event in history; it is not the once-and-for-all salvific event but happens here and now (Ahn 1990:104, 284, Kim 1993:21). The minjung is, in this light, the subjects of history (Suh 1981:169, Kim 1993:21).

All in all, Korean minjung theologians have rediscovered Jesus among the minjung in the Bible and in Korea. This even leads them to reinterpret the relationship between Jesus and minjung in a new way (Ahn 1982:177). Elucidating the relationship of Jesus to the minjung, the minjung theologians begin to amplify the minjung’s messianic character in the minjung-event, or Jesus event (Suh 1983:187-89, Yim 2002:99-101). Rather than engaging in the theologisation for theologisation’s sake, they have begun listening and sharing the stories of the suffering minjung by taking themselves on the side of the minjung (Suh 1993:189). Here, they are not merely the story-tellers of the minjung, but also the story-makers for the minjung who would retell the stories against the oppressive and exploitative power elite here and now (Kim 1993:21). In so doing, minjung theologians have decided to become minjung themselves (Suh 1995:144-45). For they see minjung as the “alternative consciousness”<sup>182</sup> of the Korean society, history and theology, which once died on the cross with Jesus two thousand year ago, but dying and raising everyday again in the present for their own salvation (Ahn 1990:104, 284). Indeed, it is this essential continuity between Jesus and minjung which enables them to find a new

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<sup>182</sup> This term is coined by Walter Brueggemann (1933- ). He defines the “alternative consciousness” as a “movement of protest which is situated among the disinherited and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who decisively intrudes, even against seemingly impenetrable institutions and orderings” (1979:162).

resurrection of Jesus in the suffering Korean minjung and thus decide them to join the Jesus-event or minjung-event willingly and voluntarily (Kim 2009:61).

#### 4.2.4.2 Theology of *Han* (Unresolved Bitterness)

Another distinctive characteristic of Korean Minjung Theology is found in a particular form of suffering, known as *han* (Lee 1988:8, Shu 1981:55-69). This Korean word *han*, like minjung, is essentially untranslatable (Kim 2008:81). Even in Koreans its meaning is hard to grasp as a whole. Although the term *han* is derived from Korean shamanism (Hyun 1985:445-56), this word is popular in many other Asian countries, where dominance-subordination has persisted for centuries (Song 1986:70-71). Here *han* is often described as the depth of human suffering (Park 1993:15). But, in Korean context, it is more than suffering itself; it is the deep-seated lamentation of the Korean minjung, inherited and transmitted to each generation and thereby became a DNA in the blood of them (Suh 1983:64).<sup>183</sup> Whereas *han* in China (*hen*) and Japan (*kon*) is similar to “grudge,” or “resentment,” waging a counter-attack (Kim 1999:126), *han* in Korea is a feeling of defeat or nothingness, having no concrete target of anger, and thus typically resolved by releasing or healing it rather than by taking revenge (Kim 1999:126-7, Hyun 1985:445-56). In this respect, *han* is for Korean people much closer to “frustrated hope,” “the collapsed feeling of pain,” “resentful bitterness,” “letting go,” and “the wounded heart” (Park 1993:20), like the “blues” in the US black experience (Cone 1981: xi).

This feeling of inward frustration is mainly attributed to painful and resentful experiences of the Korean minjung (Suh 1983:25). Indeed, the distinctive feature of Korean *han* is born in the womb of the Korean suffering history (Suh 1981:58). Behind Korean *han*, there is the history of long saga of oppression, poverty, and dehumanization inflicted upon the Korean minjung by repeated foreign invasions and internal exploitations (Hatada 1969:142, Ham 1983:71-2). This double oppression –by the powerful foreigners and by the ruling elites of their own society –turns minjung’s *han* inward, hardened and stuck to their heart as a deep wound (Moon 1985:1-2, Park 1993:15). Since the history of Korea is nothing but a history of suffering, the Korean minjung is nothing but the suffering people captured by the *han*-ridden society (Hyun 1985:7). To be sure, “[the Korean minjung] were born from the womb of the *han* and brought up in the womb of the *han*” (Yoo 1988:222). *Han*, therefore, becomes part of the blood and breath of Korean minjung throughout history (Kim 1999:125, Lee 2004:158-68). In a word, “*han* is a hallmark of the Korean minjung” (Moon 1985:1-2) and both are thereby

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<sup>183</sup> Kim, Chi-Ha (1941- ), the leading minjung poet, once defined “*han* as a people-eating monster” (quoted by Suh 1981:64).

inseparable from each other. Since “the inner reality of minjung is *han*” (Lee 1994:136), to know the Korean minjung is nothing but to know the Korean minjung’s *han* (Son 2000:33).

Taking minjung’s *han* as the keyhole, Korean minjung theologians begin to scan the rest of their theological stance (Suh 1983:105, Ahn 1984:141-42). Figuratively speaking, it is minjung theologians who transform the sighs of the minjung’s *han* into the voice of Jesus knocking on the door (Suh 1981:68). Of particular concern here is the awareness of positive potential of *han* (Lee 1994:141-42). They find in the abyss of *han* the power of resurrection, namely, a “tenacity of will for life” (Suh 1983:58). This turned *han* as a feeling of defeat and nothingness (Suh 1983:54) into a “righteous indignation” against abusive and unjust violence (Suh 1983:59). *Han* in this sense cannot be eliminated but can be sublimated into the dynamic energy for revolution (Suh 1981:27), which would provide the minjung hope in situation of no hope. Emphasizing the revolutionary dimension of *han*, minjung theologians have tried to connect the power of *han* to the power of revolution (Song 1986:71), which is, “the culmination of the oppressed people’s cries and shouts of *han*” (Suh 1991:79).

Furthermore, considering *han* as a driving force in the historical minjung movement in Korean history, minjung theologians attempt to see the Korean suffering history (*han*-ridden history) from the perspective of the suffering minjung (*han*-ridden people) (Park 1993:77-81). This is sharpened by the idea of *Ci-al*, taken from the Korean word for seed.<sup>184</sup> Not only does interpret the minjung as a collection of individual *Ci-al*, but also Korean history view as the history of *Ci-al* (Ahn 1982:21), minjung theologians have begun to understand the Christian gospel in the light of *han*, the collective experience of the suffering *Ci-al* (minjung) (Kim 1985:125-81, Park 1989:50).<sup>185</sup> This understanding of *han* as the cluster of suffering experience of *Ci-al* (minjung) helps them looking anew the Korean society as a breeding ground for the minjung’s *han* (Moon 1998:61-2). From it emerges the social dimension of *han* as the source for political, economic, and cultural alienation (Suh 1981:55-69). To minjung theologians, it is the structural evil which makes the Korean minjung a *han*-ridden people and the Korean society a *han*-ridden society (Suh 1981:15-37). They, therefore, no longer view minjung’s *han* as a natural phenomenon, or the inevitable outcome of one’s *karma*, but rather identify its root cause as the undesirable consequences of injustice and exploitation (Lee 1988:8, Phan 2000:47). The

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<sup>184</sup> This idea of *Ci-al* was used by Ham, Suk-Hon (1901-1989), a well-known people’s leader in Korea during the Park’s dictatorial regime. His understanding of Korean history as a history of suffering *Ci-al* (minjung) has made a great contribution to the development of Minjung Theology.

<sup>185</sup> Minjung Theology has elaborated that minjung is the subject of history and *Ci-al* as the subject of cosmos. So, whereas minjung is used as a socio-political term, *Ci-al* as a cosmo-ontological term (Suh 1981:63, 182).

reality of *han* is not merely a matter of the individuals. It rather subordinates through coercion of the system to increase social injustice and functions as a structure of control and domination, in which the few oppress the many (Suh 1983:25). In a word, the accumulation of social injustice and oppression is a major contributing factor to the accumulation of minjung's *han* (Moon 1985:1-2). This enables minjung theologians to distinguish *han* from sin (Suh 1983:106). In other words, they have realized that minjung's reality, which is labeled as sin by rulers, is in fact the reality of minjung's *han* (Park 1993:69). They then stress the uniqueness of *han* not as sin itself, but as the result of sins, the sins of the unjust society that entangles and oppresses the lives of the minjung (Suh 1988:6); "when the oppressors commit sin, the oppressed are harmed by the sin of the oppressor and come to have and deepen their *han*" (Hwang 2013:220). Here, sin is the volitional act of sinners, whereas *han* is the pain of the sinned-against who are the victims, not the perpetrators, of sin (Park 1993:12). Thus is constituted by the polarization of two realities; sin labeled by the rulers belongs to the oppressors, and *han* expressed by the minjung belongs to the oppressed (Hwang 2013:220).

The task of Minjung Theology, then, is two-fold. The resolution of the minjung's *han* in one sense and the transformation of structural sins in other sense (Suh 1981:68, Kim 1981:15). Yet, both are essentially intertwined. As *han* is a hallmark of the Korean minjung, Minjung Theology is to be a *han*-solving theology (Kim 1970:90, Suh 1981:55-69). In the same way, as minjung's *han* results primarily from the sins of the oppressive social and economic structure, Minjung Theology is to be a sin-solving theology (Moon 1998:84). Thus, to minjung theologians, *han*-solving is inseparable from sin-solving as a rebuttal of the existing forces of injustice and oppression (Suh 1981:27-8). For it is within the context of this process that personal salvation is available (Suh 1983:25). Here personal salvation, or personal *han*-solving, is sublimated into social transformation, or social *han*-solving (Lee 1996:53 Paik 1998:32). This presupposes restoring justice as a precondition. Indeed, in order to cope with structural sins, which is imbued with minjung's *han*, justice has to prevail (Suh 1983:58). To them, there could be neither *han*-solved minjung nor *han*-less society without justice being done (Lee 1993:101). This explains why minjung theologians are concerned about the love-without-justice approach, because it easily degenerates into cheap grace. Thus, minjung theologians take *han*-solving as their most important theological task and speak for producing justice, prior to forgiveness and love, even if it may at times provokes revolution (Lee 1984:10, Lee 1994:5).

Since justice is seen by minjung theologians as a way to release minjung's *han*, the idea of *dan* comes into being with special concerns (Kim 2008:96). *Dan* is a term used to refer to cutting off the chain of

*han* (Suh 1983:65).<sup>186</sup> It is, to be more specific, an “attempt to destroy the greed which is at the centre of the oppressor-oppressed cycle,” which eventually would lead to the creation of a *han*-less society (Moon 1985:55). Through the concept of *dan*, minjung theologians intend to create space for the *han*-ridden minjung to experience justice, healing and peace (Suh 1971:173). This is what Korean shamanism has termed *han-pu-ri*,<sup>187</sup> or releasing from *han* (Kim 1999:127, Hyun 1985:445-56). But they have been critical to shaman’s *han-pu-ri* if it is inclined to be the catharsis machinery without seeking for a radical change of the reality in which *han* has generated (Ryu 1978:345-46). To their eyes, one weakness of Shamanistic *han-pu-ri* is that it may overlook the evil of structure and simply attempt to patch up peace and reconciliation among the people in conflicts (Ryu 1965:30). They believe that the sickness of *han* can be cured only when the total structure of the oppressed society and culture is changed (Suh 1981:28).

Taking a cue from this notion, minjung theologians have observed that *dan* has a two-fold dimension; it is not only personal self-denial, but also a curtailing of the vicious circle of revenge in society (Suh 1981:64-5). They then begin to link the theological basis of *dan* with the death of Jesus, which has swallowed the injustice and oppression and thus broken the chain of the circulation of *han* (Son 2000:59). Since minjung theologians consider the cross as “God’s ultimate negation of *han*,”<sup>188</sup> the crucifixion of Jesus is nothing but “the very *dan* of God for the minjung” (Son 2000:59). So, it is clear for them the Jesus-event –the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus –is fulfilled in transforming *han* into *dan* (Son 2000:59). *Dan*, therefore, consists in the occurrence of reconciliation and healing, a

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<sup>186</sup> Minjung theologians borrow from Kim, Chi-Ha (1941- ), a well-known dissident poet, not only the concept of *han* but also that of *dan*. Kim’s story of Chang Il-Dam vividly shows the idea of *dan*. According to the story, when Chang Il-Dam, the preacher of liberation and of *han*, is arrested and eventually executed by the ruling group, his head is chopped off, but strangely enough, it appears on the betrayer’s body, while the betrayer’s head appears on Chang’s body. In this way, Chang’s *han* is resolved through *dan* (quoted by Suh 1981:67). Kim, in this way, lifts up a “violence of love” associated with a socio-political practice of *dan*. Reflecting upon Thomas Aquinas’s argument that people have the right to overthrow a tyrant, he continues, “I reject dehumanizing violence and accept the violence that restores human dignity. It could justly be called a violence of love...I welcome the violence of love, yet I am also an ally of true nonviolence. The revolution I would support would be a synthesis of true nonviolence and an agonized violence of love” (Kim 1977:8-15). “It is an expression of Chang’s conflicting thought that this is revenge but at the same time also the salvation of vicious men” (ibid 67). This is a reflection of Kim’s belief that God and revolution are intertwined (Lee 1988:9-11); the salvation from *han* is being embraced by the minjung through a personal and political practice of *dan*. This understanding, in a sense, corresponds to what John de Gruchy, the internationally esteemed political theologian of South Africa, tried to show in his book, “Reconciliation: Restoring Justice” (2002).

<sup>187</sup> The term *han-pu-ri* comes from Korean shamanism. This is a ritual means through which *han* is resolved. In Korea, this is also called, *kut*. There are three general movements throughout the duration and various steps of a *kut*. These are “speaking and hearing,” “naming,” and “changing” (Chung 1988:27-36).

<sup>188</sup> Rauschenbusch’s insight, in this connection, is noteworthy. He observes that Jesus was crucified, not just by individuals, but by “constitutional forces in the Kingdom of Evil” such as, “religious bigotry, the combination of graft and political power, the corruption of justice, the mob spirit, militarism, and class contempt” (1961:257).

healing of both personal and social *han*.<sup>189</sup> To be more specific, to the oppressor, *dan* means the negation of being greedy and oppressive, while to the oppressed, it means the negation of being vengeful and violent (Moon 1985:10). This manifests in a dialectical unification of *han* and *dan* (Suh 1983:65). There is the fearful *han*, which makes minjung hate, kill and revenge their oppressors endlessly. But, there is also the repetition of *dan* not only to break a destructive chain of *han*, but also to bring a decisive and organized explosion of *han* in the revolution, which leads to the social transformation (Suh 1981:61, Lee 1994:154).

In this dynamic process, “*dan* is eventually to overcome *han*” (Suh 1983:65). This *dan* prevents minjung from falling into the slave of negative *han* (Lee 1994:153). By cutting off the desire for continued retribution, minjung as the bearer of *dan* transformed *han* into power (Suh 1983:81). In other words, *dan*, as an effective way of releasing *han*, sublimates the destructive power of *han* into the redeeming power of *han* to change the personal or social problems (Lee 1994:154, Park 1987:121). This enables minjung theologians to insist of a necessary and radical change in the social order, rather than of an easy and partial solution which may indeed alleviate oppression but not lead to liberation (Kim 1989:1005-16). Here minjung theologians owe their approach to *Chondogyo* (Heavenly Way), or *Donghak* (Kim 2008:98). Under the banner of *In-Nae-Cheon* (humanity is heaven) and *Hu-cheon Gae-Byeok* (the great opening of the latter Heaven), *Chondogyo* taught the four stages of personal and social *dan*, namely, (1) “worshiping the divine embodiment” (*Shin-chonju*), (2) “nurturing the divine embodiment” (*Yang-chonju*), (3) practicing the divine embodiment” (*Haeng-chonju*), and (4) “transcending the divine embodiment” (*Sang-chonju*) (Kim 1982:24). All would, then, be incarnated in Minjung Theology a new type of *dan*, which is, the process of salvation of minjung both personally and socially. Then, the minjung is; (1) “to realize God in [their] hearts,” (2) “to allow the divine consciousness to grow in [them],” (3) “to participate what [they] believe in God,” and (4) “to overcome injustice through transforming the world” (Lee 1988:11, Suh 1981:66-7).

From this dialectic of *han-dan*, minjung theologians have come to the conclusion that the role of Korean churches is to be found in both “the priest of *han*” and “the prophet of *dan*” (Kim 1977:65, Suh 1981:55-69). This means the churches are to perform *dan* to heal both personal and collective *han* of the minjung (Suh 1986:602). The aim of Minjung Theology is therefore to create a *han*-less society by transforming minjung’s *han* into *dan*; by transforming minjung’s power into revolution to bring a

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<sup>189</sup> Karl Barth’s understanding of salvation, in this sense, resembles the perspective of *han* and *dan* in terms of his idea of healing broken relationship between God and man; between man and man (1969:4:2:314).

free, just, and non-exploitative *han*-free society (Park 1985:4). In short, Minjung Theology becomes a theology of *han* and *dan* for the salvation and liberation of minjung (Suh 1983:81).

#### 4.2.4.3 Theology of *Hyun-Jang* (Life-Field/*Sitz-im-Leben* of the Minjung)

“Minjung Theology prefers praxis to theory” (Kim 1995:10). It understands itself not as “Theo-LOGOS,” or “Theo-LOGY,” but as “theo-PRAXIS” (Suh 1986:602). The rediscovery of the minjung as the hermeneutical key enables minjung theologians to take a step forward in the praxis of doing-theology (Kim 1995:10). As they begin to see society and history from the perspective of minjung, who are socially and economically marginalized, the socio-political role of the church, as an advocate of the oppressed, becomes more apparent (Ahn 1982:25, Kim 2008:100). Imperative is then to awaken the Korean churches to see the praxis of Christians as an indispensable part to authentic Christian theology (Moon 1998:104, Kim 1995:10). To minjung theologians, the church should always stand at the side of the minjung and struggle for the liberation of the minjung, just as Jesus did (Kim 1995:8). This turns academic type of traditional theology on its head, which is divorced from action (Kim 2008:100-1). The praxis of Christians to minjung theologians comes to terms with doing theology from the minjung-centred perspective (Park 1995:196). Emboldened by this liberating praxis, minjung theologians have committed themselves to a “mutually critical correlation,”<sup>190</sup> which links the social and political experience of oppression and liberation to the Christian witness (Suh 1981:166). In so doing, they are doing theology among the minjung here and now (Kim 1995:10).

The minjung-centred perspective characterizes Christian praxis as social, active, political, dynamic, and liberating, having its root in hermeneutics of socio-critical theory (Thiselton 1992:379). As an effective way of opposing systems of oppression, this practice of minjung-hermeneutics rejects of the Augustinian and Lutheran legacies of “two kingdoms,” which teaches unwittingly Christians to neglect the social and political renewal (Segundo 1976).<sup>191</sup> Against the dualistic idea, the minjung-hermeneutic rather speaks of the need to a symbiotic relationship between text and context; theory and praxis; and theology and action to redress poverty and the oppressive status of the minjung (Ahn 1975:183). Minjung theologians have insisted then that under the current de-humanistic structure of de-humanized society, the Korean church, on the one sense, should be a “prophetic church,” which listens to, and speaks for the suffering minjung (Ahn 1984:186-208, Kim 1995:8). This provokes not only the

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<sup>190</sup> This term is originally coined by David Tracy (1984:167-80).

<sup>191</sup> According to Luther, God has established two kingdoms, one ruled by the law and the other ruled by the gospel. This theory has contributed largely to the dualistic idea of Western theology by separating the realm of religious life from secular life (Chung 2008:117-18).

church's liberation from the traditional theology, being saturated with the dualistic patterns of praxis and theory, but also its returning to the minjung and their vital context as the "epistemological foundation" for doing theology (Kim 1995:13, Suh 1981:229).

In light of this, they have also argued that the Korean church should be the church of *Hyun-Jang*, the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung.<sup>192</sup> The image of *Hyun-Jang* is the very place where Jesus is incarnated. The minjung theologians even regard *Hyun-Jang* as the very place where the Korean minjung have confronted in their everyday lives and where the minjung movements have been actually revealed (Suh 1981:57).<sup>193</sup> In this sense, "*Hyun-Jang* is a precondition of doing theology" (Enns 2013:159). To them, the church should dwell in *Hyun-Jang* where the minjung gathers and listens to one another's stories of victimization and liberation (Suh 1976:9). This includes the necessity of the church's rebuttal of indulging in abstract concept of liberation, apart from the real and concrete life situation of suffering minjung (Suh 2010: xiii, Kim 2008:286). Put it differently, Minjung Theology points out that Christian praxis must be shaped and reshaped in the *Hyun-Jang*, the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung (Kim 1995:11, Moon 1998:105). Here, to the minjung theologians, the authentic church is to be seen in the *Hyun-Jang*, in which theology and the life of minjung are essentially intertwined (Kim 2008:286).

The emphasis of Minjung Theology on *Hyun-Jang* as the fusion of theology and praxis is an important tension that is relevant to doing theology (Suh 1983:317). To the minjung theologians, the *Hyun-Jang* is the very place whereby doing theology is realized through the unification of God (spiritual renewal) and revolution (structural renewal) (Suh 1981:179). Thus is created by the *Hyun-Jang* as the vital context where the Jesus-event is taking place again and again (Suh 1991:239). The *Sitz-im-Lebe Jesu*, in this way, cast in a new light. Jesus was present with the poor and the powerless, namely, the suffering minjung of his time (Suh 1982:237-76). Furthermore, Jesus, as one of the suffering minjung (Ahn 1987:288), carried out his public ministry in Galilee, the *Hyun-Jang* in the first-century Palestine (Suh 1981:142, Ahn 1990:18-31).<sup>194</sup> Also, Jesus, as the suffering Messiah, died on the cross for the sake of the minjung's liberation (Suh 1981:161, 214). Thus, minjung theologians are justified in maintaining that Jesus' crucifixion was the culmination of the doing theology in the concrete life situation of minjung, namely, the *Hyun-Jang* (Ahn 1987:99). In this light, Jesus did a *Hyun-Jang* theology, by

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<sup>192</sup> The first syllable *Hyun* means "present," the second *Jang* means "location" (Suh 1981:57).

<sup>193</sup> This church of *Hyun-Jang* can also be translated as "field church," or "church on the spot" (Suh 1981:68). By presenting minjung-oriented characteristic, Suh, Nam-Dong even has argued that this *Hyun-Jang* church is a third form of the church, besides the Catholic and the Protestant churches (Suh 1981:57).

<sup>194</sup> According to one research, about 70% of the inhabitants of Galilee were peasants (Saldarini 1988:200-209).

incarnating himself into the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung (Ahn 1990:138, Suh 1983:297). This motivates minjung theologians to see the cross-event of Jesus not as a once-and-for-all (*ephapax*), but as a continuing and recurring *Hyun-Jang* event, embodied in the suffering reality of the minjung here and now (Ahn 1987:104, 284, Suh 1991:243-45).

It is decisive for minjung theologians then that the cross-event of Jesus is still alive today (Lee 1993:106). Jesus' crucifixion continues to happen again and again in the contemporary *Hyun-Jang* as the collective death of the suffering minjung (Suh 1976:67, Song 1988:81). This means the trans-phenomenon of the Jesus-event in *Hyun-Jang*. Jesus, as one of the minjung, can be found not only in Galilee –the first-century *Hyun-Jang* –but also in the Korean society –the contemporary *Hyun-Jang* –where a scandal of the cross is erected everyday (Lee 1988:11, Ahn 1987:104, 284). Here, the *Hyun-Jang* becomes a living witness, for wherever the minjung suffer, there is the agony of God on the cross, not as a “symbol of escape,” but as a symbol of “ultimate vindication” (Roberts 1988:104-5). This encourages minjung theologians to go further. To them, the cross as the *Hyun-Jang* of Jesus represents God's protest against the dominant and unjust structures (Park 2001:52, 2009:81), so that whenever the minjung suffer from the contemporary *Hyun-Jang*, it has to be proved in action. Just as for Jesus, the resurrection signifies that there is more to the life of Jesus than the cross (Sobrinho 1993:254-71). So, for the minjung, the resurrection signifies that their oppressive experience is not the end, but it represents that the minjung struggles to experience hope and liberation here and now (Ahn 1987:98-9, 118). Then, the *Hyun-Jang* comes to them as a living promise to encounter and realize God as the liberator in the present suffering context (Yewangoe 1987:293). It, therefore, involves the ongoing creation of justice. From this vantage point, the *Hyun-Jang* is sublimated into a crossroad, where the crucified Jesus (suffering) and the risen Jesus (liberated) are meeting together (Suh 1983:180-81); and where the suffering minjung and the liberated minjung are living together (Moon 1998:71, Ahn 1987:104, 284).

In short, to minjung theologians, the *Hyun-Jang* is nothing but the vital context for both Jesus and the minjung. This is the place where Jesus experiences the minjung's suffering (the human *han*) and the minjung understands Jesus' suffering (the divine *han*); and the place where Jesus and the minjung transform the suffering *Hyun-Jang* into the eschatological place where the minjung is making promise of the future here and now.

#### 4.2.5 New Understandings of Korean Minjung Theology

The contextualization of Minjung Theology can be epitomized by the theology of minjung (common people), theology of *han* (unresolved bitterness), and theology of *Hyun-Jang* (life-field, *Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung). This three-pronged feature serves as complementary to one another. Characteristics of Minjung Theology is, therefore, the open espousal of (1) minjung, the people of *han*, as the hermeneutical key; (2) the church for the liberation of the suffering minjung from the chain of *han*; and (3) doing theology in the concrete praxis of life, the *Hyun-Jang*, namely, the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung. From this standpoint, minjung theologians have further developed their doing theology in a new way, the so-called, a Korean version of biblical, historical, and spiritual understanding of Christian theology. In other words, they have reinterpreted minjung's *han* in the Bible, church history and the Holy Spirit to bringing a new understanding of Korean contextual theology.

##### 4.2.5.1 New Understanding of the Bible

Having analysed the socio-economic situation of the scriptural context, minjung theologians try to read the Bible from the minjung perspective (Park 1995:196, Lee 1993:110). Through this socio-economic interpretation of the Bible, they discover the biblical minjung, which is, the suffering people of Israel, (Kim 1995:13, Suh 1991:243-45). Thus, to them, the liberating act of God for the suffering people of Israel is the main theme of the Bible (Ahn 1987:78). Yet, the minjung theologians also find out that it is the outcry of the suffering minjung which embarks on God's salvific action (Kim 1988:229-39). Here biblical history bears witness to God's participation in the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the suffering minjung and it is, at the flip side of it, the story of the liberation of the minjung which they themselves have sought for (Suh 1981:179, 1983:11, 21, 168). Understood in this way, the outcry of the minjung is no longer regarded as merely a cry of despair, but a new outburst of hope in the liberating God who hears and protects those who suffer unjustly (Kasper 1976:118, Kim 1988:229-39). From this dynamic interrelatedness between God and the minjung in the Bible, the minjung theologians begin to see the Exodus event in the Old Testament and Jesus crucifixion in the New Testament as the core of the "liberating event" (Ahn 1987:79, Suh 1991:243-45). In Minjung Theology, both are inexorably bound together as pivotal events that serve to interpret the salvation and liberation for the minjung in the Bible (Suh 1981:159-59).

At first, in Exodus the minjung theologians find the suffering Hebrews (*habiru*) –the politically, economically, and socio-culturally downtrodden minjung –who were being forced to serve as slaves under the oppressive Egyptian system (Moon 1981:125, 1985:3-4). Then, they also find out Yahweh who heard the groaning of the Hebrews and came down to rescue them from the power of Egypt, the

harbinger of vicious circle of *han* (Exod. 3:7-8) (Moon 1987:182-83, 1981:124). In this sense, the Exodus narrative is an index finger to show that Yahweh is on the side of the oppressed, the *han*-ridden *minjung* (Moon 1981:124-25); “whenever [the *minjung* of Israel] cried in distress, God gave relief” (Batten 1972:369). Yet, to *minjung* theologians, this also means the active role of the *minjung* for their liberation (Croatto 1981:18). There is the suffering *minjung* as well as Yahweh posterior to the event of the Exodus (Moon 1985:5). Indeed, the outcry of the suffering *minjung* provoked Yahweh to rise up against the oppressive Pharaoh, the ruler of the world (Kim 1988:236). Thus, the Exodus event comes to *minjung* theologians as a ramification of their theology of *Heilsgeschichte* that the Old Testament Yahweh is the God of the *minjung* and the *minjung* are the people of God (Moon 1981:124-25).

The story of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus is another archetype example for the *minjung* liberation (Suh 1981:161, Ahn 1983:99). The liberal idea of the so-called “historical Jesus movement”<sup>195</sup> acts as a catalyst for the development of *minjung* Christology (Son 2008:52). *Minjung* theologians, like the circle of Jesus movement, put as much more emphasis on the life of Jesus, than theological dogma (Ahn 1999:48-56). But, difference is that it starts from the perspective of *minjung*, especially of the people around Jesus (Ahn 1981:85, 1993:166). In their request for the historical Jesus, the *minjung* theologians comment unfavourably on the historical Jesus movement in its neglect on the people around Jesus, the suffering *minjung* (Moon 1998:69-70, Ahn 1987:228-53). Thus, to them, the question, “Who is Jesus Christ for the *minjung* today?” always precedes “Who is the historical Jesus Christ?” (Moon 1985:48-50) This understanding of Jesus-with-the people, or Jesus-with-the Galilean *minjung*, opens a new hermeneutical grid in interpreting the people around Jesus (Ahn 1981:141, 151). *Minjung* theologians, especially in their researches on the Gospel of Mark, find that Jesus’ messages are, in particular, targeted at the social outcasts, which is *-ochlos* (Ahn 1981:149-50, Suh 1981:142). The term, *ochlos* is a Greek noun, referring to a crowd, the ignorant multitude, the populace, and the common people, those who are oppressed by the ruling powers (Ahn 1982:90). The word *ochlos* is, therefore, a sociological term, which is intentionally used by Mark to indicate the victims of the society of that time (Ahn 1983:139-41).

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<sup>195</sup> Here “the historical Jesus” refers to the discrete historical work of such men as H. S. Reimarus (1694-1768) and D. F. Strauss (1808-1874), whose focus is on Jesus’ rational, humanistic impulse over against the excesses of Super-naturalism (Reimarus 1962, Strauss 1972). They are credited by some (especially by Albert Schweitzer) with initiating historians’ investigation of the historical Jesus. From onwards, the history of historical Jesus studies has generally been divided into recognizable periods; the Old Quest, from 1778 to 1906; an interim period or “No Quest,” from 1906 to 1953; and the New Quest, from 1953 to the present day (Ladd 1993).

This discovery of the social character of *ochlos*, the people around Jesus, even urges minjung theologians to reconstruct their own minjung Christology from “the Saviour-saved schema” to “the Jesus-minjung schema.” (Ahn 1990:259-60, Moltmann 2000:256). The *ochlos* are the followers of Jesus as the minjung of his time, differentiated not only from the ruling class but also from the disciples (Ahn 1982: 90). From it the dynamic relationship between Jesus and *ochlos* came into being. Jesus identified himself with them (Suh 1983:12). Jesus had compassion for these *ochlos*-minjung and sided with them (Ahn 1981:96). Jesus promised the *ochlos*-minjung the coming of the Kingdom of God, the message of hope, without imposing any conditions (Ahn 1990:122-25). Jesus and the *ochlos*-minjung were contrasted to the political power groups and appeared as a counter community (Ahn 1982:91). The ruling powers were feared by such the Jesus-movement from below and thereby Jesus was crucified as a political Messiah of the *ochlos*-minjung by the Roman officials and Jewish leaders (Ahn 1981:149-50, 1990:18-31). All represent then that Jesus identified with the *ochlos*-minjung, the outcasts of society, and dwelled with them in their survival struggles (Suh 1983:129). Jesus is therefore the one who not only was with the *ochlos*-minjung, but he himself was one of *ochlos*-minjung of Galilee (Ahn 1985:183).

To the eyes of minjung theologians, this means that both Jesus and the *ochlos*-minjung are inseparable from each other (Ahn 2004:118). Indeed, Jesus without the *ochlos*-minjung is abstract and unreal (Suh 1981:211). It is for this reason that minjung theologians see the life and passion of Jesus as a social biography of the *ochlos*-minjung, rather than that of an individual (Ahn 1982:177). To them, it is therefore not the individual Jesus, but rather the collective *ochlos*-minjung who were crucified on the cross (Ahn 1982:183, 1987:99). In the same way, Jesus was raised means that the *ochlos*-minjung of Galilee were raised (Ahn 1982:184, 1987:99). Here the main thrust of minjung Christology becomes clear. It should not be divorced from the minjung’s struggle.<sup>196</sup> In Minjung Theology, Christology is, in this light, to be the hermeneutical key for the *ochlos*-minjung experience (Ahn 1975:183, Yim 2006:136). Thus, Jesus is to be regarded as “the personification and symbol of the [*ochlos*-minjung]” (Suh 1983:54, 191) and his crucifixion and resurrection as the epitome of the *ochlos*-minjung’s struggle for their own liberation (Suh 1991:245). This results in a formation of minjung Christology; “Jesus is the minjung, and the minjung are Jesus” (Ahn 1987:31). The minjung-Jesus, in this connection, plays a messianic function for the minjung and others (Ahn 1982:103, Suh 1983:116-19).

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<sup>196</sup> This idea essentially concurs with the work of M. M. Thomas, a renowned Indian Christian theologian. Thomas regards “the struggle for Human Dignity as a preparation for the gospel” and said “If theology is christologically oriented, it needs not be opposed to anthropology” (Thomas 1971:14).

Minjung Christology in one sense goes beyond the low Christology.<sup>197</sup> It rather constructs a radical new Christology, which even deifies the minjung (Chang 2007:206).<sup>198</sup> So, its focus lies primarily on not the “personal saviour” motif, but rather the “Jesus-event” itself (Chang 2007:206). By interpreting Jesus’ ministry in the gospels as the first minjung movement, this views the story of Jesus in the gospels not as a time bound unique story but rather as a common story that is enacted through the lives of all suffering minjung (Ahn 1990:259-60, Chang 2007:213). This understanding of Christ then emphasizes the continuum that exists between Jesus and the minjung (Moltmann 2000:256). In minjung Christology, Jesus integrates himself into the minjung and minjung, in this way, plays the role of the Messiah (Suh 1983:107-8, Yim 2002:99-101). Thus, the salvation of God goes hand in hand together with the liberation of minjung (Suh 1983:11, 21). Indeed, minjung Christology insists that Jesus-event is inseparable from the minjung-event and this dialectic of minjung-Messiah enables salvation and liberation of the minjung a continuous process in the here and now (Ahn 1975:183, Yim 2006:136).

To be summarized, minjung theologians, through their socio-political interpretation, find the suffering minjung in the Bible as the protagonists of their own history and destiny (Lee 1993:110, Suh 1981:55-69). In Minjung Theology, what the exodus in the Old Testament and the crucifixion-resurrection event in the New Testament go on to show is that the two poles of *Heilsgeschichte* scheme, running through the whole story of the Bible (Suh 1983:164). Both events reveal the true meaning of the Gospel as the dynamic interaction between the biography of the suffering minjung and God enacted in the biography of Jesus (Song 1988:122). To minjung theologians, it is the outcry of the suffering minjung, which has galvanized Yahweh to rise up against the oppressors (Kim 1988:231-32) and it is the *ochlos*-minjung,

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<sup>197</sup> “Christology in systematic theology has to do with beliefs about Jesus Christ. Broadly speaking, notions of Christ are categorized as either “high Christology,” or “low Christology.” While high Christology focuses attention on Jesus as the divine son of God and equal to God, low Christology highlights his humanness and life on Earth” (Chang 2007:206).

<sup>198</sup> Here comes the problem of deification of the minjung. The concept of *theosis*, or divinization, is one of the important themes of the Eastern Church. “Theologians like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen worked with concepts related *theosis*. These concepts often dealt with the notion of the divine image in humanity and how human beings become children (“adopted sons” as Scripture says) of God. For example, Irenaeus mentioned that “the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through his transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself” (Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 3, 19:1 quoted by Bingaman 2014:67). Also, Athanasius once said that “For the Word (Logos) was made man that we might be made God” (Athanasius *On the Incarnation* 107, quoted by Bingaman 2014:67). In the biblical support for this statement, reference is made to 2 Peter 1:4, which states, “so that through them you may participate in the divine nature” (see also Eph 3:19, John 1:14, 16, 17:22-23, 2 Cor 3:17-18, Gal 4:19, 1 John 3:2). In modern era, it is noteworthy to remind Karl Barth’s argument. Barth argues that in Jesus the “Lord as Servant” is an indication of the way in which the divine wants to live among us and the “Servant as Lord” is an indication of how the human can be related to the divine. In Jesus God is not separated from humans and humans are not separated from God (Barth 1969). In the similar vein, D. Bonhoeffer speaks that “man becomes man because God became man” (1971:84). In Minjung Theology, the minjung-Jesus represents Jesus’ identification with minjung in suffering. In this way, Jesus becomes one with the minjung and minjung becomes one with Jesus (Ahn 1987:31, Moltmann 2000:256). This minjung-messianism will be also dealt separately.

who has broken the vicious circle of avenging violence through their crucifixion and resurrection with Jesus here and now (Suh 1981:159). Hence, it is the suffering minjung, who ultimately could redeem themselves from their own suffering through the dialectic of minjung-Messiah (Ahn 1977:717-57, Kim 1987:254).

#### **4.2.5.2 New Understanding of the Church/Korean History**

Taking a cue from the new understanding of the Bible, minjung theologians have developed their own view of the church history (Kim 1987:253-57). This manifests in two different ways. One is the condemnation of the transcendental view of the church. The other is the confluence of church and Korean history (Suh 1982:237-76). To the eyes of minjung theologians, the death knell of the church has already started to ring when its centre of gravity is shifted from a historical and eschatological framework of Hebrew to a cosmological and metaphysical framework of Hellenistic worldview (Suh 1983:299, Ahn 1985:154). The influence of the Hellenistic church proved to be problematic as it defined the Jesus-event as a “spiritualized” concept rather than a “politicized” event (Suh 1982:248). Here the historical Jesus of Nazareth (the Son of Man), as a political messiah, is replaced by the supra-historical divine Jesus Christ (the Son of God) as a religious one (Ahn 1982:161). This is followed by the de-politicization of Jesus movement (Considine 2015:120). In its wake, the political implication of the cross is replaced by a religious symbol under the cloak of the doctrine of reconciliation (Suh 1982:248). Furthermore, minjung theologians see the days of Constantine not as a period of church’s triumph, but as a period of its corruption (Suh 1982:248-49). From then on, according to them, Christianity served as the ideology of the ruler and began to lose its apocalyptic and revolutionary character and the vision of justice (Kim 1987:256). An inevitable corollary was then that the Christian churches of the post-Constantinian era commanded adaptation and submission to the existing order (Suh 1982:248-49). Indeed, Christianity had fallen victim to the theology of domination (*Herrschende Theologie*) (Suh 1983:258). In this light, the church lent its justification to the existing rulers at the expense of its original apocalyptic and revolutionary character (Suh 1983:301-304). Thus is followed by the systematic elimination of the subversive memory and praxis of Jesus on the cross from the church (Suh 1982:249).

Understood in this way, Minjung Theology sees the Constantinian shift the “bad beginning” which has spoiled Christianity as a religion of rulers (Ahn 1990:115). The problem is that Constantinianism is a “hard habit to break” (Hauerwas 1991:18-9) and its danger is very real in the traditional theology (Suh 1981:162-63). It started from the uneasy connection between the church and the imperial policies (Na 1988:138, Kim 1987:256). When the ideology of empire was imposed upon the church’s theology, the

radical pronouncement of Christian believers were muzzled and in check (Suh 1981:162-63). It had rather pushed Christians toward metaphysics, which had nothing to do with the particular and concrete events of human history with God (Suh 1982:249). To Minjung Theology, this enforced silence and compromise resulted in the serious distortion of the original concept of the Kingdom of God (Suh 1982:249-50). In its wake, its essence as the radical and total renewal of the whole society through revolution had degenerated into a-temporal Kingdom, apart from human history (Moon 1998:100). This, indeed, had deprived the Kingdom of God of its power to transform history (Ahn 1990:115). Instead, the historical establishment of God's justice here on earth was replaced by the symbol of utopia, "no place," which would only be possible beyond this world (Suh 1983:131).

From this vantage point, minjung theologians have sharpened their argument. To them, the post-Constantinian position of the church has continued to limit the concept of the Kingdom of God to the realm of other-worldly, or next-worldly, dimension and thereby has removed its historical, socio-political significance that it had been previously (Suh 1981:162-63, Kim 1987:256). Yet Jesus's ministry was essentially the Kingdom of God movement and it was linked with the poor and oppressed, namely, the Galilean minjung (Ahn 1987:238). To be sure, Jesus' original intention for the Kingdom of God was closely related to the liberation of the poor and oppressed from the suffering reality (Kim 1992:243-44, Suh 1983:356). Thus, the Kingdom of God must be characterized not as the symbol of utopia of the idealized place for the powerful, but as the concrete historical reality, where the suffering people are liberated (Song 1988:81). The minjung theologians, in this light, equate the Kingdom of God with the messianic society where the power of the powerless is found and restored here and now (Suh 1983:133, Ahn 1990:104-5). The Kingdom of God, therefore, aims at transforming the oppressive social system or political power in the present (Ahn 1990:232). Thus is created by to the necessity of the re-incarnation of the Kingdom of God into the concrete life situation of the suffering minjung (Park 1990:527). The Kingdom of God under the utopian shell of other-worldliness, having no connection with anything that happens on earth and no effects on the day-to-day struggles of the suffering minjung, is a mirage (Lee 1996:147-48). It should be come down from the heaven and be started and realized in this world through praxis and engagement of the minjung (Suh 1983:131).

Since minjung theologians find in the Constantinian Christianity no kingdom of utopia, but of dystopia, they instead propose the idea of the Millennium as the messianic kingdom on earth (Suh 1982:249-50). This is an attempt to fuse the biblical metaphor of the Millennium, which guarantees the salvation of the poor, marginalized and oppressed, with the reality of historical achievement (Song 1988:159-61, Considine 2015:120). Here the goal of minjung theologians is to reestablish the symbol of the

Millennium (Rev. 20:1-7), or the Messianic Kingdom, in the here and now. The crucial difference between the two kingdoms is underlined by the minjung theologians (Suh 1983:249). While the Kingdom of God belongs to the other world after death, in securing the salvation of the individual person under the ideology of the rulers, the Millennium, by way of contrast, is rooted in this world, in seeking out the social justice through the minjung's own struggles (Kim 1987:256, Park 1985:45-50).<sup>199</sup> To make it clearer, they have elaborated on five major differences between the symbol of the Millennium and the symbol of the Kingdom of God; (1) while the Kingdom of God is a heavenly or ultimate symbol beyond human reach, the Millennium is a historical and semi-ultimate symbol within human reach; (2) the Kingdom of God appears as the symbol of the resting place where people enter after death, whereas the Millennium is the new living society, which people construct together; (3) the Kingdom of God guarantees the salvation of individuals, the Millennium offers collective, social salvation; (4) while the Kingdom of God presupposes salvation through Jesus' vicarious work, the Millennium presumes salvation by the minjung themselves; (5) the Kingdom of God has been used as the ideology of the rulers, whereas the Millennium stands for the hope of the minjung (Suh 1981:162-63, Oh 2005:55-6).

Yet, minjung theologians' view on Millennium is not in direct conflict with the Kingdom of God (Suh 1983:193), despite they prefer the former to the later. Indeed, to them, the Millennium and the Kingdom of God are not to be contradictory but to be complementary (Lee 1988:14-5, Koyama 1988:145-46); the former does not neutralize, but materializes the latter by focusing on the reality of God's salvation in the present (Suh 1976:102, Ahn 1975:108). In other words, the Millennium does not exclude, but include the Kingdom of God in its messianic-transformative role (Suh 1983:177). This helps minjung theologians to articulate that the Millennium is an expression of the minjung desire for renewing society as a whole in the midst of suffering and oppression (Suh 1981:163). Thus, the Millennium constitutes the "aspiration of the suffering minjung, the inner-ridden cry of *han*" (Kim 2007:74) and envisions a *han*-less society in Korea as the present reality of the Kingdom of God (Song 1988:159-61). Since Minjung Theology links *han* to salvation (Ahn 1982:177-84, Suh 1982:247) and sin produces *han*, salvation means creating *han*-less society as the realized eschatology, namely, the Millennium (Considine 2015:120). Sin is collective and so is salvation (Lee 1988:21-2). Therefore,

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<sup>199</sup> This is reminiscent of Jan Amos Komensky's millenarianism or chiliasm. Komensky (1592-1670) as a pioneer of the Czech Reformation took a vigorous view in defending the theological and practical grounds for the chiliastic hope. While distancing himself from fanatical version of faith in the millennial kingdom, Komensky was openly advocating "true Chiliasm" as integral to Christianity, which sustained Christians already within earthly history and set it in motion in the direction of the Kingdom of God. He thus understood the reformation of the church, culture and society was developed in a down-to-earth way in the chiliastic, eschatological prospective of the coming and already beginning sovereignty of Jesus Christ (Lochman 1980:83).

the Millennium transforms individual salvation into the liberation of a community; spiritual salvation into historical and political liberation for the suffering minjung; a *han*-ridden society into a *han*-less society (Ahn 1979:108).

In light of this understanding of the Millennium, minjung theologians insist that being saved does not mean merely going to heaven (Ahn 1990:146). Rather it means to be delivered now from the forces of alienation that has enslaved the minjung unjustly (Song 1988:81). In it, the deeply ingrained soteriological kingdom motive has given way to a more integral understanding of salvation as fullness of life (Lee 1996:147). It turns the salvation of souls as a postmortem affair into the call to share the divine life –the grace, mercy, love and blessings –with others here in this life on earth (Park 1990:527). This encourages minjung theologians to uphold a view of salvation *hic et nunc* (here and now) (Suh 1982:250-51, Kim 2007:74-5). In its historical fulfilment of the Millennium, minjung are not considered simply as the object of the Kingdom. Rather they are the power of the keys to achieve their historical call (Kim 1982:371). By eschewing the abstractedness of the symbol of God’s Kingdom, Minjung Theology consciously selects the symbol of the Millennium as the realized eschatology, achieved by the praxis of minjung (Kim 1982:371-72). They, in this way, pose a critical hermeneutical key that the minjung are destined to be the protagonists of their own history in exercising their messianic role to advance the Millennium on earth (Suh 1982:250-51). Here the Millennium is the Kingdom of minjung, which is, the *han*-less society, where freedom, justice, and equality prevail (Kim 2007:74, Park 1990:527, 530).

This understanding of the Millennium as the creation of a *han*-less society allows minjung theologians to propose the idea of the confluence (conjunction) of the two traditions: the biblical and Korean minjung tradition (Suh 1983:66-8, Yi 1996:143-44). They have endeavored to find a link between Korean history and the biblical stories, or, conversely, to understand biblical stories within the frame of Korean history (Suh 1983 237-76). This is, in other words, a critical attempt to include Korean history within Christianity as part of the minjung movement (Suh 1983:17-86). They, in particular, regard Jesus’ ministry as “the liberation of humanity” (Suh 1983:13) and Jesus himself as the model for the revolutionaries in Korea, who is always with the Korean people “as a symbol, or paradigm of minjung deliverance” (Yi 1996:143), although anonymously so (Lee 2010:146). This results in the rediscovery of the presence of God within Korean history even before Christianity is introduced to Korea (Hyun 1981:54, Camp 2000:167). For the minjung theologians, God’s redemptive acts are not limited to the Bible, but it can and must be found in the history of Korean minjung (Suh 1983:299). God’s on-going activities, in this light, revisit to various minjung movements in Korean history (Suh

1983:256). Thus is created by an idea of confluence between Christian and Korean minjung tradition (Suh 1982:271). By bringing together the two currents of tradition, minjung theologians not only develop the present understanding of the minjung but also provide the motivation for the establishment of the Millennium or *han*-less society, for the minjung by the minjung (Yi 1996:143-44).

This confluence of two traditions makes the message of the gospel more relevant to the Korean context.

The stories of the minjung reveal not only their rendering of reality of who they are and what the world is. They also tell about their struggles for peace, justice and integrity as God's people in Korean history. The Bible includes the same kind of stories of God's people, be it Hebrews and Gentiles; how they have tried to understand themselves, the world, and God's acts in their specific historical context (Park 2008:133)

In this light, the minjung theologians insist that there are parallels between the minjung movement in the Bible and the current Korean minjung's context (Moon 1998:115) and it is the liberation tradition which unites between the two as a coherent whole, much like two rivers flowing into each other to form one river (Park 2008:209). Indeed, the liberation events, such as the Exodus, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus, show no gap between the two traditions. Rather, according to them, they imply "the significance of theological interpretation of liberation for the oppressed, the poor, or the dominated" (Lee 2005).

From it the subjectivity of the minjung tradition came into being as the authentic communication medium of God's redemptive acts (Suh 1983:177). This means the social reality of suffering minjung serves as the prime motivation of God's salvation history, or Jesus-event (Lee 2005). As the narrative of Exodus indicates, before God appeared as the liberator, the minjung has to confront the pharaohs of the world (Moon 1987:181-82). The confrontation with the oppressor alerts the minjung to the reality of suffering; it is none other than Pharaoh who has infringed upon their rights (Moon 1985:6-7). In this construct, God is considered as "an immanent force," who "lives along with minjung, is immanent within minjung, and is equal to minjung" (Suh 1983:79). Here God acts justly for the liberation of the minjung by intervening history (Moon 1987:183). But, God is not the sole actor; minjung are also offered to participate in this liberation movement in the context of the Covenant Code between the two (Kim 1986:281, Lee 2005). This further enables minjung theologians to highlight of the minjung subject-hood; they are not only the first bearer and transmitter of the gospel, but also the partner of God who continues to form the Jesus-event in the Covenant Code (Moon 1987:185, Sye 2001:60-117). Thus is created by the idea of God as a "co-suffer of the minjung" who considers suffering in human history through injustice and violence as His own (Kim 1982:15, Moon 1987:183). Yet, minjung theologians aware of minjung's subjectivity and sinfulness at the same time (Park 1992:180-202). Indeed, the emphasis of minjung's subjectivity does not preclude the possibility of the passivity of

minjung. In the Exodus narrative, for example, the motif of complaining in the wilderness demonstrates that not only Pharaoh but also the majority of Hebrew minjung can be the stumbling block to their own liberation (Lee 2005).

The minjung theologian then integrate this concept of confluence into the doctrine of synergism –a partnership of minjung with God in salvation (Suh 1982:250-51, 1983:78). To them, Korean history, like church history, has embodied the liberation movement of the Korean suffering minjung from its inception (Lee 1976:34, Ham 1983:71-2). Just as the Christian minjung tradition is deposited in the event of Exodus and Jesus' crucifixion, so is the Korean minjung tradition in the Korean history, in which minjung have struggled for their own liberation (Kim 1981:187, Suh 1981:167). They describe the minjung movement in the history of Korea, starting from the period of the Three Kingdoms (300 CE), up to the recent human rights movement in Korea, as evidence of the minjung's struggles for the historical subjectivity (Suh 1981:169-71). Characteristics of these movements is the open espousal of minjung's messianic praxis for their own liberation as the subject of history (Suh 1986:158). God in the biblical stories takes side with the oppressed and fights for them on the one sense (Moon 1987:183). On the other hand, Korean minjung in the history have become involved in the fight of their liberation, in striving for salvation here and now (Ahn 1982:177-84, Suh 1981:171). Therefore, a confluence of the minjung tradition in Christianity and the Korean minjung tradition represents the mission of God, to be more specific, "pro-minjung mission in Korea," taking place in the present historical context (Suh 1983:19, Jung 2012:124). Indeed, in Minjung Theology, the history of church and the history of Korean minjung are not separated (Suh 1982:237-76). Both are discovered in the *Missio Dei*, namely, God's on-going struggle for the establishment of His justice and freedom on earth through the minjung's active participation as reflecting the doctrine of synergism (Suh 1982:250-51, Küster 2010:1).

All in all, what Korean minjung theologians are trying to do is to witness and reinterpret the liberation traditions of the minjung in the Bible from the Korean minjung movement (Lee 2014:60). In this dynamic confluence, the story of biblical minjung is no longer the story of the past to Korean minjung who are now suffering (Suh 1982:237-76). The story of biblical minjung is rather integrated and fused into Korean minjung's own story here and now (Suh 2007:64). Here, the suffering minjung in the biblical times revisits the suffering minjung in the present. To be sure, the discovery of minjung in the Bible is no other than the discovery of minjung today and it even re-invites God of the minjung to the present historical context (Suh 1982:244, Kim 2009:137). In Minjung Theology, the biblical minjung are therefore not dead, but living. They still speak to, for and with the Korean minjung. The past is still

with the Korean minjung as the current reality and the present still has within it the past with the biblical minjung (Ahn 1987:249). In this light, the story of the biblical minjung is a long preface to the Korean minjung's own life stories in the minjung events (Park 2008:21). The story that the Korean minjung are experiencing now is a continuation of biblical story which makes it part of their story (Lee 1988:20-1). This even leads to the confluence of God and minjung in the *Missio Dei* (Ahn 1999:248). Here, certain is that God, who has stood on the side of the biblical minjung, still stands on the side of the today's minjung (Lee 1998:19, Cone 1975). While minjung, as the covenant partner of God, are invited to play a messianic role for their own liberation (Suh 1983:116-19, Ahn 1987:25-6). Thus, in Minjung Theology, the doctrine of synergism provides a useful paradigms for dynamic and holistic interplay between God and minjung in salvation (Suh 1982:250-51).

#### 4.2.5.3 New Understanding of the Holy Spirit

Minjung theologians' view on God's on-going intrusion into Korean history is inseparable from their emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit (Lee 1988:13). In fact, the confluence of the biblical minjung tradition and the Korean minjung history requires special methods: the socio-historical and pneumatological-synchronic interpretation (Suh 1982:78-9, Kim 1994:134). The former has awoken the minjung theologians to take socio-political responsibility seriously (Kim 2003:75), by regarding the Jesus-event as the historical event in which God's action takes places for the suffering minjung. Whereas the latter has encouraged them to participate in the minjung event, by seeing the Jesus-event as the manifestation of "the Holy Spirit's transforming power and movement for the creation of a new society" (Suh 1983:20-1). In the form of the latter, the Holy Spirit is the driving force in actualizing two minjung traditions here and now (Chung 2008:189, Park 2008:21). Indeed, it is the Holy Spirit who makes Jesus-event inspiring and empowering; it continues to form its shape and be concretized, not as a once-and-for-all, but as a recurring historical event (Chung 2008:189-90). At this point, the Jesus-event becomes the ultimate liberating phenomena, which is holistic, dynamic and changing" (Lee 1988:11, 15, Kwon 2010:155-56).

Since the minjung theologians prefer "pneumatological-synchronic" interpretation to a classical "Christological-diachronic" interpretation (Suh 1981:163, Chung 2008:190), God's revelation in Jesus Christ is considered exemplary and "the Holy Spirit is ascribed the role of the one in whom the minjung is imitating Jesus Christ" as reenactment of the Jesus-event (Küster 2010:118). Thus, the minjung event in Korea, like that of *Chun, Tae-II*,<sup>200</sup> becomes transparent for the Jesus-event (Kwon 2011:57). This

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<sup>200</sup> Chun, Tae-II was a sewing machine operator and textile worker. He was sympathetic for the young, assisting his fellow workers in small factories who earned a low income and who became diseased from extended work hours and the dust-

constitutes the minjung pneumatology, which is, a successful rendezvous between the Spirit and the minjung. The liberating movement of the Korean suffering minjung is primarily inspired and sustained by the Holy Spirit who resides in their suffering and despair (Bretzke 1997:325). This minjung pneumatology is best understood as both an on-going and reciprocal enterprise toward the realization of the minjung's historical aspiration for liberation (Ahn 1987:220-21, Suh 1982:314); it is the Holy Spirit who empowers the minjung to transform the oppression of the present situation and thus "to become real subjects of their own history" (Suh 1983:79, Bretzke 1997:329-30). Korean minjung become the one who plays the role Jesus would have played and they see the Jesus-event reemerge now with the Holy Spirit (Suh 1983:79). In a word, the presence and action of the Holy Spirit enables the Korean minjung to participate in the Jesus-event effectively in the Korean context (Kang 1990:84-107).

This leads to a distinctive minjung ecclesiology, namely, "the Church of the Holy Spirit," or "the Church of Minjung" as the third Church, neither Catholic nor Protestant (Park 2008:210). In keeping with Joachim's three successive historical periods, minjung theologians uphold that this age is neither of the Father, nor of the Son, but of the Holy Spirit (Suh 1976:124, Lee 2009:79). Also, since they identify the minjung as the spiritual men of the third age, today is the age of minjung (Suh 1976:132, 1982:253, Moltmann 1981:205). This third age of the Spirit would go beyond the institutionalized church and the written Scripture (Suh 1981:166-67). There would rather emerge a mysterious and democratic community, totally liberated from fear, class, monopolizing of wealth, and domination by the unjust ruler (Suh 1983:58). "The third age of [Spirit] is therefore of, by and for the minjung" (Lee 1990:363, Suh 1976:58-9). Understood in this way, the mission of the church is to witness the liberating works of the Holy Spirit rather than to repeat old dogmas, which focus on the Father and the Son (Kim 2009:33). Thus is created by the role and the position of the minjung church as a third model, "beyond the Catholic sacramental and the Protestant proclamation models of church" (Min 1996:30, Suh 1981:167). Here church is not to be "an institution, a fixed form, a building"; it is rather to be "an event, the event of the encounter between the Spirit and the minjung" (Min 1996:30). At this point, the minjung church is the most appropriate to the third age of the Spirit, in which minjung redeem themselves with the outpouring of the Spirit (Lee 1988:13, Park 2008:211).

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filled and polluted environment of the work place. He organized fellow workers and finally he immolated himself in protest against the structures that created such miserable situations for the workers. As he set fire himself on November 13, 1970, he yelled, "We are not machines!" The event of his suicide became a touchstone for the Korean minjung (labour) movement (Kwon 2011:57).

This enables minjung theologians to give more spotlight to pneumatology than to Christology (Suh 1983:161-64). To them, since the Bible tells that it is the Holy Spirit who empowers the Christian Church (the Pentecost) (Ahn 1987:220-21), and now is the time of the Spirit who is shown to be Christ's successor (Suh 1981:164), God as the Spirit is more relevant than God as the Son (Lee 1988:13). This spirit-centred origins is, however, interrupted when the orthodox theology of the West posits an undue emphasis on Christology (Suh 1983:163). According to minjung theologians, the most fundamental error of this classical Christology is found in its justification to dualism, giving the priority to the transcendent, sacred and divine over the immanent, secular and human (Ahn 1984:148-49). Despite both church and secular history are the warp and woof of history, in the traditional Christology, God's salvation history is limited merely to the church history (Suh 1983:131-32, Lee 1990:187-88). As a result, God's saving realm is confined to the establishment of the church, excluding and relegating the world history (Suh 1983:58). To them, in this dualistic understanding, God as the Spirit loses its significance (Koo 2007:177). In it, there is no room for the Spirit as freedom, who keeps on struggling to engage in human history (Suh 1983:61-2). Instead, a lopsided other-worldliness and individualistic pietism occupied a central place in order to suit its dogmatic claims and prejudices (Park 1985:56). In this light, this-worldly God as the Spirit is eventually superseded by other-worldly God as the Son (Suh 1983:162).

It is for this reason the minjung theologians are convinced that pneumatology makes Christianity truly universal and inclusive (Lee 1988:13). Minjung theologians refuse God's salvific activity to be reducible simply to the mission of the institutionalized church (Song 1984:493). Rather, they hold that it must embrace the world and society as the sphere of the work of the Holy Spirit (Suh 1983:58). Thus, for them, the movement of the Spirit is to be ecumenical (Kim 2016:132-38). It should go beyond Christian tradition (Moltmann 1992). It needs to break down the boundary between Christianity and the secular world (Moon 1998:113). In this regards, every event in the secular world becomes "the language of God" (Suh 1983:51) and any act that implies the liberation of the powerless has a new meaning in Minjung Theology (Bretzke 1997:329-30). It sees all events of liberation as a point of reference, which submits history of both the sacred and secular, to God's mission (Suh 1983:58). In this way, the minjung theologians believe that the power of the Holy Spirit, which carries out the work of justice and liberation, functions not only to transcend, but also to incarnate into two –sacred and secular –histories at the same time (Suh 2007:61, Kim 2008:179).

This leads to a critical dialectics of two histories in the concept of *Missio Dei*.

Prior to the human and ecclesial mission in the world, God has already been engaged in God's own mission of

liberating the oppressed with a preferential love... This liberating *Missio Dei* undercuts all the traditional dualism including that of church and society to the extent that God's mission is not the monopoly of the Christian churches. In this regard, [it] highlights the role of the Holy Spirit as the universal, eschatological, and liberating presence of God beyond the borders of Christian history. The Spirit is at work wherever and whenever selfishness is transcended and the existing order is eschatologically renewed (Min 1996:28-9).

The Jesus-event is the culmination of this liberating *Missio Dei* which serves as the point of reference for the church and secular movements. The liberating presence of the Holy Spirit makes the Jesus-event not as a unique revelatory but as a reiterating event throughout history (Ahn 1990:104, Kim 2009:34). Here, "Jesus continues to suffer, die and rise again in his people. The Holy Spirit has been poured out upon all creation even before the arrival of Christian missionary" (Min 1996:29). This provides a basis for the minjung theologians to break down the qualitative difference between Christian salvation history and salvation experience in other religious traditions (Chung 2007:8). Indeed, they find the liberating Spirit who drives ecumenism where two histories come together as tributaries and form a river (Kim 2007:8).<sup>201</sup>

To sum, emboldened by the Spirit's liberating and ecumenical power, minjung theologians venture to claim that in God's salvation-history, there is the dynamic unification of God as the Spirit and the minjung as the spirit-filled Christians (Suh 1976:129-30). To them, this Spirit enables the oppressed minjung to fight for their own liberation against the unjust reality. In light of this understanding, God as *das ganz Andere* (the Wholly Other)<sup>202</sup> in the third person pales into insignificance against "God-as-for-us" who directly speaks and acts in the first person for, and with the suffering minjung. They have integrated such a notion of God as freedom and liberation into the praxis of minjung. This results in the Koreanized minjung pneumatology, a dynamic union between the Spirit and the Korean minjung. In this light, it provides a basis for Minjung Theology to discover Jesus as minjung and the Jesus-event as minjung event as the on-going liberating works of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Minjung Theology begins to wed together the ecumenical movement of the Spirit with the struggle for minjung's liberation in Korean context. Thus is created by the idea of liberating *Missio Dei*, which unites the church and secular history as the minjung movement in the Spirit. In Minjung Theology, therefore, in the beginning was the Spirit and the Spirit was with the minjung and the minjung was the Spirit in relation to the Jesus-event in light of suffering, participation and compassion. To be sure, the minjung pneumatology gives rise to the subjectivity of the minjung in the Spirit.

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<sup>201</sup> Ahn, Byung-Mu once said that there is no border between Christians and non-Christians when both suffer. He even further insisted that Jesus could not be a Messiah for the whole world if he was crucified only for Christians (Balasundaram 1995:61).

<sup>202</sup> This term is firstly coined by Rudolf Otto and is well developed by Walter Kasper, a well-known contemporary Catholic theologian, in his understanding of the doctrine of revelation (Kasper 2008:164 quoted by Huhtanen 2016:66).

#### 4.2.6 Subcategories of Korean Minjung Theology

Minjung theologians have contextualized their theological concerns into the Korean context from the minjung-centred perspective. From it, the Korean Minjung Theology becomes a doing theology with its fundamental concern toward the liberation of the suffering minjung. This manifests in three distinctive characteristics, which is, theology of minjung (common people), theology of *han* (unresolved bitterness), and theology of *Hyun-Jang* (*Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung). These three aspects are, then, contributory to new understanding of Minjung Theology, namely, that of the Bible, of Church/Korean history, and of the Holy Spirit. The theology of minjung, for example, has found the minjung as the hermeneutical key to the understanding of the Bible, while the theology of *han* has sharpened its argument of the minjung as the subject of church and Korean history. The notion of *Hyun-Jang* as the meeting place of Jesus and minjung has redeemed the role of the Holy Spirit who not only initiates, but also reiterates the minjung-events in history. In this connection, another distinctive characteristics of Minjung Theology further comes into being. They are minjung-Christology, minjung-soteriology, and minjung-biblical hermeneutic that merit special attention.

##### 4.2.6.1 Minjung Christology

Minjung-Christology constructs a radical new Christology, namely, “minjung-messianism” that emphasizes the messianic function of minjung (Suh 1983:51, 53, Ahn 1987:32-3). In fact, by recognizing sin as a political and economic inconsistencies, minjung theologians regard the plural mass of the minjung, not Jesus individual, as “the lamb of God” who carries the sin of the world (John 1:29) (Ahn 1987:19, 96, 105). Here minjung, like Jesus, plays a messianic role to take away the sin of the world, the suffering (Ahn 1975:17, 50); “they are hungry because of others; they are thirsty instead of others, [but] they save the world from its own suffering” (Choi 2008:207). This radical outlook leads them to claim “the subversive interpretation of Good Samaritan’s story” (Luke 10:25-37) (Choi 2008:207). Minjung-Christology answers differently to the question, “Who is the Saviour in this story?” (Hwang 2013:215). Unlike the traditional Western interpretation, whose answer goes to the Good Samaritan, minjung theologians alert to the messianic role of the robbed man (Suh 1983:180). To them, it is this wounded person who takes the initiative through suffering. In other words, the *han* of the person, who is attacked and beaten by the robbers, encourages the Samaritan to act on love (Choi 2008:207). The cry of his suffering touches the Samaritan’s heart so as to respond to this outcry (Ahn 1987:117-18). It is none other than the calling of Jesus to participate in God’s messianic mission (Lee 1996:234). The burden, pain and suffering of the robbed man, in this way, coincides with “the meaning of Jesus’ suffering, cross, and death” (Choi 2008:207). Thus is created by the distinctive idea of

minjung-Christology; the one who plays the role of the Saviour is but “the person who attacked by the robbers” (Suh 1983:107).

The Korean poet Kim, Chi-Ha’s play, “The Golden-Crowned Jesus” is another vital example that crystallizes this minjung-messianism. In the play, Jesus is imprisoned in the concrete statue inside the church, and He asks a beggar to set Him free and to remove the golden crown from His head.

Beggar: What can be done to free you, Jesus? Make you live again so that you can come to us?

Jesus: My power is not enough. People like you must help to liberate me. Those you seek only the comforts, wealth, honour, and power of this world, who wish entry to the kingdom of heaven for themselves only and ignore the poor and less fortunate, cannot give me life again...Only those, though very poor and suffering like yourself..., can give me life again.

Beggar: Jesus, as you can see, I am helpless. I cannot even take care of myself. How can I help you?

Jesus: It is for that exact reason that you can help me. You are the only one who can do it. It is your wisdom, your generous spirit, and, even more, your courageous resistance against injustice that makes all this possible. Come closer, come closer and liberate now my body as you freed my lips. Remove this prison of cement...The crown of gold is merely the insignia of those ignorant and corrupt people who value only displays of external pomp and showy decoration (Kim 1978:24).

Here, Jesus is no longer “Christ of the church with his golden crown” when seen from the angle of the forsaken, naked and castigated minjung (Moltmann 2000:256). It is rather a symbol of God-forsakenness and thus the outcry for salvation (Moltmann 1973:126-53). “Take it please! For too long a time have I been imprisoned in this cement. Eventually, you have come and made me open my mouth. You have saved me” (Ahn 1995:163-64). Thus, suffering minjung becomes the liberator who hears Jesus’ crying for salvation and frees Him from the burden of golden crown imposed by the privilege and powerful (Orevillo-Montenegro 2006:37).

To be summarized, minjung-Christology is not concerned about reproducing a Christology of the Reformation in an individualistic-forensic sense, but rather actualizing and deepening Jesus in solidarity with and sharing the social biography of the suffering minjung (Chung 2008:265). This *perichoresis* (co-inherence) makes the minjung the Messiah who liberates themselves (Choi 2008:207). Yet, in a Christology of a minjung Jesus, Jesus is not replaced by the minjung. It rather emphasizes both Jesus’ sacramental presence among the suffering people and minjung’s liberating act with Jesus (Chung 2008:266). An authentically minjung-Christology, therefore, recapitulates the dialectic of minjung-messiah; “minjung cannot exist without God, and God cannot exist without minjung” (Choi 2008:207).

#### 4.2.6.2 Minjung Soteriology

Minjung-Soteriology<sup>203</sup> is the other side of the coin of minjung-Christology. Indeed, the liberating character of minjung-messianism is closely related to the salvation of the suffering minjung (Suh 1981:166). To be more specific, minjung-messianism connects minjung-soteriology to the dialectic of *han* and *dan* (Kim 1989:1007, 1014). In minjung-soteriology, the function of minjung-messianism is to play minjung as Messiah, who has a salvific function for the resolution of the minjung's *han*, which is, *dan* (Ahn 1987:98-9, Suh 1983:309-10). Since the praxis of *dan* includes both personal and social problems (Park 1987:121), minjung-soteriology is to work as the process of both personal salvation and social transformation (Suh 1983:81). The central question about minjung-soteriology is, then, two-fold; one is "What is the concept of sin and salvation at the personal level?" The other is "What is the relationship between salvation and social justice at the social level?"

The idea of "the conscious absence of sin" is a distinctive characteristic that is essential to the understanding of salvation theme in Minjung Theology (Chang 2007:206). In fact, for salvation, greater concern to minjung theologians is *han* rather than sin; "one must be saved not from personal sin, but from the collective *han* stemming from social injustice" (Chang 2007:206). At this point, Minjung Theology considers sin the language of the oppressor and *han* the language of the oppressed (Hwang 2013:220); the former commit sin, while the latter are suffered by sin (Park 1993:69). Both are related from each other, but the subject of sin and *han* are separated (Hwang 2013:220). In this distinction, "sin is of the sinners and *han* is of the sinned-against" (Park 2004:115) and salvation is for the sinners and healing or liberation is for the sinned-against (Park 2008:141). Furthermore, in minjung theologians' view, the problem of sin is not sin itself but the social conditions that cause one to sin (Suh 1983:243-34). The condition of the minjung as sinned-against, thus, has to do with the collective *han*, stemming from social sin (Oh 2005:55). From it emerges the idea of *dan* as the soteriological concept (Kim 1981:24). The Korean minjung needs a way to release their collective *han*, caused by both individual and social sin, through the praxis of *dan* to bring salvation and liberation as a whole (Park 2008:141). In minjung-soteriology, which regards sin as injustice oppressing the minjung's *han* and *dan* as the restoration of justice for salvation (Kim 1989:1005-1016), the traditional, exclusively soul-saving approach to soteriology is no longer attractive (Küster 2010:223, Bacote 2002:99). For minjung-soteriology sees salvation not only as an individual and spiritual process but also as a concrete

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<sup>203</sup> The research is intentionally defining "salvation" as suggested by Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009), a Belgian Roman Catholic theologian, who proposes moments of fragmentary salvation that are God's incomplete but realized works of healing, liberating, forgiving, and reconciling in this world that will not come to fulfilment until the eschaton (Schillebeeckx 1981:646-842).

social and structural one. In it, “any personal salvation is but a [key] constituent element in social salvation” (Kang 1980:214).

In this dual-process of both personal-spiritual and collective-social transformation, *dan* is sublimated into humanization of the minjung (Suh 1983:166). Here, *dan* liberates *han*; *dan* liberates the minjung, the people of *han*, from their *han*-ridden society (Lee 1994:154). In this praxis of *dan*, the minjung’s subjectivity can be realized. Through this process, the minjung can cut off the cycle of oppression and restore their subjectivity (Kim 1982:384). Salvation for the minjung is, in this way, to be taken rather than to be given; it can be achieved through the minjung’s struggle for justice (*dan*) against the power of injustice (*han*) (Chang 2007:212-13, Park 1987:121). In minjung-soteriology, praxis for personal and social justice, therefore, constitutes salvation (Ahn 1982:177-84). Minjung-soteriology, in this light, reiterates the idea of the minjung’s subjectivity, already manifested in the minjung-messianism. For *dan*, cutting off from the cycle of *han*, is a self-transcendence within the process of minjung liberation (Suh 1982:274). Indeed, “through *dan*, the minjung can invade *han*” (Hwang 203:130); they can transform their *han*-ridden society into a *han*-less society (Lee 1994:154, Oh 2005:57). Thus, what *dan* ultimately pursues is the historical realization of the Kingdom of God—a new social reality based on justice and freedom—as the *han*-less society here and now (Lee 2008:241).

#### 4.2.6.3 Minjung Biblical Hermeneutics

Minjung Theology is proposing a new paradigm of biblical interpretation, the so-called, minjung-biblical hermeneutics (Knitter 1995:80). By emphasizing the epistemological privilege of the minjung in its hermeneutics (Park 1995:196), this methodology approaches the Bible from the minjung’s perspective (Ahn 1983). Due to its primary concern to the sociological context, or *Sitz-im-Leben* of the scriptural text, it is often called a “sociological” biblical interpretation (Kim 1995:12). This minjung-centred outlook enables the minjung theologians not only to read the Bible sociologically, but also to interpret the Korean traditions of minjung theologically (Suh 1983:49-55, Na 1988:141). From it, they have come to a conclusion that the core of Bible is the “liberating movement,” namely, the history of the liberation of the minjung (Ahn 1990:78). Thus is created by minjung-biblical hermeneutics, which connects the social-political dimensions of the Bible to the minjung’s contemporary historical situation (Suh 1983:57-8, Lee 1993:106).

To minjung theologians, the Exodus and Crucifixion, in particular, serves as the pivotal “point of reference” to integrate the biblical events into the Korean minjung movements today as a testimony of liberation (Suh 1983:164, Lee 2005:69). With the minjung-biblical hermeneutics’ lens, the Exodus

event represents the history of Hebrews' liberation from economic exploitation and political oppression (Kim 1982:29-57, Gottwald 1980:223). It was the oppression of the Egyptians which galvanized the Hebrews to take action so as to escape from the cruel and merceless bondage under the leadership of Moses (Suh 1983:158). Here, the Exodus is read as "a political revolution which took place in a socio-economic context" (Moon 1995:240, Kim 2008:123). The salvation of Israel from Egypt was in this light a political –not a spiritual –liberation, primarily rooted in history and politics (Suh 1983:235, Ahn 1990:78). In the same way, minjung theologians, with a minjung-biblical hermeneutical lens, interpret the event of the Cross in a new way. They regard the crucifixion of Jesus a political murder committed by political injustice (Suh 1983:317-18). Jesus was crucified by the ruling class because of his political resistance for the human rights of the minjung (Suh 1983:54, 191). To them, Jesus' crucifixion is, therefore, a political event for the liberation of the minjung (Suh 1981:161).

Taking a cue from it, the minjung theologians begin to further elaborate the event of the Cross. In fact, minjung-biblical hermeneutics blurs the lines between Jesus and the minjung; and the Jesus-event and the minjung-event (Ahn 1987:26). Since they view Jesus as a personification, or symbol, of the minjung (Suh 1983:54), the death and resurrection of Jesus is to be regarded as the death and resurrection of the minjung (Ahn 1990:99). Because Jesus' death on the cross represents the culmination of the minjung's suffering, his death is not the death of an individual, but the minjung's death by the dominant and oppressive powers (Ahn 1975:16-7, 1990:99). This even enables them to see Jesus' crucifixion not as a unique once-and-for-all event, but as "a repetitive suffering and liberating event of minjung throughout history" (Ahn 1990:104, 284, Kim 2008:125). Jesus and the minjung are one in the Jesus-event, or the minjung-event, so that it must be continuously repeated and revived in today's context (Ahn 1987:25-6). Here minjung-biblical hermeneutic asserts that "theological interpretation ought to start from the social context of the minjung and a commitment to their liberation" (Suh 1995:12, Suh 1981:157-58). To be sure, minjung biblical hermeneutics provides the key to reinterpret both events –Exodus and Crucifixion –from the context of the socio-economic and political liberation (Suh 1981:158).

#### **4.2.7 Conclusion: Korean Minjung Theology as the New Reformation in the Making**

Korean Minjung Theology was formulated in the 1970s as a protest theology against both conservative evangelical theologies and the unjust structural system in Korea (Kim 2007:48). In its sincere quest to solve the problems, Minjung Theology looked anew the suffering reality of the Korean minjung; "the locked-out, the exploited, the downtrodden, and the have-nots" (Louie 2005:383). From it derives its essence. "[Minjung] Theology is of practical use only in the measure in which it is practiced by the

[minjung themselves]; otherwise it remains a merely intellectual activity indulged in by comfortable academics” (Kalilombe 2006:443).

Historically the development of Minjung Theology can be seen in its three phases and foci. The first generation of the 1970s had paid more attention to “the minjung in theological and biblical terms” (Lee 2015:159). They considered their task witnessing the presence (Choi 2008:213). The second generation of Minjung Theology in the 1980s envisioned minjung as both a religious and socio-political movement and tried to do theology from a Marxist position (Kim 2009:21). This enabled them to advocate “the theology of transformation/revolution” (Kim and Lee 2002:165). The third generation, in 1990s on, took its mission to integrate the national horizon of Minjung Theology into the whole global horizon (Choi 2008:205). Acknowledging world-wide phenomenon of globalization, these younger generation has proposed non-dialectical, non-dualistic, and relational methods and approaches as the central theological topics (Lee 2015:159-60).

Methodologically Minjung Theology is “inductive and not deductive, descriptive and not normative, storytelling, and not system building, biographical and not theological construction, and it is open to dialogue and not closed and final as in dogma and fundamentalism” To be sure, “Minjung Theology is not a theology of the Word, but a theology about the world and for the world. It is to change the world, and not to explain the world” (Suh 2010 xiv). Furthermore, the minjung theologians choose the biblical minjung as the text and the Korean minjung movement as the context so as to remake “a truly contextual and indigenous Korean theology” (Son 2000:50). Thus is created by a double-emphasis of Minjung Theology, not only to be faithful to the contemporary social and political realities, but also to be trustful to the Christian faith as attested in the Bible (Suh 2010: xiv).

Theologically, the discovery of minjung in both biblical and Korean minjung traditions opens a new perspective for Minjung Theology. In a dialectic of *han* and *dan*, minjung of the Minjung Theology becomes no other than the people of *han*, having suffered from the economic exploitation and the political oppression throughout Korean history (Suh 1983:64). This makes the task of Minjung Theology the ministry of *dan*, the release of the minjung’s *han* (Suh 1982, Moon 1998:85). The minjung theologians then have devoted themselves to bring about *dan* in the *han* of the minjung both critically and creatively; both spiritually and socio-politically (Suh 1981:64-5). They, in so doing, have tried to articulate for the subject-hood of minjung in both history and theology (Kwon 2011:67).

Implicit in all is that Minjung Theology is to be understood not as *the* Korean theology but as *a* Korean

theology in the making (Park 1984:1). This makes Minjung Theology more relevant and powerful, which brings forth a continuum of doing theology not only in old frame of reference, but also in a new frame of reference (Chung 2007:1). In this sense, Minjung Theology of the 1970s and 1980s needs to revisit to a new situation and a new minjung, which is, the post-colonial minjung who are certainly politically oppressed, economically exploited, and culturally alienated in the process of global marketization (Kim and Lee 2002:175). Here a Korean Minjung Theology is aimed at reinventing and transforming itself, so as to induce a new reformation, taking into account the minjung's new reality under the impact of global and post-modern situation (Küster 2010:148-49).

#### **4.3 THE PROFILES OF KOREAN MINJUNG THEOLOGIANS**

Minjung Theology, as a doing theology, aims at self-reinventing and self-transforming. This contains its challenge from within, as it struggles with and approaches to a new situation. This results in a paradigm shift: from the political and populist minjung of the older frame of reference in the 70s and 80s towards “a spiritual and multi-religious minjung” of the new frame of reference in the 1990s onwards (Chung 2007:1). Further this shift of reference contains the socio-political reality of minjung under economic globalization. In this sense, Minjung Theology of the past is a gateway to that of the future. It is for this reason that there is the validity for studying the first generation of Minjung Theology as a keyhole, which leads to the identification and tension between minjung and theology, between minjung and minjung theologians; and between the elder and younger generation of Minjung Theology. This then needs to take a look at four forerunners of Minjung Theology, who have initiated it using their own distinctive methodologies. They have devoted themselves to bring about *dan* in the *han* of the minjung both critically and creatively and, in so doing, attempt to present Minjung Theology more public theology<sup>204</sup> than church theology (Kwon 2004:56). In this light, the first generation of Minjung Theology could stand as the radical Reformers who had dreamed of new Reformation in Korea for, by and of the minjung. They are; Suh, Nam-Dong (1918-1984), Ahn, Byung-Mu (1922-1996), Kim, Yong-Bock (1938- ), and Hyun, Young-Hak (1921-2004) whose life and theology merit serious attention.

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<sup>204</sup> Public theology here is to be understood as a “theological articulation of the rationale for giving voice to marginalized groups and promoting socio-political change” (Kim 2008:10). For more details, see; (Bacote 2005:11, Stackhouse 1997:165-179 and Thiemann 1991).

### 4.3.1 Suh, Nam-Dong (1918-1984)

#### 4.3.1.1 Biographical Sketch

Suh, Nam-Dong (1918-1984), one of the two pillars of Minjung Theology with Ahn, Byung-Mu,<sup>205</sup> was born in 1918 in *Muan* in the province South *Chulla* and grew up on the island of *Chindo* (Küster 2010:79). He died in 1984 at the age of 66. Like Ahn, Suh completed most of his university studies at a college of the colonial power Japan (1937-41). In March 1941 he left the Doshisha University in Kyoto with a BA in theology (Lee 1990:178). After returning to Korea, he taught at the Pyongyang Johan Theological Seminary for one year from September 1941 till December 1942. Between 1943 and 1952, Suh served as a pastor in three different congregations. In 1952 he followed a call to Hanguk Theological Seminary which gave him a leave for further studies in Canada. In May 1956 Suh obtained a M.Div. at the Victoria Seminary of Toronto University and one year later he acquired a Th.M. at the same institution (Lee 1990:179). In 1963 Suh joined the Faculty of Theology of Yonsei University where he had been teaching part-time since September 1961 (Küster 2010:79). In 1975 Suh was discharged as a professor because of his political commitments. He was arrested several times and tortured. After his last prison term in 1984 Suh did not return to the university. Instead he chose to continue working as director of the Mission Education Centre, an assignment he had already taken over at the insistence of Ahn, Byung-Mu after his release in 1978 (Küster 2010:79).

#### 4.3.1.2 Theological Perspective

##### 4.3.1.2.1 From Western to Anti-Western Theology

Suh had developed his distinctive theology in a progressive and synchronic way, from inside the church to outside the church (Moon 1998:44). After his theological training in Japan under the strongest domination of liberalism (Suh 1976:7, Chae 1994:30-1), Suh broadened his theological spectrum and this was characterized by four periods of his theological journey, namely, (1) the period of existential theology in the 1950s; (2) secular theology in the 1960s; (3) scientific theology between the late 1960s and the early 1970s; and (4) Minjung Theology as political theology after 1970s (Park 1991:182).

First, from existential theology, Suh took the theme of personal subjectivism, along with the idea of here and now, seriously as the proper way to understand the concrete life-situation of the people. He thus had no hesitation in confessing his theological heritage from Paul Tillich and Rudolph Bultmann (Suh 1976:181-87, Moon 1998:47-9). Yet, the Westernized scales began to fall from his eyes even before he drank from the well of the traditional existential theology. Suh was already influenced by the

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<sup>205</sup> Suh is, in this regard, often considered as “the systematic alter ego of the exegetically oriented Ahn” (Küster 2010:79).

teaching of Ham, Suk-Hon (1901-1989), the “Korean Gandhi,” from his early period of the 1940s (Chae 1994:31-2). Ham’s interpretation of Korean history as the history of the suffering ‘Ci-al’ (an independent minjung; literally means the seed), especially widened Suh’s concerns from existential individualism to the social condition of human living, particularly embodied in the Korea suffering minjung (Suh 1983:49).

Second, secular theology encouraged Suh to develop the idea of so-called “kerygmatic Christ” who is found in the present event here and now (Suh 1976:65-77). Taking Bonhoeffer’s question “Who is Jesus for us today?” as the meaningful text,<sup>206</sup> Suh was committed to exploring the significance of the Korean context, which could encounter the suffering Christ who worked among the poor and oppressed minjung in their real life-situation (Suh 1983:8). From this point of view, Suh insisted on the correlation of the kerygmatic Christ and secular theology (Suh 1983:78). For him, the present Christ within the life of minjung and his self-identification with the suffering minjung were not different. This attempt was culminated in his interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:29-37). Here, Suh reshuffled the traditional interpretation by identifying Jesus Christ with “the wounded person on the road,” not the Good Samaritan (Suh 1983:107). To him, Jesus is to be understood as the crying victim presently among the suffering minjung, beyond a helping hand for the suffering minjung. In other words, the present Jesus is no other than the suffering neighbour who are beaten and stripped by the unjust attackers today. Such is, on the other hand, the re-contextualization of Bonhoeffer’s intriguing question from a perspective of the suffering minjung, namely, “What does Jesus mean for the poor and oppressed Korean minjung today?” (Moon 1985:48-50) In this sense, the core of Suh’s secular theology lies on the “re-mythologisation” of “the holy one in the secular one” (Ro 2000:50), or of the divine Jesus in the earthly neighbours (Kim 1984:490-91). This coalition was a stepping stone to a more distinctively Korean way of theologizing on the socio-political front. Indeed Suh’s secular theology has its root in the teaching of “Donghak” (“Eastern Learning”), the religion of the Korean minjung (Moon 1998:51). To be sure, Suh’s understanding of Jesus as a suffering neighbour, to a great extent, is consonant with *Donghak*’s doctrine of *In-Nae-Cheon* (humanity is Heaven), the belief of the humanity as the bearer of the divine and thus of human beings as God in disguise.<sup>207</sup> This identification

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<sup>206</sup> Pointing out the historical responsibility of Christians for Auschwitz, Metz, in the same vein, writes: “Søren Kierkegaard: In order to experience and understand what it means to be a Christian, it is always necessary to recognize a definitive historical situation” (Metz 1984:26).

<sup>207</sup> It is, in this sense, reminiscent of the Apostle Paul’s claim, “Christ in me” (Gal. 2:20, Phil. 1:21). Here Paul seemed to be aware that all his life-activities were the works of Christ –who was once revealed ‘in me’ now ‘lives in me’ –so that human life is at the same time divine; thus is constituted by the unity of the human and the divine. From this vantage point, it can be further said that when Jesus as incarnate divine-human, called himself the son of man, he was aware of himself as a divine being (Yagi 1987:127).

of Jesus and minjung came to Suh not only with a faith principle but also with a political and ideological statement. Through transforming faith into political action, Suh's finding Jesus in the suffering minjung, and its vice-versa, became radicalized within an ethos of equality between the human beings and human beings; human beings and the divine.

Third, it was scientific theology which fascinated Suh in the period between 1969 and 1974. The idea of the "Omega point" theory of Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)<sup>208</sup> in particular caught his attention (Suh 1983:49). Suh in this period attempted to build a new synthesis of religion and science; of the biblical truth and scientific methodology (Moon 1998:51). This made a significant turn of his theological perspective from the church to nature (Moon 1998:44). Emboldened by such the scientific-religious concept, Suh tried to expand his theological emphasis into a new viewpoint of cosmology (Chae 1994:32-4). This was followed by his strong criticism against the Westernized Christianity, which reduced God's revelation to historical events only and thus failed to see not only the Nature as its mother, but also Christ in the realm of cosmos (Suh 1972:95-6). In this sense, Suh's new synthesis of science and religion had a two-fold emphasis; it first challenged the traditional idea, which placed revelation in God's sole property and then propounded the methodology of natural theology as a new synthesis of human consciousness toward spirit, culture, and history (Kim 1984:147-151). Here knowledge of God does not need to begin only in God's historical revelation in Jesus Christ. Suh, in so doing, made preparations to expand his theological perspective into the history of the whole world, having no separate boundary between the church and society; between the sacred and secular (Suh 1976:492). To be sure, in Suh's thought, God is not an object of religion but really the Lord of the world.

Lastly, theology of contextualization became Suh's theological motto under the banner of Minjung Theology after the 1970s (Suh 1976:9). The advent of liberation theology of Latin America and Black theology of North America spurred his theological shift (Moon 1998:64). By showing sympathy with such a theology of social change, Suh participated in the conference of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at Nairobi in 1975 and it was his road to Damascus (Kim 1984:523). From then on, his theology

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<sup>208</sup> Even if "Omega point" theory is a physical theory, derived from scientific materialism rather than revelation, it becomes "a model for an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, evolving personal God who is both transcendent to space time and immanent in it" (Tipler 1989:217-53). The term is popularized by the French Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) (Castillo 2012:393-5). He, in his book, "Activation of Energy," has articulated that the "Omega point" is "the centre, at once one and complex, in which, bound together by the person of Christ, may be seen enclosed one within the other (one might say) three progressively deeper centres: on the outside, the immanent ('natural') apex of the humano-cosmic cone; further in, at the middle, the immanent ('supernatural') apex of the 'ecclesial' or Christic cone; and finally, at the innermost heart, the transcendent, triune, and divine centre: The complete Pleroma coming together under the mediating action of Christ-Omega" (Chardin 1978:9).

directed on cry of the suffering people in Korea under the dictatorship of President Park, a Korean Pharaoh. In this “theological conversion” (Suh 1983:81), Suh began to put his theological task in a proactive participation in the concrete situation of the suffering Korean minjung (Kim 1984:488-90). To him, theology should be a practical theology urging the Church and every Christian to wield the sword of truth and justice directly at the various cycle of injustice, where the exploitation and oppression are prevalent (Kim 1984:490).

More specifically, it must bring forth true *metanoia* not only as a cognitive change, but also as a socioeconomic and political turning to God’s justice (Andrew Park 1993:90). Minjung Theology, in this sense, came to him as “the most suitable one in the Korean context and for the Korean churches” (Suh 1976:9). By taking the *han*-ridden society of Korea as the point of departure for his theological reflection, Suh had, at the same time, emphasized the liberation of the oppressed minjung as the essence of divine work. This also led him to develop a deeper understanding of the role of a Christian church in relation to the concept of *Missio Dei*. Such a realization made him impossible to remain neutral to what was happening around the minjung. Indeed, this minjung-ness made him imperative to get involved with and commit himself to the suffering reality of the minjung. This in return resulted in the establishment of “Church of Galilee” as the beginning of the Minjung church (1975) (Chae 1994:42). Put it succinctly, Suh found a Christian hope in church’s incarnation into the minjung’s life-setting, namely, the *Hyun-Jang* (*Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung), as the agent of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

No doubt, Suh’s theology and action really irritated the military government of his time. He was forced to leave from his teaching position at the University and was imprisoned in reprisal for his severe criticism of the dictatorship of Park’s regime (Moon 1998:45).<sup>209</sup> But, all these challenging situations rather seemed to have the effect of spurring him to actualize and radicalize Minjung Theology *hic et nunc* –here and now (Suh 1983:353). Indeed, Suh transformed all other stereotypes, the occidental theological ideas –existential, secular, and scientific theology –into Korean Minjung Theology as a critical response to the concrete life-situation of the Korean minjung. This was then his snappy slogan that “the only way out was in.” In short, by shifting his focus from Western to anti-Western theology, or by releasing Christianity from the Western captivity, Suh became embroiled himself in the Korean

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<sup>209</sup> Along with him, there had already enough minjung theologians who had been dismissed from their university teaching posts. In 1975 alone, for example, some thirteen professors –who were members of the Korean Christian Faculty Fellowship –were fired by government (Suh 1995:159-60). Besides, hundreds of students and labour union workers were either under arrest or in prison for alleged violations of the so-called “Emergency Decree No. 9,” which could punish any act of criticizing the Park’s regime.

context as a minjung theologian, whose primary concern lied on action and behavior, rather than on concept and dogma.

#### 4.3.1.2.2 From Christology to Pneumatology

The involvement in the World Council of Churches opened Suh's eyes to the relationship of the church and the world both theologically and pragmatically (Hyun 1984:523). In line with the WCC's movement in its concern for human rights in general, Suh in particular began to uphold the church's responsibility as an advocate for Korean minjung, "those who suffered outside the wall of the Christian church" (Chae 1994:36-7). Suh perceived of inhumane social phenomenon in Korean society as an expression of structural sin. The poverty, hunger, and misery of the minjung had their common causes in unrighteous political and economic relations under the military dictatorship (Suh 1983:174). The participation in the struggle for justice and freedom of the suffering minjung is therefore to be the central tasks of the Korean church (Suh 1983:132). As Suh found the massive suffering of the minjung in an unjust society, the restoration of justice came to the fore in his theology. He as a result actualized and radicalized a political praxis from below against injustice and violence by seeking total change in all social relations (Suh 1983:55-69).

Here, changing and renewing the dominant social structure, which had produced a vicious cycle of structural injustice, became the first task for him in accord with God's mission (Suh 1983:167). Suh developed this idea from the angle of salvation. Sin was seen by him as the corporate expression in the dehumanizing of the society, so that salvation must find its manifestation in power over these forces for the humanization of collective existence (Thomas 1971:1-19). It seemed evident for him that justice is a dimension of God's mission and to participate in the struggle for justice is no other than to participate in God's mission; "to know God is to enter into a covenant justice-oriented relationship" (Abraham 1996:35). This notion of interconnection urged him to argue that the mission of God is inseparably connected with the mission of social justice for the liberation of the suffering minjung (Moon 1998:93). To him, salvation should include liberation from structures of sin, oppression, injustice, depravity and death. Hence God's mission is primarily political and it demands action. It was for this reason Suh came to accept action for liberation from oppression and transformation of society as an indispensable and integral part of salvation.<sup>210</sup>

From this came to Suh's distinctive concept of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit as a messianic hope of

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<sup>210</sup> Here Suh's idea of salvation stands closer to what Liberation theologians in Latin America has maintained (Gutierrez 1973, Ellacuria and Sorbrino 1995:251-89).

Christ's reign on earth with his people, namely, the suffering Korean minjung (Moon 1998:93). Suh continued to say that the Kingdom of God is to be found and fulfilled "here and now" (Suh 1983:133), the very place where justice is broken and dead, so that "the blood of the [minjung] is crying aloud to heaven." Suh's understanding of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit, in this sense, was the contextualization of Trinitarian mission.<sup>211</sup> His view, in one sense, resonated with a traditional Trinitarian mission that can be epitomized by God's act of sending the Son and the Spirit for the world. It echoed with the orthodox idea of God's mission as Trinitarian activity (Newbigin 1995:29). Yet, in another sense, Suh's *Missio Dei* in the Spirit had distinctive character on its own. Here a form of pneumatological-synchronic interpretation came into light (Kim 1992:243). He particularly moved his paradigm from the Christological-diachronic to the pneumatological-synchronic interpretation in terms of the *Missio Dei* (Suh 1991:272). While the former put its emphasis on Christ's atoning work as a once-for-all event "for the sake of my sin," the latter instead construed the Jesus-event as a permanent reality, which can be revived here and now in the work of the Holy Spirit, teaching that "I replay Jesus" (Kim 1992:243). By giving priority to the Holy Spirit in the concept of God's mission, Suh connected the work of the Spirit to the social movements as well as the spiritual revival. In so doing, he brought the Holy Spirit into God's salvific drama as the concrete face (Suh 1983:162-67).

It was no surprise then that Suh's attempt at re-reading the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit resulted in his contextualizing reading of the Korean society, where the Spirit is working, here and now, with and for the suffering minjung (Suh 1976:132). Suh saw a current turbulent situation of the Korean society, not as the absence, but as the presence of God in the *Missio Dei* activity, which had a missional direction for liberating the Korean minjung –the oppressed, exploited, and suffering people –from the socio-political injustice (Suh 1983:57). Indeed, Suh's conviction of the liberation of the Korean minjung was inspired primarily by his conviction of the liberation motif of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit (Kim 1976:41). To him, God's on-going mission cannot be fully understood apart from the Spirit's liberating activity for the world (Moon 1998:93). It is in this light that the Exodus motif, both Old and New

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<sup>211</sup> "The Trinitarian concept of *Missio Dei* was introduced in the discussions around the world missionary conference in Willingen, Germany 1952. It was an attempt to overcome the crisis of the Western missionary project by giving it a new theological foundation in God's acting in history. Before, during and after the Willingen conference there were always two competing interpretations. One that perpetuated the old salvation history model in disguise –the church is understood as the agent of God's mission –and the other one influenced by the American Social Gospel and Barthian theology that focused on God's promise to be with the creation. In the prolongation of the latter the *relecture* of the *Missio Dei* concept in liberation theologies took place" (Küster 2010:1). A good summary of its development can be found in the work of David Bosch, best known for his book, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (1991:389-93).

Testament alike, has become central to Suh's understanding of the *Missio Dei*.<sup>212</sup> With an overriding conviction that the biblical Exodus event did not exhaust God's liberating mission in salvation-history, Suh planted this Exodus theme to the Korean context. For the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, was, is, and will be revealed in the history of the suffering Korean minjung (Kim 1991:29-57, Moon 1983:123-37). With this idea, Suh's central argument took on the dimension of liberation.<sup>213</sup> In other words, Suh unfurled the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit as a major breakthrough in the concrete reality of socio-political injustice of his time and thus tried to bring about the Good News in the lives of the minjung and the society in Korea (Suh 1983:58). Here the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit was sublimated into liberation and justice for the suffering Korean minjung, which responded with Christian hope for a different world and a different order of society (Suh 1991:243-45).

This resulted in Suh's radical voice, calling the Spirit, rather than Jesus, to play a more proactive role in mission. His emphasis lied at the very core of the Holy Spirit's present work here and now, embodied in the struggles of the oppressed Korean minjung. Yet, such an affirmation was introduced not as a contradiction but as a complement to the Christ-centred interpretation (Suh 1983:162-67). Suh agreed that there is the continuity between the Father's mission and Jesus' mission and the ongoing mission of the Holy Spirit (Newbigin 1995:29). But, he disagreed with the doctrine of absolute grace through Jesus only, accompanying ignorance and indifference to the responsibility of the believers toward the society (Moon 1998re:137). What Suh criticized the most was orthodoxy's emphasis on the so-called "Jesusology"<sup>214</sup> which seldom or never told about the Spirit's degeneration into an egoistic and heteronomous spirit in it (Moon 1998:136-37). It centred so much on the spiritual and interior needs

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<sup>212</sup> Yet, one of the critics of this perspective can be found in the so-called historical peace-churches, its claim is focused on the fact that the apocalyptic and the whole of NT-literature belongs not to the "Exodus-paradigm" but to the "Exile-paradigm." The epistemological privilege in reading the biblical apocalyptic and NT-texts is, according to this interpretation, on the side of Exile-communities (Yoder 1972).

<sup>213</sup> Joining the historian Lee, Ki-Baek, Suh presents the history of Korea as a process that is characterized by "a progressive expansion of the social base of the ruling power" that culminates in the subject-hood of the minjung and in the democratization of Korean society (Suh 1983:167-69). Lee has proposed sixteen eras and their corresponding social systems. His theses have been widely discussed in Korea. Periodization of Korean history, according to Lee, can be divided into; "(1) Neolithic period: since ca. 4000 BC -Communal clan-centred society; (2) Bronze age: since ca. 800 BC -Walled-town states and confederated kingdoms; (3) Three kingdoms: since ca. 50 BC -Aristocratic societies under monarchical rule; (4) Since ca. 650 -The fashioning of an authoritarian monarchy; (5) Since ca. 750 -The age of powerful gentry families; (6) Since ca. 950 -The hereditary aristocratic order; (7) Since ca. 1200 -Rule by the military; (8) Since ca. 1300 -Emergence of the literati; (9) Since ca. 1400 -The creation of a *yangban* society; (10) Since ca. 1450 -The rise of the neo-Confucian literati; (11) Since ca. 1650 -The emergence of landed farmers and wholesale merchants; (12) Ca. 1800-1850 -Instability of the *yangban* status system and the outbreak of popular uprisings; (13) Ca. 1850-1900 -Growth of the forces of enlightenment; (14) Ca. 1900 -National stirrings and imperialist aggression; (15) Since 1919 -Development of the nationalist movement; (16) Since 1945 -the beginnings of democracy" (Suh 1983:167-69).

<sup>214</sup> This term is originally coined by T. E. Fretheim, a professor of Old Testament in Lutheran Seminary (1984:3).

of the minjung that the connection between the Word of God and the realities of every day became secondary, almost irrelevant. This meant, in return, the necessity of the recuperation of classical Christology from its indifference to the life-field (*Sitz-im-Leben*), where material deprivation, violations of human rights and sheer exploitation were the most pressing concerns. Here, the life-field of the suffering minjung must be the mission-field of the liberating God (Suh 1983:57). This was the reason why Suh placed his theological locus in the concept of *Missio Dei* in the Spirit (Chae 1994:170). It was indeed pneumatological-synchronic, rather than Christological-diachronic, interpretation which opened his eyes to the Spirit's working in and through the suffering minjung here and now (Moon 1998:104-105). In short, in Suh's view, the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit is the signature of the role of the Spirit in the economy of God's salvation, namely, the Spirit's solidarity with the minjung in Korean history.

#### **4.3.1.2.3 From Saviour (Jesus) to Saved (Minjung)**

Suh's idea of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit has a double-emphasis; it paid more attention to the Spirit than to Jesus in one sense (Suh 1983:163-64), and the minjung than Jesus in another sense (Moon 1998:134). From this viewpoint, Suh's *Missio Dei* in the Spirit was the other side of the coin of his minjung-Christology from below (Moon 1998:76-7). Here Christology was not understood in terms of power, but in terms of what was humble and frailly human (Suh 1983:211). Jesus was met in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the imprisoned (Mt. 25:31-46) as one of the suffering minjung (Suh 1983:142). At issue here was the identification of Jesus with the minjung (Suh 1976:76, 1983:177). The unjustly victimized were found in Jesus and vice-versa. The suffering of Jesus, then, revisited to Suh not as the vicarious suffering, but as the real identification with the outcry of the people as a beacon of hope. In this radical communion with the unjust victims, the cry of Jesus on the cross became the *cantus firmus*, the leading voice, to which all the voices of the suffering minjung were joined (Suh 1983:243-45). From it derives the messianic character of the minjung, which is, the minjung's self-salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit. Suh understood the cross-event of Jesus from the perspective of *Missio Dei* and rediscovered its realization in the present minjung events in the Korean history (Moon 1998:83-4).

Suh created new understanding of Jesus Christ in the context of the Korean minjung, here and now. From the fact that Jesus, as one of the minjung, suffered and died for the powerless minjung in his time, Suh saw the suffering minjung as no other than the secular Christ, the source of salvation (Suh 1991:243-45, Kim 1992:239). By re-appropriating Jesus' death on the cross for the suffering minjung of Galilee, Suh re-capitulated the suffering and resurrection of Jesus to the minjung's *han*-ridden reality

in terms of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit (Suh 1990:133). In this way, Jesus was reincarnated in the Korean society as a suffering minjung, not simply taking on of flesh and becoming present among them, but taking on of minjung's perspective, thoughts, needs and aspirations, and thereby becoming one of them. Thus, Jesus was no longer to be identified with the Good Samaritan, but rather with a victim, who was assaulted by thieves and left him behind the side of the road half-dead. To Suh, this man of sorrow is Jesus himself who lives here and now not only as a suffering minjung, but also with the suffering minjung (Suh 1976:65-84). It was evident for Suh then that the unknown victim –stripped, robbed and half-dead –could complete the salvation of the minjung themselves (Suh 1976:67). In this light, Jesus' cross-event was a prelude to the minjung's self-salvation in solidarity with the victims of evil, with those who were relegated to the underside of history (Lee 1988:11). In a simplistic way, from the cross-event, minjung's salvation of today is planted. There is the cry of Jesus on the cross and the cry of countless minjung in history (Sobrinho 1978:231). Suh, therefore, came to realize that Jesus' crucifixion is present in the minjung's day-to-day struggles that lead to their freedom and victory. As Jesus is paradigmatic, the minjung becomes so when they liberate themselves as Jesus have been liberated himself. The suffering minjung then no longer remains silent as the object, but rather they speak out their hope as the subject of their salvation (Suh 1991:245).

To Suh, the event of Chun, Tae-II's self-sacrifice on November 13, 1970, in this sense, was a counter-proof in making the cross-event of Jesus a present event of the Korean minjung (Moon 1998:87).<sup>215</sup> Suh regarded Chun's suicide at the Peace Market in Seoul as both the forth-telling and fore-telling of the Jesus crucifixion to save the minjung from the existing unjust structure of the Korean society (Suh 1983:353). Suh had a powerful *déjà vu* of Jesus' crucifixion from Chun's self-immolation for others (Suh 1983:353, Ahn 1990:133). It came to him as the prophetic witness that the cross-event of Jesus continued to happen today with the minjung in their daily struggles (Suh 1983:223). It came no surprise then that this moment of *eureka* turned into the moment of *Kairos*. Understood in this way, Suh came to insist that minjung's self-salvation even embraced Jesus' salvation (Moon 1998:90). If the suffering

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<sup>215</sup> Here it seems necessary to unfold the story of Chun more specifically. Chun, Tae-II (1948-1970) was a worker in a garment factory in the Tongdaemun-ku district in Seoul. He became involved in labour organization and formally petitioned the government: "We understand well the working procedures which are specified in the Labour Standard Law. However, we cannot receive the least benefit of the Labour Standard Law and what is more 90% of the 20,000 employees are on average 16 year-old girls. Even without the Labour Standard Law, as human beings how can you force girls to work 15 hours a day?" "Chun's appeal continues, describing non-existent health facilities, wages that force workers to fast through lunch, crowded conditions, and lack of days off. The dual imperatives, clearly of ideological rather than practical necessity, of a vicious internal anti-communism and export-led economic development worked against any compromise with regard to unionization or even the enforcement of labour laws already on the books. Deeply disturbed by working conditions and the lack of any positive remedial action, official or otherwise, Chun entered the Peace market and, shouting "Comply with the Labour Standard Law! We are not machines! Do not enslave the workers!" committed self-immolation in a desperate display of protest" (Yi 1993:454).

minjung gained salvation in solidarity with the minjung-Jesus in their struggle for liberation, the minjung themselves, then, could also liberate the minjung-Jesus who suffered from the oppressive status quo, here and now (Suh 1976:76, Lee 1988:11). Such is his conviction that if the minjung-Jesus needs salvation, it is the helpless minjung themselves who can liberate the helpless minjung-Jesus from the hopeless situation (Moon 1998:90).

Yet, Suh refused to see minjung's self-salvation as a sort of surrogate for Jesus' atonement (Kim 1992:238). Rather he tried to reappraise the revealed –but imprisoned in ideology –Christ in the minjung in the light of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit. In Suh's view, Jesus cannot save himself apart from the salvation of the minjung. There is an intrinsic correlation between Jesus and the minjung; between the Jesus-event and the minjung event in the Spirit. It is therefore to be understood as complementary rather than contradictory; as synchronic rather than diachronic (Kim 1976:41). Although in his radical voice, minjung, not Jesus, was primarily taken as the subject matter (Suh 1981:159-60), what was decisive for Suh was the idea of double-identification. In this light, the relationship between Jesus as the suffering minjung, and the suffering minjung as the face of Jesus, or Jesus-messianism and minjung-messianism in the Spirit, is intensified (Kim 1983:187). In so doing, Suh strove not only to incorporate the suffering Jesus into the present socio-political context of the Korean minjung, but also to impart the messianic role of Jesus into the suffering Korean minjung (Suh 1983:78). Put it succinctly, Suh's idea of the *Missio Dei* was bound up with the minjung in solidarity with the Spirit. Thus, the Korean minjung had a messianic significance and role in Korea's history and society. In a word, “[minjung] are the ones [minjung] have been waiting for.”<sup>216</sup> This further led to his understanding of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit as the epitome of critical correlation of minjung (the saved) and messiah (the Saviour); minjung-ness of the Spirit and the Spirit-ness of minjung as the subject of history and salvation. It is for this reason that Suh's *Missio Dei* in the Spirit called for the messianic role of the minjung in the horizon of the coming of God's Kingdom as a next step.

#### **4.3.1.2.4 From Other-Worldly Kingdom of God to This-Worldly Messianic Millennium**

Suh saw the coming of the Kingdom of God as the hallmark of Jesus' own preaching and ministry (Suh 1983:261).<sup>217</sup> Further, his idea of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit as God's liberating activity to the world through the Spirit, motivated him to look at Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God anew. It

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<sup>216</sup> Here, the researcher is indebted to the poem of June M. Jordan (1936-2002), the Caribbean-American bisexual poet and activist. It is just changed the subject from “we” to “minjung” (Jordan 1980:42-3).

<sup>217</sup> G. R. Beasley Murray also claims that the Kingdom of God was the very centre of Jesus' own message (1986:5).

came to him not as an abstract and theoretical concept, but as a concrete and organized historical reality, here and now in the midst of the minjung (Suh 1983:131). Suh described the minjung as the permanent reality of historical Jesus who represented the people of *han*, and thus prescribed the minjung as the champion of the Kingdom of God, a *han*-free society here on earth (Suh 1983:131). Characteristic was then found in the co-existence of the denouncing and the announcing. Suh saw the Kingdom of God simultaneously as untiring denouncing the minjung's suffering as injustice, and inexhaustible announcing that new hope was born through the solidarity of the suffering minjung (Suh 1983:177).

Here, Suh placed the life-field, the place where the minjung are suppressed, as a sign for how the Kingdom is "today" (Suh 1983:57). Jesus' Kingdom message was presence in the day-to-day struggle of the people of Galilee, the first-century suffering minjung and became the Good News to them with a new vision of social order where the minjung were to be the centre. "Blessed are the minjung, they shall inherit the kingdom of God!" (Kasper 1976:72) This meant that the Kingdom of God was, from its inception, closely related to the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, namely, the suffering minjung (Kim 1992:243-44). As long as the minjung suffered in dehumanized condition, there was Good News to be proclaimed, beyond time and space. Suh took such God's predilection for the suffering minjung as the critical gospel paradigm for his time –God loves the outcast (Suh 1983:142). To Suh, the concrete life-situation of the suffering minjung, therefore, has to be seen as a divine place to listen to the reality, nature, and scope of God's liberating activity for His people (Suh 1976:80). In this light, the minjung's *Sitz-im-Leben* (life-setting) served as a prism in which the Kingdom of God can shine through. It represented in microcosm, where the heaven and earth meet, where Jesus is present, and where the Kingdom of God is realized as a complete reversal of the status quo (Kim 1992:234).

Suh's appraisal of the minjung's life-field as the incarnation of the Kingdom of God resulted in his advocacy of the Messianic Millennial Kingdom as the realization of the new heaven and new earth in the present (Suh 1976:102). This was followed by his negation of the spiritualization of God's Kingdom its emphasis had nothing to do with the concept of *Missio Dei* in the Spirit, that is, God's transforming act in this world (Suh 1983:58). To Suh, the irony was that the detachment of the Kingdom of God from the world began with the attachment of Christianity to the worldly power (Moon 1998:99-100). Suh saw that Constantine's elevation of Christianity as the official religion (AD 313) had transformed itself into a lackey to the Empire. Christianity, from then on, became a better advocate for the oppressive Roman rulers than for the oppressed as a part of grand scheme of building and maintaining the "Holy Roman Empire" (Suh 1983:58). It soon degenerated into a tool in the hands of

the privileged to safeguard their interest under the banner of a *henotikon*, a formula for Christian unity.

In its wake, according to Suh, a growing tendency toward centralization of power and systematic suppression of freedom existed in the church as well. An inevitable corollary was the open espousal of the “political economy” of truth.<sup>218</sup> The Christian church was itself within the circles of the powerful and it reduced Christians to silence about their responsibility for socio-political issues (Moon 1998:129-30). The church did no longer oppose oppression. Suh complained that the close relationship of the church with the power from above had justified its willful ignorance to the outcry from below (Suh 1983:301-304). To Suh, “doing nothing is in fact doing something.” Here the structural sin, which actually victimized the powerless, was to be limited merely to an individual and spiritual category for the church’s sake. Under this climate, this-worldly church sought to the other worldliness of the Kingdom of God as a place of pilgrimage, which fostered a-historical and a-social retreat to heaven (Suh 1976:129-30). From it derived Suh’s conclusion that there was the secularization of the church behind the sacralisation of the Kingdom of God. The church, in its marriage with the Empire, was willing to sacrifice the Messianic Millennial Kingdom on the altar of its profit. Here, the privatization of Christianity reached its zenith and the Christian Church had lost its *raison d’être*. By its silence or by hiding behind an apolitical disguise, it reinforced and legitimated dependency. Then the church preferred being a servant of the powerful to being a friend of the powerless, the unimportant members of society.

Suh then distinguished the term Millennium from the Kingdom of God (Suh 1983:162-63), imposing it on the minjung-messianic aspirations, which would embrace both the spiritual salvation, and historical and political liberation as a whole (Suh 1976:102, Ahn 1979:108). In a word, Suh saw the Millennium as a sort of minjung-oriented centripetal force, which pulled God’s salvific action down to the deepest level of this earthly world. While the Kingdom of God as a sort of centrifugal force, which pushed it out to the other-worldly dimension to safeguard the vested interest of particular groups (Suh 1983:193). On the basis of the idea of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit, Suh further stressed the messianic hope for the Kingdom of God on earth. He in particular found the apex of the Kingdom of God in an analogy of the messianic feast, which was open to everyone, especially to the poor and the oppressed (Suh 1983:131). The implication of this parable, according to Suh, was the necessity of praxis of the powerless in this world (Moon 1998:97). Therefore, this praxis should be distinguished from praxis of the powerful toward other-worldly discourse. While the latter was praxis of conspiracy

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<sup>218</sup> The term is originally coined by Michel Foucault (1926-1984), a French philosopher (1980:131).

from above, which promoted alienation, repeated the oppressive system, and thus introduced the domination itself into the powerless. The former, instead, dealt with praxis of liberation from below, when the powerless stood up, protest, and struggled for their rights, for participation, and for justice (Moon 1998:100). Suh believed that it was a liberating praxis, which had to do with the power of the powerless, namely, the *minjung*, inherited from Jesus' own struggle against the established powers and authorities of his time (Moon 1998:101, 156).

In this sense, Suh's point becomes clear. The Kingdom of God needs to be replaced by the Messianic Millennial Kingdom. It is because for the former, the power of the keys is given to a few power-holders, whereas for the latter, it is given to the majority of the powerless *minjung* (Suh 1983:162-63). To Suh, there is no doubt then that Jesus, as the suffering Messiah, suffered and died for bringing the power of the keys back from the privileged to the underprivileged; from the oppressor to the oppressed; and from the powerful to the powerless (Moon 1998:101). This rediscovery of the Kingdom of God in the Messianic Millennium resulted in his recapitulation of the "unification of God and revolution" in the struggle for the realization of God's Kingdom here and now (Suh 1983:166). To be sure, the realization of the Messianic Kingdom on earth meant the restoration of the Kingdom of God. The restoration of the Kingdom of God meant the restoration of the power of the keys. The restoration of the power of the keys meant the restoration of the power of the powerless, namely, the suffering *minjung*, through the active participation in God's mission (Suh 1991:243-45). This corresponded further with his idea of *Missio Dei* in the Spirit. Just as God's liberative and transformative mission to the world is interconnected both cosmically and eschatologically, the Messianic Millennial Kingdom is, in essence, inclusive of both spiritual-vertical and social-horizontal dimensions (Suh 1983:133, Kim 1992:243-44). *Shalom* before God here on earth must come together with the everlasting *shalom* before God in the hereafter. In this connection, Suh came to insist that the realization of life in all its fullness, including the spiritual and material basis, is the apex of the Messianic Kingdom of God in the eschatological reversal, which is imminent. The Millennial Kingdom is in this light a dynamic manifestation of God's salvific action in the Spirit for the liberation of the *minjung*, here and now (Suh 1983:131).

To be summarized, in Suh's outlook God's Kingdom is never abstract, but must be open to the concrete living situations here and now. It cannot be understood conceptually, in some a-temporal fashion, but must be reckoned with in any effort to bring it into the *minjung*'s day-to-day struggling. To him, the matter is not when the Kingdom comes, but how the Kingdom can come. By recognizing the Messianic Kingdom as the historical-eschatological realization of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit, Suh gave a new

impetus to the powerless minjung. Here minjung is characterized as the power of the keys, being exercised a liberating praxis not only as the object, but also as the subject of salvation in terms of their joint citizenship in this-worldly and other-worldly Kingdom of God (Suh 1991:243-45). In a word, Suh reinterpreted the minjung as both guests and hosts of the messianic banquet where the suffering minjung played the role of suffering messiah in order to create a brave new world here on earth.

#### **4.3.1.3 Conclusion: Suh, the Reformer as Being-in-the-Minjung in the Spirit of *Missio Dei***

Suh found in the idea of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit the apex of *dan*. Suh took the reality of the suffering minjung in the Korean society (especially in the 1970s) seriously and interpreted it from a perspective of God's liberating action in the works of the Spirit. To him, God as the Spirit always opts for the outcry of the victims for justice. Explicit is that He is the Good News of God who brings down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the lowly (1 Cor. 1:26-29). This motivated Suh to link the Exodus motif with the Korean society. He saw the on-going God's mission in human history, including the church history. The Exodus event in the Old Testament is, in this sense, a close nexus not only of Jesus cross-event in the New Testament. It is also that of the minjung-event in the Korean history as a presage and presentiment of a new Exodus. At issue here was two-fold; it, in one sense, emphasized the continuity of the Father-Son-Spirit's mission in the history of the suffering minjung. It also represented the close affinity between the Korean minjung's suffering and God's suffering in the cross in another sense. From Suh's perspective, the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit is therefore the signature of the relationship between idea and action; church and world; spirit and body; knowledge of God and practice of liberation; and the Messiah (as minjung) and the minjung (as Messiah).

Yet, such a perspective became also the source of conflict when it encountered with the existing theological views bound up with dogmatic garb. From it emerged a crucial and radical reversal of Suh's perspective; (1) from Western to anti-Western theology; (2) from Christology to Pneumatology; (3) from the Saviour (Jesus) to the saved (minjung); and (4) from other-worldly Kingdom of God to this-worldly Messianic Millennial Kingdom. By bring about the idea of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit as a breakthrough in the reality of social injustice in the Korean context, Suh first endeavored to break off the shell of Western models of theology, which was not suitable for the Korean context. Then, he tried to reshape a Korean version of contextual theology based on the minjung's perspective. This anti-Westernized Minjung Theology shed new light on the works of the Holy Spirit as the spirit of freedom. This galvanized him to put the pneumatological-synchronic interpretation over the Christological-diachronic one. Suh felt the necessity of reappraisal of the Holy Spirit for the liberation of the minjung not only from the socio-economic oppression, but also spiritual cul-de-sac where "Jesusology"

disguised itself as Christology. This Spirit-centred outlook opened a new connection between Jesus and minjung in terms of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit. Suh found a critical correlation between Jesus and the suffering minjung; Jesus-messianism and minjung-messianism. In Suh's minjung-Christology as a Spirit-Christology, there is therefore a holistic view of minjung (the saved) and Messiah (the Saviour); minjung-ness of the Spirit and the Spirit-ness of minjung as God-given power to resist injustice and oppression. It is no surprising then that Suh distinguished the Messianic Millennial Kingdom from the Kingdom of God when the latter appeared as the other-worldly utopianism, apart from the minjung's *Sitz-im-Leben*, which is, the *Hyun-Jang*.

All in all, Suh's conspicuous concern was that the Kingdom of God is to be turned into the Messianic Millennial Kingdom as the realization of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit; as the culmination of the unification of God and revolution which empowers the suffering minjung to take control of their liberating praxis in the Spirit. Suh in this sense envisioned the ratification of "God's saving *coup d'état*" (Barth 1969:620) for a wholesome, liberative, and *han*-less society in the here and now by the power of the powerless minjung in the Spirit. To Suh, the Messianic Millennial Kingdom, as the historical manifestation of holistic integration of spiritual and material liberation, cannot be realized without harnessing the minjung's power in the Spirit. Here, the Millennium Messianic Kingdom calls for an affirmation of the subversive and retributive memory and praxis of Jesus which dismantles the sinful structures within the *han*-ridden society so that legitimizes the violent and unequal encounter meted out to the minjung. In this light, Suh's idea of the *Missio Dei* in the Spirit inevitably led to a *lex talionis* whereby those who oppress the minjung are ultimately despoiled with the matter of "crime and punishment."

In short, Suh has radicalized the theology of *Missio Dei* by accepting worldly occurrences as divine intervention or the work of the Spirit. From this viewpoint, he not only encourages others to participate in these worldly events but also attempts to infuse them with theological language and meaning. Beyond Christological teaching of justification in an individualistic and forensic sense, Suh tries to actualize the Jesus-event *hic et nunc* in an on-going pneumatological manner. This, in turn, characterizes him as the reformer as being-in-the-minjung in the Spirit of *Missio Dei*.

### **4.3.2 Ahn, Byung-Mu (1922-1996)**

#### **4.3.2.1 Biographical Sketch**

Ahn, Byung-Mu (1922-1996) was born on June 23, 1922 in *Shinuiju*, a city that now belong to North Korea. When he was one year old, his family moved into Manchuria because of Japanese colonial

politics.<sup>219</sup> While initially raised in a Confusion way, Ahn converted to Christianity in childhood. His involvement with Christianity brought harsh conflicts with his father and eventually led to a break (Küster 2010:60). His mother divorced her husband and took both sons with her. Ahn contributed to their subsistence with temporary jobs. After about a year, he entered the secondary school of the Canadian Presbyterian mission in Yongchang and there Ahn encountered people who would join him as allies on his future path in life; Ham, Sok-Hon (1901-1989), the Korean Gandhi, Kim, Chai-Joon (1901-1987), co-founder of the Hanguk Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK, in Korean: *kichang*), and his school friend Mon, Dong-Hwan (1921- ). After finishing the mission school, Ahn travelled to Japan in 1941 and started studying philosophy with a sociological emphasis at Waseda University. When the Japanese army threatened to recruit him, Ahn interrupted his studies and hid in Manchuria, where he served a congregation as a lay preacher for some time. When the war was over, he managed to support himself and his mother by teaching English, while at the same time, resuming his study of sociology at Seoul National University (Küster 2010:60).

During the Korean War Ahn and his student friends found a Christian community to demonstrate an alternative to the institutional Church. They developed a concept of lay mission. The *Hyang-rin* congregation<sup>220</sup> in down town Seoul, which still emphasizes the lay element today, came out of this group. Beginning in 1950, Ahn worked as a junior lecturer at the Chungang Seminary, an interdenominational seminary that served the training of lay people, which he co-founded. In 1953, he became a senior lecturer there and then began to offer courses in New Testament, always focusing on the question of the historical Jesus. At that time Ahn developed an interest for Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) and decided to go to Germany to further explore his Jesus studies. From 1956 till 1965 he studied in Heidelberg with Gunther Bornkamm (1905-1990) who was a student of Bultmann. Besides his exegetical studies, Ahn started to turn to classical Asian literature again.<sup>221</sup> Ahn in fact received his doctor's degree in 1965 with a study on "Kung-Tse and Jesus about Love" (Küster 2010:61). Having returned to Korea, he resumed teaching at Chungang Seminary, while at the same time, serving as a professor at Hanguk Theological Seminary from 1965 till 1971. The *Hyang-rin* congregation elected the returned Ahn as their leader even though he stubbornly refused to be ordained.

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<sup>219</sup> Ahn later compares this situation to that of Galilee in Jesus' time (Küster 2010:59).

<sup>220</sup> The Korean name "Hyang-rin" means "good neighbour (hood)."

<sup>221</sup> In one interview, Ahn said that "as a Korean or an Asian, I had to redefine where I stood... I wished to free myself once and for all from Western theology and ask from a different perspective. With a conscious scepticism I wanted to find out whether my enthusiasm for Jesus was a coincidence" (Küster 2010:61).

Ahn made a great contribution to theological training and the development of Korean theology by founding the “Korea Theological Study Institute” in 1973 (Küster 2010:62). The translation of German and English theological literature done by the staff of this institute enabled Korean theologians to participate in international discussions. The institute also published two theological magazines: the monthly “Presence” especially for lay people, and the academic quarterly “Theological Thought” which became the mouthpiece for Minjung Theology (Küster 2010:62). The institute was meant to be a theological forum for both lay people and theologians. The strong commitment to human rights issue had deeply influenced his theological thinking. Due to pressure from the government, Ahn was banished from the college in June 1975. Together with other dissidents, he established the Galilee congregation, which dedicated itself to family members of those who were politically prosecuted (Küster 2010:63).

The PROK entrusted him with the task of founding a Mission Education Centre its main interest was focused on the continuing education of minister, especially in the area of urban and rural mission. Yet the political situation of these years made Ahn set up a theological training course in 1977 for those students who had been discharged from the universities and who partly served in prison for some time. In 1978 Suh, Nam-Dong took over leadership of this institute. The roster of tutors was no other than a ‘who’s who’ of Minjung Theology; besides Ahn and Suh, the brothers Moon, Ik-Hwan (1918-1994)<sup>222</sup> and Moon, Dong-Hwan (1921- ) taught Old Testament and religious education, and Lee, Oo-Jung (1923- ), classical languages (Küster 2010:63). On March 1<sup>st</sup> 1976, Ahn was arrested for signing the “Declaration of Democracy and National Salvation.”<sup>223</sup> He was sentenced to several years of imprisonment but international pressure led to his early release in December of the same year. This experience of imprisonment was the turning point for Ahn; he started to look at the world with different eyes –with the minjung’s eyes, and to read the Bible anew. It was, according to Ahn, like he was born again (Küster 2010:65). After the president Park was assassinated in 1979, a short period of democratization allowed Ahn to return to the theological seminary in February 1980. Just six months later the military seized power again and Ahn was suspended from university service once again. Only

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<sup>222</sup> Moon was a South Korean pastor, theologian, poet, and activist engaged in various social movements. He earned his master's degree from Princeton University in the United States, he returned to South Korea and began to lecture the Old Testament at Yonsei University and Hansin University.

<sup>223</sup> This manifesto focuses on the important themes of the political resistance; democratization, social justice and reunification. It is a follow up to the 1973 declaration of Korean Christians that was written in response to the introduction of the “Yusin” constitution in 1972 and stressed God’s option for the poor and the coming of the messianic kingdom. cf. see more, *Documents on the Struggle for Democracy in Korea* (1975:37-43).

in September 1984 was he rehabilitated along with most politically prosecuted college teachers. He became dean of the Graduate School of Hanshin University until his retirement in 1987 (Küster 2010:66-6).

### 4.3.2.2 Theological Perspective

#### 4.3.2.2.1 Encountering Western Theology

The essential impulse for Ahn to turn to academic theology in the first place came from Bultmann.<sup>224</sup> Ahn had been fascinated by Bultmann's major book on the synoptic tradition and the idea that the biblical texts had a *Sitz im Leben* (Küster 2010:66). Even more important was Bultmann's existential approach that spoke to the Korean situation after the civil war (1950-53). It is therefore true to say that "before Minjung Theology Ahn was an existentialist" (Küster 2010:66). Nevertheless Ahn is theologically self-educated. He had already read exegetical literature extensively before he decided to go to Germany to study with Bultmann. When Ahn found out that his chosen master was already retired, he went to Heidelberg, where Günther Bornkamm, a member of the Bultmann School, taught. Even during the following years he studied predominantly on his own.

For his struggle for human rights and democratization, Ahn later referred also to Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). The confessing church opposed the German Christians and the Nazi regime, encouraged Ahn to confront the conservative Korean churches and later the military dictatorship (Küster 2010:67). His early essays were still drenched with the concept of the "church for others." As a Christian intellectual, Ahn translated this concept into a plea for a Christian pro-existence in following Christ (Ahn 1986:36). The vertical structure of the "for others" was broken down by Ahn's new Minjung Christology. Jesus was sharing the pain of the people. He was not suffering *for* but *with* others (Küster 2010:67). Ahn did not deny the Western influence on his theology.<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless, he sought the discussion with Western theology from the position of an independent Korean theology. With this new self-understanding, Ahn criticized the praxis-deficiency of German academic theology (Ahn 1987:12-16).

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<sup>224</sup> In one interview, Ahn once said that "Bultmann has been the only teacher with a large influence on me, as a theologian and a New Testament scholar at the same time... If I had not encountered Bultmann, I would never have started doing theology. He showed me how to do theology" (Küster 2010:66).

<sup>225</sup> "I was educated by Western theology. I cannot divert from it. It is within me; it is part of me. My thoughts, my language, also logics plays a role... I admit it, whether I like it or not, consciously or unconsciously, I cannot reject it" (Küster 2010:618).

#### 4.3.2.2.2 Discovering the *Ochlos*-Minjung in the Gospel of Mark

In his studies on the Gospel of Mark, Ahn time and again has stressed the close relationship between Jesus and the *ochlos*.<sup>226</sup> He criticized the blindness of German historical-critical exegesis which viewed the Markan *ochlos* from the perspective of form criticism and thus failed to see its social and theological significance (Ahn 1984:138-39). In contrast, Ahn emphasized Jesus' unconditional commitment to the *ochlos*, manifested in the Gospel of Mark. With regard to this, Ahn's thesis can be divided into three hypotheses: a research-historical, a terminological and a redaction-critical aspect of the role of the *ochlos* in the Gospel of Mark (Küster 2010:68-9). Firstly, Ahn pointed out a research historical deficit in German historical-critical exegesis which has neglected the Markan *ochlos* as a social group (Küster 2010:68). To Ahn, there have been voices which have pointed towards a special esteem of the *ochlos* in the gospels but Western historical-critical perspective is often incapable of acknowledging it. Secondly, Ahn paid attention to the terminological innovation (Küster 2010:68). The evangelical Mark designated a social group with the term *ochlos*,<sup>227</sup> which was assigned a special meaning in his gospel. According to Ahn, Mark intentionally used the word *ochlos* to refer to a central group of people in this Gospel of Mark that experienced an enormous boost by Jesus' direct and immediate commitment towards them. Thirdly, Ahn came to a redaction-critical innovation which made the role of the *ochlos* relevant for Markan theology (Küster 2010:69). The political interpretation of the Gospel of Mark by Ahn was compatible with the traditional historical-critical exegesis of Mark. The geographical opposition Galilee-Jerusalem indicated that there might be a double conflict between Jesus and the political as well as the religious authorities in Galilee and a conflict about his authority with the aristocracy of the temple in Jerusalem (Küster 2010:69).

It is therefore clear for Ahn that the Galilean *ochlos* –an amorphous, and in its membership varying group of people from the Galilean lower class –were the addressee of Jesus' mission. Jesus contrasted the political power relations of his time with the inner organizational structure of the group of apostles. Jesus postulated a radical change of positions –whoever wishes to be first shall become the servant of all others. The Gospel of Mark is a scripture with a hierarchy-critical tendency, which displayed short period of Jesus' human life before he was put on trial as the “biography of the exemplary suffering righteous one” (Küster 2010:70). He had proclaimed the Kingdom of God to the *ochlos*, whose magnificence was experienced by these people in the short period of his public actions by showing his

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<sup>226</sup> Ahn regards the *ochlos* in the Gospel of Mark as a group of socially uprooted people, who come together wherever Jesus appears during his public life.

<sup>227</sup> Admittedly, the term *ochlos* applied only peripherally in Jewish-Hellenistic literature. It was supposed to characterize a “crowd” and had a pejorative connotation (Küster 2010:69).

unconditional commitment to them. The Jesus-movement appeared as a counter community, which was characterized by inner solidarity and a willingness to endure conflicts with its surroundings (Küster 2010:70).

#### 4.3.2.2.3 The Jesus Event versus Kerygma

Ahn castigated the convergence of radical criticism and the Lutheran doctrine of justification, which became apparent in Bultmann's theology. To Ahn's eyes, Bultmann simply replaced Luther's "gospel" with "kerygma" thereby suspending the question of the historical Jesus (Küster 2010:70). Ahn in contrast wanted to differentiate between the eschatological kerygma of the institutionalized Church and the Jesus-event of Minjung Theology (Ahn 1985:28). Over against Bultmann's dictum that the gospels were the expanded kerygma, Ahn argued: "In the beginning there was the event, not the kerygma" (Ahn 1985:27).<sup>228</sup> The Jesus event was secretly communicated as a rumor by the minjung of that time (Ahn 1985:37). Yet, this Jesus-event was robbed of its historical dimension. The kerygma "was primarily concerned with the meaning and not with the description of the Jesus event" (Ahn 1985:30). Its formation was influenced by the striving to reduce conflicts with the outer world and the stabilization of the institution in the inner circle (Küster 2010:71). In light of this process, the concrete suffering of Jesus on the cross, his being abandoned by God, has completely disappeared into the background. Ahn rather contrasted it with the portrayal of the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, which was based on the minjung tradition, and which was spread in rumors. He, therefore, emphasized the historical dimension of Christian faith, the dangerous memory of Jesus suffering on the cross and his resurrection, which at once allowed the minjung to identify and offered a source of hope (Küster 2010:72).

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<sup>228</sup> This explains why Ahn's theology was often called as a theology of event. Ahn states about event; "Western theology asks only who Jesus is, about his *persona*. Its answer is that his person is this or that. Western theologians find comfort in such answers. But I do not think that is right. My response is Jesus is an event! And God is also an event! I came to realize it. Regarding Jesus as a person is wrong! This enlightenment has become a turning point in my theological journey. Event, not a Person! The person of Jesus two thousand years ago in Galilee, Palestine has no significant meaning for me. Event is more significant. This enlightenment came to me late in my life. Jesus was an event! This awareness made me turn from study on historical Jesus to Minjung Theology. In the past my study on historical Jesus focused on the person of Jesus. However, a new insight into Jesus opens up a new road that leads anew to my search for historical Jesus. I would like to see Jesus as the event of minjung, a collective event. The event of Jesus was not a complete, once and for all event two thousand years ago. It happens again and again not only in the church, but in history. This awareness lets my theology of the event easily pass over to Minjung Theology... I liken the event of minjung to the magma of volcano (molten rock below ground) by analogy. An amount of magma erupts at a certain time in history. In Jesus time, a large volcano erupted and overflowed magma, which is the event of Jesus. Other eruptions have taken place at different historical moments. The events of minjung that are taking place today are not disparate and separate ones, but are connected to the event of Jesus two thousand years ago. Jesus appears to us through the events of minjung! It is nonsense to quest for the Jesus of two thousand years ago, or to quest for the Christ in doctrine. Important is where Christ of today –in my word, today's event of Jesus –appears" (Ahn 1987:25-6, 35).

Ahn's scepticism towards kerygmatic theology extended itself to Paul as its alleged founder (Ahn 1985:130-40). In it, he pleaded that the Pauline letters be read in their biographical and social context (Ahn 1986:21-25 quoted by Küster 2010:72). In his explanation of the Corinthian community, Ahn spoke of an "urban *ochlos*" in Corinth analogous to the "rural *ochlos*" in the Gospel of Mark (Ahn 1979:4). According to Ahn, Paul clearly took side with these weak ones whom God has chosen and furthermore he announced a revolution here (Ahn 1979:6). Yet, unfortunately Paul did not provide a clear answer as to how this revolutionary change should be brought about. By criticizing a socio-ethical deficit in Paul, Ahn urged that "We, as historical beings, must deal particularly with this 'how.' This is exactly the sphere for which Christians hold responsibility" (Ahn 1979:7).

#### 4.3.2.2.4 *Ochlos* as the Minjung and the Jesus-Event as the Minjung-Event

Even if Ahn denied having any special method which have elevated the life of Jesus to an integral part of Christology, he made a significant contribution to it though his theology of event. Ahn understood Jesus' life, death and resurrection as the event in which God revealed himself to the world. The concept of event manifested the historicity of the Christian faith. Closely related to this is the question: "Who is Jesus for us today?" Christology became the hermeneutical key for human experience as well as a possibility to identify with and a source of hope. The minjung have recognized their own suffering in Jesus Christ's passion. Similarly the Minjung theologians are "encountering the suffering Christ in the suffering minjung" (Ahn 1982:290-96). For Ahn, the Jesus-event became present in minjung events,<sup>229</sup> such as the textile worker Chun, Tae-Il setting himself on fire or Park, Jong-Chul's death by torture (Ahn 1989:126-33 quoted by Küster 2010:74).

This means that the major themes of Ahn's theology, in terms of both the historical Jesus and the minjung, can be converged in the concept of a *corporate theologia crucis* (Küster 2010:75). From it, Ahn insists that "the Gospel of Mark does not depict a personal biography of Jesus' life and actions, but it is a social-biography... If one considers Jesus' life with this presupposition in mind, one should not look for traces of Jesus' behaviour as an individual, but for what happened between Jesus and the people surrounding him" (Ahn 1984:164). Significantly enough, Ahn postulated an analogy between the Markan *ochlos* and the Korean minjung. The *ochlos* was a group of reference which showed God's option for the minjung. Thus, Ahn further argues that the passion of Jesus can be understood as "a condensation of the suffering fate of the minjung" (Ahn 1984:167). This does not necessary mean a

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<sup>229</sup> "In our everyday lives, we often overlook God's vertical interference. But we have to believe the reality of the miracle of God's interference. What the world may testify to everyday -God came to the world!" (Ahn 1986:25)

direct and ontological identification of minjung with Jesus and vice versa (David Suh 2010: xiv-xvi). Rather this indicates that through interpreting Christ's suffering on the cross as sharing their lot, the minjung who are alienated in their suffering can and should re/construct their identity and thereby become the subject of history (Küster 2010:75). Ahn believes that God's option for the poor empowers them in this identity re/construction (Küster 2010:75).

#### **4.3.2.3 Conclusion: Ahn, the Reformer as Being-in-the-Minjung in the Jesus-Event**

What is the legacy of Ahn, Byung-Mu? Of course it can be found in his rediscovery of Jesus' option for the poor, his hermeneutic Christology and the theology of events. First, Ahn had consistently criticized Luther's discovery of the righteousness of God in Rom 3:28. Rather, in his discovery of "the people" around Jesus, in particular the poor (*ochlos* in Greek) in the Gospel of Mark, Ahn brought to the forefront a reciprocal relation between Jesus and the *ochlos*. It is clear for Ahn that from the beginning of his public ministry in Galilee up until the time of his crucifixion, Jesus identified himself with them. Choosing the word minjung as a translation of the Greek *ochlos*, Ahn tried to comprehend the reality of minjung from the perspective of those who suffer on the underside of dominant history and society. Thus, *Ochlos* in Mark's Gospel meant neither Israel as God's people (*laos* in Greek), nor the Gentiles (*goyim* in Hebrew). Mark's usage of the word *ochlos* rather referred to sinners excluded from Jewish society, people without religious identity, people without ethnic coherence, and people without land (*am ha'aretz*) or property. They were despised as the multitude of the lost. However, it was the people with whom Jesus sit and taught, the *familia dei*. Jesus' mission was not to call the righteous, but the sinners. Connecting it to the social history of minjung, Ahn conceived of the *ochlos* as the homeless, driven-out, scattered Jews and Christians after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Moltmann 2000:254).

Furthermore, in turning to the side of the *ochlos*, Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God as their future, and fought together with them on the front of God's advent. To the forsaken, oppressed, and marginalized minjung, Jesus appeared as a brother or a sister, rather than becoming Christ of the church with his golden crown. Jesus' personality and his movement became meaningful only when they were seen as a life-history in his fellowship and identification with the *ochlos*. God's people (*laos*) became the forsaken people (*ochlos*) under the Roman Empire. This hermeneutic of discovering and interpreting the story of Jesus' life in the Gospel of Mark in terms of the socio-biography of the *ochlos*, therefore, provided an exegetical basis for Ahn to contextualize a theology of suffering *ochlos* (minjung) in Korean society.

Finally, with his *relecture* of the Gospel of Mark, Ahn elevated the life of Jesus to a constitutive part of Christology again, which had long focused only on his death and resurrection. All aspects together constituted what Ahn called the Jesus-event. Jesus lived among the Galilean *ochlos*, the uprooted ‘little people,’ whom Ahn saw as analogous to the Korean minjung. They were the primary addressees of Jesus’ mission. Hence, the interpretation of his death as a sacrifice was bypassed. Jesus was not suffering *for* but *with* the minjung. The hope for resurrection became the hope for liberation of the minjung (Küster 2010:115-16). The relation of Jesus with *ochlos*-minjung must, therefore, be seen as a relation between the liberator and the liberated. In this sense the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was not only his private accomplishment, but also the death and resurrection of the minjung. Further, such Jesus-events was not a unique revelatory event in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, but reiterate throughout history.

But, even more is in his general attitude, the openness towards doing theology as a *theologia semper reformada* (Küster 2010:77). Ahn understood his own biography and his theology equally as open systems, which must reconstitute themselves in new situations, over and over again.<sup>230</sup> He, in this light, would join the global flow of liberation theologies searching Jesus among the victims of globalization on the particular local level (Kang 2007:227-65).

To sum, Ahn understood salvation as the restoration of the human rights of the minjung and the struggle against the evil social structures which controlled present oppressive situations. Ahn insisted then that when the humanization of the minjung was achieved, the salvation of history became possible. He stated that the Bible is the history of the liberation of the oppressed and God identified himself with them and continued his liberation work throughout history. Ahn contended that through the minjung movements of liberation, the minjung saved themselves and the non-minjung were saved by participation in the minjung movements of liberation. Thus, the suffering minjung who participated in the liberation movements could become their own Messiah. For Ahn, salvation is not an individual redemption or spiritual deliverance but the liberation of all the minjung from the historical reality. In short, Ahn identified *ochlos*-minjung with Jesus and minjung events with Jesus-events. He, in this light, identified himself as the reformer as being-in-the-*ochlos*-minjung in the Jesus-event today.

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<sup>230</sup> “Therefore, if someone asks; yesterday you talked like this and you used to write like that, and why do you speak this way today, I will not react at all; yesterday is yesterday and today is today. I do not want to let myself be captured in a particular framework. The minjung is a living substance as well and how can I let the minjung be captured in a particular framework?” (Küster 2010:78)

### 4.3.3 Kim, Yong-Bock (1938- )

#### 4.3.3.1 Biographical Sketch

Although Kim, Yong-Bock was by far the youngest (born in *Chulla* province in 1938) among the contemporaries, it has never been an issue to become himself one of the major proponents who were working in the spirit of Minjung Theology. His main concern was a kind of liberationist mentalist of the minjung. Yet, he did not confined it in the Korean minjung, but extended his theological emphasis to the Asian struggle for liberation within the framework of the wider ecumenical movement. In the early seventies, after finishing his study of theology in the US (1963-68), Kim worked as an advisor for the CCA (Christian Conference of Asia) in Japan and it was long before the CCA conference in 1979.<sup>231</sup> In Tokyo, Kim set up a centre of Documentation for Action Groups in Asia (DAGA) and was in charge of a URM research project on the role of trans-national corporations in Asia. In order to strength the *koinonia* of Asian churches and Christian communities, Kim responded to the challenges of the changing societies of Asia as well as of Korea with determination (Küster 2010:95).

In Princeton Kim's vision of political theology in Asian context made inroads into the traditional curriculum, which focused solely on Western needs. Instead of the required knowledge of the European languages German and French, Kim boldly requested that Japanese and Chinese be accepted: for he wanted to preserve his identity as an Asian Christian. His dissertation, *Historical Transformation, People's Movement and Messianic Koinonia* was a historical-theological sketch that placed and examined the suffering history of Korean minjung in the light of Messianic movements from the rise of Protestant mission to the Korean March First Independence Movement of 1919.

Even today Kim is still not free from his reputation as former radical student leader. He isolated from established university circles in Korea and remained in his church (The Presbyterian Church of Korea, in Korean: *Tonghap*). Yet, the authorities have an ambivalent attitude towards this internationally esteemed scholar. At the institutional level, they were welcome to benefit from his international connections, but were reluctant to highlight his influence. In 1992 Kim was elected as the president of Hanil Theological Seminary in his home province of *Chulla* and within two years he expanded it as a recognized university. After being discharged from his presidency (1999), Kim decided to start his own

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<sup>231</sup> The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) is known as the first regional ecumenical body, inaugurated its assembly in Kuala Lumpur, in 1959, to be an "organ of continuing cooperation among the churches and National Councils of Churches in East Asia (including Australasia.)" Many ecumenical leaders had contributed to its initial formation and key figures among them were Bishop E. C. Sobrepena, Dr. D. G. Moses, Dr. Daniel T. Niles, U. Kyaw Than, and Rev. A. A. Brash. The current official name, Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), has been newly assigned since the 1973 assembly agreed to change its name.

school independent of the churches, namely, “Asia Pacific Graduate School for the Integral Study of Life.” He envisions an interdisciplinary curriculum, its concept expands the rights to the cosmos as the household of life for all living being. In spite of his marriage to an American and international job offers, Kim preferred to stay in his homeland (Küster 2010:102).

Ahn, Byung-Mu’s death in 1996, left Kim, Yong-Bock, together with David Suh (1931- ), as the last of the core group of first generation Minjung theologians, who is still productive. His political theology is based on reformed concepts. In the 1980s Kim applied Calvinist covenant theology to overcome economic justice in a “Covenant with the poor.” To the upswing of neoliberal capitalism and the American empire, Kim responded with the call for a *status confessionis* that led to the Accra Confession 2004, which took a faith stance against the negative aspects of globalization, not only driving people against life, but also causing them to live in despair (Küster 2010:101). Kim pointed out then that, if minjung movements have been struggling for social justice, they now struggle for social rights and life at all levels and in all places. To Kim, the task of liberation movements is, therefore, how to strive for peace and security for life in the cosmos.

#### **4.3.3.2 Theological Perspective**

##### **4.3.3.2.1 History as the Social Biography of the Minjung**

Kim, Yong-Bock advocates the use of social biography to understand the reality of minjung and the nature of God’s revelation in history. Kim sees social biography not merely as social or cultural history, but as political, which is, comprehensively related to the reality of power and the *polis*, namely, the community. The social biography, therefore, functions to integrate and to interrelate the dimensions and components of minjung’s social and cultural experiences, especially in terms of the dramatic scenario of the minjung as the historical protagonists (Kim 1981:185). Minjung, in this sense, cannot be defined or conceptualized; for they are a living reality, of which stories, their biography, can only be an effective way of expressing (Kim 1981:185). The Bible, according to him, contains a rich variety of socio-biographical materials on the people of God in the forms of stories both individual and social collectivity. This indicates that the historical nature of divine revelation can be clarified in the context of the social biography of the people of God (Kim 1981:28). The socio-political biography of the minjung therefore becomes the key historical point of reference for Kim, in addition to the references of biblical stories (Kim 1981:185).

In considering the potential spiritual and political power that the minjung do have, Kim proposes the immediate need to re-read the history from below, from the minjung point of view, instead of from that

of the ruling power (Kim 1983:188). Rather than having history always happens to them, the minjung can make history happen. The minjung, in this light, can become subjects of history and stop being just objects of history. Kim further elaborates the inclusive aspects of minjung in contrast to the proletariat, who is sternly predetermined in socio-economic-political situations and thereby limited by the logic of history. To him, minjung differs from the proletariat in that it has no static and socio-economic definition, but has dynamic nature which encompasses socio-economic-political as well as religious-cultural biography. This helps Kim to see the concept of minjung in a more flexible way. To him, minjung controls history, but there is an element of transcendence, a beyond socio-economic determination of history, which is often expressed in a religious form (Kim 1987). In this light, minjung can be defined within the frame of social biography and avoid categorization of class stratification (Yi 1996:39).

With this perspective, Kim traces the roots of Minjung Theology to the beginnings of Protestant Christianity in Korea. From its beginnings, according to Kim, the Korean Protestant Christianity was highly politically motivated even when the conservative missionaries had tried to prevent this by all means possible. The suppression of the resistance to the protectorate treaty with Japan left a vacuum behind which Korean Christians entered eagerly (Kim 1981:90). They then had developed a “creative political and historical hermeneutics” (Kim 1981:104) that shed a different light on their experiences from a Christian perspective. “The language of the Bible was directly applied to the history of the Korean people. It was becoming a historical language and not just a ‘church’ language” (Kim 1981:108). The central events of the biblical faith, the Exodus and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ became transparent for the experiences of the Korean people under the yoke of Japanese colonial rule. Korean Christians did not identify Israel with the church, but with all Korean people, who hoped for the exodus out of the grip of the Japanese colonial power. Now they began to recognize their own suffering in the suffering of the Cross. “Thus the language of Jesus’ Cross was the language of the suffering of the Korean people” (Kim 1981:117). In traditional Korean culture there was no idea of innocent suffering being meaningful. The political commitment of the Korean Christians culminated in the March First Independence Movement. For Kim, this event marked a change of times. In a kind of “root experience” the people discovered their own role as the subject of history; “it supplies the motivation, scope, and direction for the minjung to create their own future” (Kim 1981:189).

Following his study of the early phase of Korean Protestantism, Kim has developed a “theological-political hermeneutics” that reconstructs a view on Korean history from below, from the perspective of the minjung by making use of messianic as well as apocalyptic categories. Methodically, Kim is

close to the new developments in the secular historical sciences such as social-historical research and oral history, but in his concept of the social biography of the minjung, pre-national and analytic moments melt together. To him, “At present, the only way to understand the social biography of the minjung is to approach it through dialogue and involvement with the minjung and through the minjung’s telling of their own story...Social biography encompasses the minjung’s subjective experiences as well as objective conditions and structures and societal power relations” (Kim 1984:70-1).

#### 4.3.3.2.2 The Messianic Politics against the Political Messianism

Within this framework of ideas, Kim has chosen the theological notion of the Messianic Kingdom to develop the minjung perspective on history. In the history of Korean people, Kim considers minjung’s political aspiration (Lee 42). Their experiences of oppression give rise to Messianism, the collective longing for an ideal leader to institute the Messianic Kingdom of justice, *koinonia* (fellowship), and *shalom* (peace). The Messiah will be one who identifies with and suffer with minjung (Kim 1981:188). Kim lists a number of messianic movements, such as; Maitreya Buddhism;<sup>232</sup> the tale of Hong, Kil-Dong who collected a gang to rescue the poor and to attack the rich; the *Donghak* religious movement; and the Christian messianic movements.<sup>233</sup> These were movements of minjung themselves which emerged from the historical confrontation between the ruled and the ruler. Here, history unfolds itself as a drama between the minjung as protagonists and those in power as antagonists. By telling their stories, the minjung undergoes a process of growing awareness that allows them to become cognizant of their broken identity. These messianic movements are therefore the core of history for which the suffering people, the poor, and the oppressed continue to struggle.

To the reproach that he is deifying the minjung, Kim replies by making a distinction between “political messianism” and “messianic politics” (Kim 1981:189).<sup>234</sup> The latter is contrasted with the former, whose origins are external to the minjung and their power is imposed upon them. The recent examples

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<sup>232</sup> The name Maitreya indicates the coming Buddha, or the future Buddha and it is taken from “the Sanskrit word *maitri*, meaning “kindness,” “love,” “benevolence,” “friendship,” “friendliness” or “goodwill.” Thus Maitreya has been referred to as the “Loving One” or the “Friendly One,” the embodiment of all-encompassing love” (Prophet 2006:32). Since he is considered by his disciples to be a messiah who would rescue the world, even today, “many Buddhists await Maitreya’s coming in much the same way that Christians await Jesus’ second coming” (ibid., 4).

<sup>233</sup> To Kim, the biblical logic of suffering led from the suffering Messiah to the coming of the Messianic Kingdom; thereby encouraging Christians to believe that they suffered on behalf of the whole Korean people. Christianity in this sense has developed the characteristics of a Messianic movement from its inception (Kim 1981:183-93).

<sup>234</sup> Kim also calls it respectively, “power messianism” vs “Jesus messianism”; “ruler messianism” vs “minjung messianism”; and “political messianism” vs “messianic servanthood” (Kim 1981:189).

of this are Japanese colonialism, North Korea communism, and modern technocracy. The result is an absolute dictatorship which oppresses the people. What Kim emphasizes is rather powerlessness of messianic politics. All forms of political, royal and power messianism must be judged and placed under the rule of Jesus. By placing all powers under the messianic servanthood of Jesus, minjung will receive again their “subject-hood” in history (Yewangoe 1987:134). Kim argues that in Jesus’ death and resurrection, this possibility is realized. Jesus on the one hand, emerges from the suffering minjung and identifies himself with the suffering minjung. His resurrection from death, on the other, gives the minjung the certainty of their own resurrection from the power of death, a resurrection which can be historically experienced and not just waited for until the end of time (Kim 1981:189). It is therefore a politics that will realize for the minjung their own subjectivity, or in other words, make them the masters of their own historical destiny (Kim 1981:193).

The relationship between the minjung and the Messiah in this sense is to be understood as a relationship between the minjung as subject and the Messiah as their function (Yewangoe 1987:134-35). Significant here is that the messianic function of the people is not found in an elite who sits on top of a political hierarchy, but rather in the Suffering Servant. In this figure of the Suffering Servant, the two qualities of a Messiah are fulfilled; one is his identification with the suffering people and the other is his function as servant to the aspiration of the people for liberation (Kim 1981:194). This characterizes the task of Christian community, to serve the suffering minjung, which has seriously to do with political matters. Its task to realize the messianic aspirations of the minjung includes not only a religious or spiritual but also political matter, which the messianic struggle is really carried out. This means the faith commitment to Jesus as the Messiah of the people must entail political service to the people (Yewangoe 1987:135).

Kim also pays attention to the subject-hood of the minjung in history from the eschatological view. For the minjung will participate not only in history but also in the *koinonia* (community) of the Messianic Kingdom. From it comes to the idea of “the sudden intervention of the messianic politics” from the future into the present historical reality (Kim 1987:67). Kim sees this sudden intervention as a sure sign of transforming the history of suffering into the history of hope. Precisely at this point, Kim’s subject-hood of the minjung seeks its self-redemption. It tries to detach itself from the Marxist view of history, while at the same time attaching itself to that of the Christian view (Kim 1987:67). The minjung are no longer regarded as an absolute entity, like the proletariat. But, in the expectation of the *parousia*, they are rather in between the “already” and the “not yet” (David Suh 1980:33-4, Kim 1981:186). Based on this view, the origins of the subject-hood of the minjung in history stand closer

to God than to minjung themselves. God is the Lord of history: He is sovereign over history. This kind of understanding enables Kim to define minjung as the participants in the Messiah Kingdom in their corporate subjectivity in God (Kim 1981:188).

Kim has continued to insist that it is this historical sovereignty of God, which constitutes the guarantee, the promise and the fulfilment of the realization of the subject-hood of the minjung (Kim 1987:73). For Kim, this God of history is not a God of transcendence, who does not like dirty His hands by touching the problems within history. He is not a God who overlooks the historical problems. He is not a God who takes part in history only in principle, but not in actuality. Rather God is the God of history, who is not alienated from history, He prevents the evil of suffering from becoming a permanent reality in history and thereby the minjung will not lose their bases as a historical entity (Kim 1987:73). Indeed, the fact that God is the Lord of history, still active in history, and sovereign over history, verifies the subject-hood of the minjung in history. The social biography of the minjung –which is the history of a people who is suffering as part of the whole historical experience –is caught up into the sovereignty of God by affirming God as a protagonist in this social biography (Kim 1987:74). The minjung live under the promise of the messianic redemption of their life circumstances; their subject-hood is an eschatological one. Kim, in this light, draws the outlines of a “symbolical-analogical interpretation” that makes the stories of the minjung and the biblical stories transparent and recognizable to each other (Kim 1981:109). From this vantage point, the decisive role that Kim ascribes to Korean Christianity rests on the identity re/constructing function that the promise of the Kingdom has for the minjung, not on the ability of the people to redeem themselves. God as the protagonist in history goes hand in hand with the minjung as the protagonist in history; the former gives the latter a special power to fight the existing evil forces in history. To be sure, the “people realize their corporate subjectivity in participating in the Messianic Kingdom” (Kim 1981:187).

#### **4.3.3.3 Conclusion: Kim, the Reformer as Being-in-the-Minjung in the Messianic Politics**

Kim has stressed the need to understand the collective spirit –the consciousness and the aspirations of the minjung through social biography. To him, the minjung reality is known only through its biography, its story, its hope and suffering. By discovering the social and political biography of minjung, Kim tries to redeem the minjung as the historical protagonists. Minjung is the subject of history and their social and political biography is the predicate. This notion of the subject-hood of minjung in history leads him to that of messianic aspirations of the minjung, namely, their corporate subjectivity in participating in the Messianic Kingdom.

Kim, then, concentrates on the category of messianism as conceptual tool to determine the relation between minjung and power. Messianism, in this sense, is a political process, or history in which the minjung join with the Messiah in realizing their messianic role. Thus is created by the conceptual distinction of power-messianism and Jesus messianism, or ruler-messianism and minjung-messianism. In his view, the messianic politics of Jesus is critical of the political messianism that is to force the people into servitude. The power messianism is the negation of the historical subjectivity of the minjung. It is a sort of realized subject-hood in the form of a totalitarian and absolutist character that makes the minjung a historical nothing. The messianic politics of Jesus, however, challenges to all forms of such political, royal and power messianism. It is rather concerned with saving and transforming the minjung, so that its subject-hood is to be realized under the rule of Jesus, the Messiah who is willing to come to be the servant of minjung. It leads the minjung to realize their subjectivity while suffering and struggling in the unfolding drama of history between the times of the already and the not-yet.

From the figure of Jesus as the Suffering Servant, Kim also finds the two messianic qualities: his identification with the *suffering* minjung and function as a *servant* to the aspiration of the minjung for liberation. The relation between Jesus and the minjung is therefore to be reformulated by him as a relation between the minjung as the subject and the Messiah as their function. This understanding enables Kim to take the minjung messianic politics of Jesus seriously. For the politics of Jesus and other messianic traditions in Korea, it does not make the minjung an object of messianic claim but the subject of their own historical destiny, struggling for justice, *koinonia* and *shalom* to come.

To be sure, Kim has identified the stories or social biographies of the minjung as resources for doing theology in Korea. In these stories the Messiah discloses himself. At the same time, Kim interprets the Christian text as a liberating language event. The confluence of these two tradition, as Suh, Nam-Dong would put it, empowers the minjung movement to develop messianic politics over against the political messianism of the powers that be (Küster 2010:119). When Kim comes to realize the relation between the minjung as the subject and the Messiah as their function, he, therefore, has no hesitation to make himself the reformer as being-in-the-minjung in the messianic politics of Jesus, the Suffering Servant.

#### **4.3.4 Hyun, Young-Hak (1921-2004)**

##### **4.3.4.1 Biographical Sketch**

Like a number of the first generation minjung theologians, Hyun, Young-Hak (1921-2004) has his root in the territory of today's North Korea. Hyun was born in *Hamheung*, the second largest city in North

Korea in 1921. His parents were firmly rooted in Christian faith and national spirit. His father, who died at an early age, was a Methodist minister working as a teacher of religious education at a girls' secondary school. While his mother was the so-called "modern woman" who tried to integrate Christian faith and western learning into the national liberation. His father wised that one of his sons would follow in his footsteps and the fifteen-year-old Hyun, as the first of six children, willingly accepted it. Then Hyun's career plan drastically shifted; he stopped preparing for the admission test to study medicine for his poor family. Instead Hyun enrolled at Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan, his father's *alma mater*. Hyun later recalled this as an act of obedience to Confucian family virtues (Küster 2010:87).

The young Hyun, soon, could not help finding himself in the middle of the discord with the times. Korean Christians were among the spokespersons of the resistance against Japanese colonial rule, but he was studying at a Japanese university. The keenness of the Japanese militarism on progress –the occupiers tried to suppress Korean culture and force their own Westernized culture on the colonized – was also rampant among the seminaries attached to Kwansei Gakuin. In his dismay, the further the best elements of Western culture are developed and spread universally, the sooner the Kingdom will come (Hyun 1985:29). The Korean churches he visited in Japan were situated in the ghettos of the *burakumin*,<sup>235</sup> which were the only places Koreans were allowed to live. Hyun saw the settlements of the poor and the workers which had been built under the aegis of the Christian socialist Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960). With other students, he even ventured into the red light districts a couple of times. This enabled Hyun to discover the glaring disparity between theology and reality. He began to critically look at the seminary teaching which was far removed from all these realities he was experiencing and observing (Hyun 1985:30). Having this in mind, Hyun successfully completed his studies in 1943. Subsequently he became assistant pastor in a Japanese parish at Obe (1943-44) (Küster 2010:88).

Yet, Hyun's ministerial career was abruptly interrupted. In the last death throes of Japanese colonialism, many Korean young people were forcefully sent to the front. Hyun had to return to his homeland (1944)

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<sup>235</sup> The *burakumin* (literally *buraku* means village people) –from the words *buraku*, meaning hamlet or small village, and *min*, meaning people (like 'min'-jung) –has been pejoratively applied to descendants of outcast communities from the feudal era society. The history of anti-*buraku* attitudes is long and deep-rooted. From the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), the leather and butchery workers were considered as polluted occupations and thus were excluded and disadvantaged by other Japanese who did not want to be in contact or 'polluted' by them. This discrimination had permanently and irretrievably infected not only those who carried out such tasks but also their descendants and associates in all future generations (McLaughlan 2006:1). In this sense, the *burakumin* are social outcast rather than an ethnic or racial group. The marginalization and prejudice are real and ongoing to them. Although "ethnically speaking purely Japanese," they are still victimized by the increase of derogatory and formal discrimination against in contemporary Japan (Küster 2001:163-77).

and work in the metal processing industry in *Na-Heung* in the South *Hamkyung* province to avoid such conscription. In August 15, 1945, all Koreans celebrated their own liberation and Hyun, like many others, went to the South. He accepted a post as English teacher in a secondary school and worked as an interpreter for an American lawyer. Relatively soon, the 25-year-old theologian was entrusted with his first teaching position at E-Hwa Women's University, recognizing his theological training in Japan. Through the mediation of a friend Hyun received a scholarship, which enabled him to go to the US for further theological studies (1947-56). On receiving a Bachelor's Degree from the Bible Seminary in New York –a very conservative institute in his opinion, Hyun changed to Union Theological Seminary, which laid the foundations of his theology (Küster 2010:88).

At that time Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) was very popular at Union Seminary and his work had also significantly influenced Hyun to move away from idealism and embrace realism. One of the main questions Hyun had on his mind was how to deal with Korean history and reality in the light of the biblical message. Korean Christianity gave him no satisfactory answer for it was fundamentalist and revivalist up to that time. He was told that the biblical message had very little to do with daily life, and mostly to do with life after death. It was, therefore, very exciting for him to hear Reinhold Niebuhr at Union and to read his books based on a philosophical perspective, known as Christian realism. Among them *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) and *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (1944), had especially caught his attention. This helped Hyun to be able to develop his ethical and political theology, which did have a lot to do with current reality (Küster 2010:88-9).

Many years later (1964), Hyun went back to Union. At that time Secular Theology was fashionable and Harvey Cox (1929- ), the professor at the Harvard Divinity School, was the leading theologian in this field. Above all, Cox's book, *Secular City* (1965), had a great impact on him. In it, Cox argued that secularization is itself a result of biblical faith and that secularization sets the agenda which gives meaning to the church's mission. Therefore, the church must learn to "speak in a secular fashion of God," as the liberating power operative in nature and history that is discerned through the model of the Exodus. Taking a cue from it, Hyun began to shape his theological methodology that had to start with the reality the people lived in. This even urged him to decide his theological point of departure not from the American secular city, but from the secular world of Korea, or better: the non-Christian world of Korea (Küster 2010:89). When he returned to Korea with this new knowledge, Hyun became a good messenger of Secularization Theology, like he did before with Reinhold Niebuhr's theology.

In the meantime, Korea became more modernized, Westernized or industrialized. Under this circumstance, the squeezed-out farmers and peasants began to move into the urban and the industrial areas as job seekers, especially young people in their teens. This galvanized Hyun to come in contact with Urban and Industrial Mission. As he kept on participating in this missionary work, Hyun was shocked by the inhuman working conditions and the degrading situation of the poor in the urban slums (Hyun 1985:31). The frontline missionaries in this area asked theologians to give them more theological foundations. At that time, the materials they used to educate the poor and the workers were translations from Western languages. This western terminology did not make much sense to the poor workers who had just come from the rural areas. That's why they asked him for help: "Why don't you theologians produce something in the Korean language that poor uprooted from rural areas can understand?" (Hyun 1985:32) Then, university students were performing traditional mask dances, because they were not allowed to criticize what was happening in Korea directly. These students, too, were asking theologians to provide them with theological rationale and moral support for what they were doing. This turned Hyun to decide to find out what these mask dances meant in the past and currently mean among students. That is how his first article, *A Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea* (1981), came into being as theology of the body language of the minjung. This made Hyun a willing witness to Minjung Theology.

#### **4.3.4.2 Theological Perspective**

Hyun, Young-Hak, once a Neibuhrian ethicist, now tries to reveal the characteristics of minjung in his studies of Korean minjung cultures, such as puppet show, *pansori* (one-man opera) and mask dance (Hyun 1997:71). This comes from his socio-economic interpretation of Korean history. By reading the history from the bottom up, from the perspective of the underdogs, Hyun comes to realize that the history is a story of minjung engaged in incessant revolts, rebellions, banditries, and revolutions (Hyun 1985:35). Even when not involved in fighting, the minjung are not a silent majority either. Through their paintings, songs, stories, *pansori*, and mask dances, they are both lamenting over their miserable lots and expressing their hopes and wishes. They are singing, narrating, and dancing the incongruities of reality. From the social biography of minjung, Hyun finds out the transcendence of minjung, who are critical and at the same time are able to celebrate their life (Hyun 1985:35). This urges him to reconstruct culture already richly embedded in the life and history of the minjung. In his methodology, Hyun especially explores the traditional Korean mask dance to grasp and experience the *han* of the minjung. Here, the Korean mask dance serves as a theology of body language not only to disclose the hidden *han* of the minjung, but also to transcend it with tears and laughter. From it comes to Hyun's distinctive understanding of the minjung as the clown and a Christology of fools (Hyun 1985:13-4).

#### 4.3.4.2.1 Minjung as the Clown

Hyun recognizes that the Korean mask dance has the religious origin of Shamanism. But later, in the late 18th century and the early 19th century with the development of village market economy, the performance of mask dances become an urban affair and thus a market-centred community affair. It is a community activity, mainly around the harvest time. Every actor and actress in the mask dance wears a mask. Hence, the people who act in the play are not recognizable. The mask dance in Korea is a popular form, consisting not only of dance, but also of music, songs and dialogue between the performers, the musicians and even the audience. The group is spontaneous and improvises. For Hyun, what characterizes the mask dance is its satirical nature. There are a lot of satires, vulgar jokes, and even sex-related dirty words. They are mostly used to criticize the oppressor of the minjung. The story normally concerns monks who misbehave or noble men who act stupidly. They are portrayed in an unfavourable light and are made fun of. Although the Korean mask dance consists of eleven scenes, Hyun introduces three of these scenes: “The Nojang” (The Old Buddhist Monk); “The Three Yangban (The Three Aristocrats); and “Miyal-Halmi” (The Old Woman Miyal) (Hyun 1981:47-50).

To Hyun, all three scenes expose religious and secular authorities to the realm of the ridiculous. The minjung make fun of them. First, in “The Nojang,” they ridicule an old Buddhist monk who represents higher religion, saturated with spiritual and metaphysical abstractions. This religion, separated from this world, is impotent to provide anything concrete for the life of the people and thus has no meaning for them. Second, in “The Three Yangban,” the world of the ruling classes is satirized. Here the minjung play jokes on the ruling aristocratic literati who pretend to be learned and respectable but do not understand what is happening. In reality, the aristocrats are, therefore, incompetent to solve the problems of the minjung. Lastly, the minjung enact the rottenness of their own lot in this world with tears and laughter through the narrative of “Miyal-Halmi.” This depicts the lot of an old woman, who separated from her husband for a long time due to war. One day her husband returns home, but when the old woman discovers her husband’s concubine, a serious quarrel starts, in which Miyal is beaten to death by her husband. Here the minjung’s own precarious situation can be identified with the tragic stories of Miyal, the old lady (Hyun 1981:47-50).

In presenting stories the above, Hyun speaks of theological implications of a critical transcendence. The minjung have a good laugh in this story which is close to the real world. The experience can be therapeutic; for “where there is humour (laughter), there is hope; where there is hope, there is humour (laughter)” (Eckardt 1992:411 quoted by Claassens 2015:670). With their laughing and making fun of

the people, the minjung creates a distance from their own situation. By looking at life symbolically and in a humorous manner, the ordinary people learn to step back and realize the relativity of their experience from an outsider's perspective. As they laugh at the so-called holy people and powerful people, they are pointing a critical finger at themselves. This is the moment they become critical of the existing order and social system. By satirizing the aristocrats they stand over against the ruling aristocrats. And by laughing at the impotent old monk, they stand over him, physically, morally and even spiritually. The minjung audience then transcends the status quo in their laughter and shouting (Hyun 1981:50-3).

Here "tragic laughter"<sup>236</sup> plays an important role in the formation of critical transcendence. By transforming the tragedy into comedy, it gives the minjung an alternative identity that stands over against that of the oppressors. Through it, the minjung transcends their own conditions (Hyun 1981:50-1). In this tragic laughter, the tensions of *han* can be released. Indeed, the satirical performance of the mask dance empowers the powerless. It guides the minjung to the point of transcendence where their *han* would be dissolved through laughing at themselves and at the absurdities of society. This is not a one-off event, the minjung are conscientised. They recognize the causes of their suffering and reconstruct their identity over against them. Therefore, in and through the mask dance, the minjung, the ordinary folks, experience and express a critical transcendence over this oppressive world and laugh at this absurdity. Their *han*, then, breaks from in liberating "tragic laughter" as a form of rebellion against the traumatic reality (Ostrower 2015:184 quoted by Claassens 2015:671).

In Hyun's thought, the minjung can laugh not only at oppressors but also at themselves too. This offers a means of overcoming the danger of self-righteousness (Hyun 1985:13). Even when the minjung engages in collective action for transformation, this sense of critical transcendence makes them less self-righteous. Self-transcendence, rather than self-righteousness, makes it possible for the minjung insert a wedge (grace) into the vicious circle of the ruled, so that they may not become the same kind of oppressive rulers who are seeking revenge. This, then, serves the function of opening up the possibility of reconciliation. They seem to be forgiving even their worst enemies, and reconciling with them. In the celebration of the mask dance, the minjung are already enjoying the experience of the eschatological reality, the Kingdom of God. They seem to be confident that the day will come when

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<sup>236</sup> Although this term "tragic laughter" is originally from Jacqueline Bussie, who defines it as laughter that emerges in a context of trauma, which, as she argues, "interrupts the system and state of oppression, and creatively attests to hope, resistance, and protest in the face of the shattering of language and traditional frameworks of thought and belief (2007:4), the researcher is met this notion from J. Claassens, the Old Testament professor of Stellenbosch University, who presents an insightful research in this regard through her article "Rethinking Humour in the Book of Jonah: Tragic Laughter as Resistance in the Context of Trauma" (Claassens 2015:655-73).

the Kingdom will be realized in full. They do not have to hurry, they can wait, laughing and joking even about themselves and their own ridiculousness (Hyun 1985:13).

As such, in the mask dance, Hyun sees the tears on minjung's face and hears their laughter at the same time. He then depicts another way of viewing minjung; both as the tragic hero of revolution and the clownish comic figure (Hyun 1985:14). To him, the minjung are revolutionaries, but no simple revolutionaries. If they are, after repeatedly getting beaten up, imprisoned, and killed, they would soon fall into despair and give up. Yet, they do not give up. In the process of repeated beating, the minjung rather have developed wisdom to survive in the most adverse conditions with human dignity. They have developed a capacity to laugh and to play clown, a way for the victim to become the victor (Hyun 1985:12-3).

#### 4.3.4.2.2 Christology of Fools

Viewing the Korean mask dance as a process for the resolution of minjung's *han*, Hyun distinguishes three faces of *han*: the first face is the priestly face as the passive aspect, akin to *jung-han*, the enduring of the painful situation; the second face is the prophetic face as the active aspect, akin to *won-han*, leading to anger, revenge, revolution and justice; and the third face is the Servant-King's face, holding the first two faces together with tragic laughter (Hyun 1985:354-59). Both the priestly and the prophetic face of *han* are significant, but it is the third face of *han* expressed in the mask dance which truly reflects Hyun's Christological interpretation. The mask dance provides the minjung to participate in cathartic, critical transcendence of shared suffering through the third face of *han*. This is the fool's Christology, humour, satire and laughter of the Servant-King's face (Hyun 1985:359).

In the mask dance, Hyun pays special attention to the figure of *Maltugi*, who is originally the servant of the three *yangban* (the gentry) brothers. The *yangban* is supposed to be the master of *Maltugi*, but when he appears with them on the stage, everything is upside-down. In this sport *Maltugi*, the supposedly ignorant servant, proves to be far more able and learned than the *yangban*, the ruling elite. *Maltugi* indeed acts like the grand puppet-master who pulls the strings of the *yangban* to ridicule their incompetence and ignorance. By transforming himself from a puppet to the puppet-master, this comic hero then presents a prophetic alternative to the status quo that is oppressive to and alienating from the reality of the minjung. This shows the power of paradox; *Maltugi*, the servant of the Aristocrat, begins to release his *han* at the hands of the *yangban*, the master of *Maltugi*, through crude language and satirical humour as an idiom of protest. It is actually this powerless *Maltugi* who not only understands the reality but also possess the ability to change and improve it (Suh 1981:175). *Maltugi*, in his struggle

to abolish the restrictions of his social status, realizes that he can change his own destiny. Whereas the *yangban* is captured by the world of fantasy and imagination in its own. *Maltugi* therefore becomes a symbol of the *minjung*, who realize through him their own ability to release themselves, not by any agent, but by using their own resources (Suh 1981:75).

This moment the *minjung* becomes critical of the existing order and social system. The *minjung* audience, then, becomes one with *Maltugi* and takes his side to laugh at the false dignity of their ruling masters. They let out their *han*, their frustration, and their desire for resistance to the world. Their deep-seated *han* is indeed coming out in the open. As such, the *minjung* joins with *Maltugi* in his struggle to achieve freedom; they are released from suffering and oppression. Therefore, *Maltugi*'s shout for the fight against injustice is also the *minjung*'s shout; the victory which *Maltugi* achieved is also their victory. This unbounded interaction between *Maltugi* and *minjung* reveals then that the liberation of *minjung* is at hand (Suh 1985:18-22). Here, *Maltugi* is no longer a subservient slave boy; he is an independent fighter, ready to resist and to cut off the vicious circle of oppression for and with the *minjung* (Suh 1991:171-72).

This affinity between the two –*Maltugi* and *Minjung*, culminates in a common dance, in which the *minjung* audience joins the performers as a feast of fools. From it emerges Hyun's Christology of Fools. *Maltugi* in this way becomes a Christ-like figure. Hyun points out that behind the mask dance, the *minjung* grasp *Maltugi* as Christ. *Maltugi*, like Jesus, dances the pain of the suffering *minjung*. Jesus is not just the mask of God, but the mask dance of God. Jesus dances God's love, expressed in pain, to meet the *minjung* in despair (Orevillo-Montenegro 2006:18). This dance reaches its climax to the cross where Jesus and the *minjung* become one in suffering, humiliation, rejection, and death. Jesus becomes the story of the *minjung* who grasps Christ and Christ behind the mask dance grasps the *minjung*, the *han*-ridden "ghost"<sup>237</sup> of Jesus (Hyun 1985:7).

At this point, *Maltugi* in the mask dance is dangerous because he criticizes the status quo and conscientises the *minjung*, just Jesus did. But, *Maltugi* is powerless and almost fool to some serious people, like the political Zealots, who lost the sense of humour and took themselves and their revolutionary tasks too seriously.

If revolution is humourless, and the *minjung* laugh at revolutionary seriousness, the revolutionaries would be the ones who might at the end take away laughter and humour from *minjung* for whom the revolutionaries claim to work. The humourless Zealots departed from Jesus. And the humourless Romans took Jesus' humour by giving

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<sup>237</sup> Hyun has intentionally used the term "ghost," for "Spirit" is too abstract and metaphysical, while "image" too aesthetic and dispassionate. To Hyun, "ghost" is more material and concrete in expressing the *han* (Hyun 1985:7).

him the royal robes and by forcing down the thorny crown on his head, even to the point of putting up the inscription on the cross: “King of the Jews.” Jesus was, indeed, a big joke. But it was a joke of critical transcendence, a serious joke and a dangerous one, dangerous enough to be killed on the cross (Hyun 1985:28-40)

In this sense, *Maltugi* in the mask dance portrays as laughing and dancing Jesus, like the *Dokaebi*,<sup>238</sup> a Korean goblin (Hyun 1985:9). He is laughing and dancing together with the *minjung* who can laugh heartily, enjoying and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus the Christ as well as his crucifixion. Shedding blood together on the cross is immediately followed by smiling and laughing together in the mask dance. Both –*Maltugi* and Jesus –go in to conscientise the *minjung*, but come out having been conscientised by them. Both go in for the purpose of bringing them back to human community, but comes out having been accepted into their *koinonia*. Both then look like fools and begin to enjoy the status of being fools with the *minjung* (Hyun 1985:2-40).

This emerging Christology of fools has many layers. It is for Hyun both a promise of salvation and a call to imitation of Christ. Alluding to its roots in Paul’s theology (1 Cor. 1:23), Hyun formulates a Christology of fools. On the one hand, by following the way of the cross Jesus Christ made himself appear foolish to the world. Through the condescension of Jesus Christ, the foolish and the weak, the *minjung* have been granted the presence of God in their midst (Küster 2010:92). It provides them hope in the future in spite of the seemingly hopeless situation. It is therefore a promise. The promise, however, does not come from the future, but oozes out of historical engagement and happenings. On the other hand, it enables the *minjung* to make up their minds anew. They have to experience their imitation of the suffering of Christ bodily. For this promise remains wishful thinking, until they experience sweat, tears, and laughter. To Hyun, it is the praxis that makes the theological idea of promise. Here the praxis means not only the prophetic sweating but also the priestly shedding tears and the royal laughter. Until that last day comes the *minjung* would try their best to keep on joyfully sweating, shedding tears, and laughing together. Therefore, whoever would be a co-worker in the *Missio Dei*, has to become a fool for Christ’s sake (Hyun 1985:2-40). In short, Hyun believes that theology needs to make them mingling with other bodies; it makes them fool, a fool for Christ in a state of critical transcendence, by laughing at the miserable circumstances of their own life.

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<sup>238</sup> “‘Dokaebi’ is another supernatural being like the ghost. But unlike the ghost who resembles real people, ‘Dokaebi’ has his own features. He is tall, has horns on top of his head, and the whole body is painted red. Usually he plays havoc on people, mostly jokes, in the dark of night. By the time you discover that you have been cheated and misled during the confusion of the night, the ‘Dokaebi’ is already gone, but you can hear his chuckles and laughter” (Hyun 1985:9).

#### 4.3.4.3 Conclusion: Hyun, the Reformer as Being-in-the-Minjung in the Mask Dance

Hyun actually appropriates the term “transcendence,” to gain back its historical dimensions.<sup>239</sup> In the liberating acts of God in history, the transcendent is present in the immanent. When the minjung transcends their experiences, and face their own situation, the possibility to discern traces of God’s liberative action opens up to them. He is primarily concerned about the history of God with the people. Hyun’s dictum that “God was not carried piggy-back to Korea by the first missionary” (Hyun 1981:54), is, therefore, the historio-theological program of Minjung Theology in a nutshell. God is a liberating God, who chooses the side of the minjung and thus has worked in and through history with a special concern for the underdogs, namely, the minjung” (Hyun 1981:53).

Hyun’s major contribution comes on a theological look at the mask dance in Korea as a process for the resolution of minjung’s *han*. He focuses on the ability of the minjung for critical transcendence and analyses three aspects of this transcendence. First, the experience of critical transcendence gives the minjung the energy to live in the fallen world with humour and without falling into despair. The minjung is sure that the existing world is fallen and rotten that they are standing over, against and beyond it. Because there seems to be no exit from it, they bear *han* in their minds. But they must survive. They bear the hardship of the world with tragic laughter. In this tragic laughter minjung develops a capacity to play clown. Second, the traumatic experience provides the minjung with the courage to fight for change and freedom not only as the revolutionary, but as the clown. It is the wisdom of the minjung, a way for the victim to become the victor. Third, the experience of critical transcendence prevents them from self-righteousness. Therefore, the minjung can fight against the oppressors as well as against themselves. They can be free from self-righteousness so that they can change the existing world without seeking for revenge. This is the fool’s Christology, based on tragic laughter of the Servant-King’s face. This is also a revelation of the true humanity, the power, the wisdom and the liberty of the Suffering Servant behind the masks of the powerless, foolish and ugly faces of the minjung.

All in all, Hyun goes in the minjung with prophetic intentions, though with fearful and trembling hearts, but comes out having been comforted and warmed by the priestly role of the minjung through tears, satire and laughter. It is a conversion experience; it is an experience of critical transcendence of the minjung to laugh not only at the oppressors but also at themselves. Hyun here sees the third face of the

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<sup>239</sup> Here Hyun understands “transcendence” as not movement into some metaphysical world out there, or into “Spirit,” but as something deeply rooted in the historical experience of the human. Therefore, to Hyun, the idea of transcendence as a dichotomy between metaphysical and physical categories had to be re-examined (Hyun 1981:54).

minjung as both the revolutionary and the clown. In the process of being converted by the minjung, Hyun willingly acts like a fool and even begin to enjoy the status of being a fool. That is why he begins to laugh as the reformer as being-in-the-minjung in the mask dance, the Servant-King's face, who is able to humanize the revolution with tragic laughter.

## 4.4 CONCLUSION

### 4.4.1 Korean Minjung Theology as Being-in-the Dialectic of Messianic Practice and Prophetic Practice

Korean Minjung Theology defines its main task to bring *dan* into the minjung's *han*. This goal has dealt creatively by four outstanding minjung theologians with different methodologies. That is, Suh, Nam-Dong uses the Spirit of *Missio-Dei*, Ahn, Byung-Mu, socio-biblical analysis of the *ochlos* (the outcast), Kim, Yong-Bok, the Messianic Politics, and Hyun, Young-Hak, the Korean mask dance.

First, Suh, Nam-Dong (1918-1984), as an initiator of the Minjung Theology, has argued that Korean Minjung Theology is to be a people's theology not only to solve *han* of the minjung but also to transform it for constructing God's Kingdom here and now. In his view, Jesus and minjung are identical as a suffering people of *han* (Suh 1981:160) and thereby the mission of Minjung Theology is two-fold. One is to perform *han* as the priest of *han*, and the other is to perform *dan* (releasing *han*) as the prophet of *dan* (Suh 1982, Moon 1998:85). Suh perceives in particular that *han* stories are deeply embedded in the social biographies of the minjung. It is, thus, to be interpreted theologically as the story of Holy Spirit, who resides in minjung's *han* and restores them from their suffering through the transformation of the present situation, which is, the praxis of *dan* (Kim 1976:41, Suh 1986:190). For him, the practice of *dan* is closely related to the concept of *Missio Dei* as the work of the Holy Spirit with, through and in the minjung (Suh 1983:355). From it, Suh takes the Spirit of *Missio Dei* as his important theological reference (Suh 1983:58).

Second, it is Ahn, Byung-Mu (1922-1996), who has analysed the Bible from the socio-economic perspective in connection with the resolution of the minjung's *han*. Ahn, as a developer of Minjung Theology, interprets the Bible as an account of minjung's experience and history. In his sociological interpretation of the Gospel of Mark, Ahn especially pays close attention to the characteristics of *ochlos* and the attitude of Jesus toward them (Ahn 1981). For Ahn, Mark's intentional distinction of *ochlos* (the social outcasts) from *laos* (the crowd) has a significant theological implication. The followers of Jesus were the poor, the oppressed and the sick, those who were opposed to the ruling classes, and Jesus' messages were directly targeted at *ochlos*, that is, the suffering minjung of his time (Ahn

1981:140). By providing additional biblical bases with sociological hermeneutics, Ahn advocates minjung's liberation from *han* as the main theme of Minjung Theology (Ahn 1983:113).

Third, Kim, Yong-Bok (1938- ), the editor of *Minjung Theology*, has sought to unpack the minjung's *han* through the messianic role of the minjung. Kim sees Korean history as messianic movements of minjung (Kim 1981:77-118). Despite their historical reality as the powerless, Korean minjung, according to Kim, had played a messianic role to liberate them from the presently gloomy structure of oppressive power. To him, the socio-political biography of minjung is a keyhole of identifying the minjung with Messiah. Kim thus reads the story of Jesus in the story of "messianic politics" which stirs the hopes and imagination for the liberation of the minjung (Kim 1984:193). In this light it is clear for Kim that "minjung, as the eternal reality in history, are to become the people of the Messianic Kingdom" here and now (Kim 1984:109).

Fourth, Hyun, Young-Hak (1921-2004) has explored the traditional Korean mask dance (*Tal Chum*) from *han* of the minjung. Hyun explains that the mask dance, as the people's festival, often carries a biting social satire on the upper class. In the dance, minjung expresses their *han* behind masks by lampooning the unjust rulers (Hyun 1982:351). In this way, minjung recognizes the absurdity of their present situation and experiences the critical transcendence of the injustice (Park 1985:6). For Hyun, the main goal of mask dance is to give minjung the wisdom and power to survive. In this process of social catharsis, the minjung are able to create a new hope to fight for change and freedom (Hyun 1982:52). Through the performance of non-violent dance, the suffering minjung's *han* transforms into a revolutionary consciousness, which criticizes the evil and oppressed structure in current society.

Although these minjung theologians have used different methodologies, they are, however, mutually united in presenting minjung as the real and historical subject who can and should play the messianic practice for their own salvation. From it derives the *avatar*-hood of minjung theologians. This "messianic practice" of minjung provokes them to carry out the task of their *avatar*-hood that involves doing the "prophetic praxis" designed to confront, reform, and transform the current injustice.<sup>240</sup> It, in other words, leads the minjung theologians to a prophetic practice that is aimed at bringing about the total transformation of society. In this light, the messianic practice of minjung presents the minjung

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<sup>240</sup> The term "messianic practice" and "prophetic practice" and their correlation are hinted from the works of Jon Sobrino, a Jesuit Catholic priest and theologian. In an effort to build a Latin American "saving history" Christology, starting with the historical reality of Jesus, Sobrino introduces Jesus' "messianic practice" and "prophetic practice" as a unified whole which alters the historical reality of first-century Israel (1993).

theologians with a critical invitation to their prophetic practice. More figuratively, the minjung theologians are called to “take the crucified people, or suffering minjung, down from the cross” (Sobrino 1993:48) and when they heed it, take responsibility for it, and carry it through a prophetic practice, the minjung theologians are caught up in the *avatar*-hood, the transformative participation in the minjung’s messianic practice. Thus is created by dynamics of Korean Minjung Theology as being-in-the dialectic of messianic practice by the minjung and prophetic practice by the minjung theologians.

#### 4.4.2 Korean Minjung Theology as Being-in-the-Double-Mirror Reading

Decisive is that the dialectic of messianic-prophetic practice in Korean Minjung Theology opens a new path for a creative synthesis between the radical Reformers and the Korean minjung Theologians. It draws so-called the double-mirror reading, namely, a synchronic reading of the radical Reformers of the sixteenth-century from the minjung’s perspective. This first recalls the *avatar*-hood of four radical Reformers –Thomas Müntzer, Hans Hut, Melchior Hoffman, and John Bockelson –who started with commiseration to the common men. This is the first mirror-reading. Then it moves to the second mirror reading; from the *avatar*-hood of the radical Reformers to that of the Korean minjung theologians whose course of action called for is to “take the crucified [minjung] down from the cross” through their prophetic practice. From it the double-mirror reading comes into being. By infusing the viewpoints of four selected minjung theologians –Suh, Nam-Dong’ Spirit of *Missio-Dei*, Ahn, Byung-Mu’s socio-biblical analysis of *ochlos*, Kim, Young-Bok’s Messianic Politics, and Hyun, Young-Hak’s Korean mask dance –with those of radical Reformers, it begins to construct the critical and creative synthesis, that is, the reinterpretation of the radical Reformers, seen from Korean Minjung Theology in terms of one way of being in the *avatar*-hood for the common men, namely, the minjung. In this dynamics, the double-mirror reading –a reading from diachronic-synchronic way –becomes a point of departure to shape and reshape a new portrait of radical Reformers. In this way, each of them is not only being refined and elaborated by the Korean minjung theologians, but also being renewed and transformed by the *avatar*-hood of the common men, or the crucified minjung, as follows;

- (1) Thomas Müntzer seen from Suh, Nam-Dong weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the retributive minjung in the Spirit.
- (2) Hans Hut seen from Ahn, Byung-Mu weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the restorative minjung in the *ochlos*.
- (3) Melchior Hoffman seen from Kim, Yong-Bock weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the revelatory minjung in the Messianic Politics.
- (4) John Bockelson seen from Hyun, Young-Hak weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the rhetorical minjung in the mask dance.

At issue here is that this way of reading alerts one to the new portrait of Münster Anabaptism as the place of hybridity, depending on its dynamics of the *avatar*-hood of the radical Reformers and the *guru*-ship of the common men, or of the prophetic practice of the radical Reformers and the messianic practice of the common men, which will be further dealt with in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

# RE-READING THE ANABAPTIST KINGDOM OF MÜNSTER FROM KOREAN MINJUNG THEOLOGY

### 5.1 ANOTHER LOOK ON THE ANABAPTIST KINGDOM OF MÜNSTER

One of the most enigmatic events of the sixteenth-century Reformation is the Anabaptist rule in the city of Münster in 1534-35.<sup>241</sup> Not surprisingly, most scholarly accounts of Anabaptist Münster had shared a hostile attitude toward “a variety of Anabaptists who proceeded to institute polygamy and a form of collective ownership of property and to elect a Dutch tailor as their king” (Mackay 2007:1).

The whole crisis is often constructed as an extreme outworking of some latent tendencies within Reformation thought. Luther’s widespread influence had greatly diminished the role of the priest as a mediator between the layman and God, thereby increasing the importance of the Bible and personal conscience in directing the layman’s spiritual journey. The outcome of this change was that many laymen gave birth to radical interpretations of scripture –interpretations which often carried dangerous social and political implications. The prophetic claims of the two principal prophets at Münster, [John Matthjisson and John Bockelson], support this view. Both men drew an enormous amount of prophetic authority from scripture and wielded it with disastrous social and political consequences (Howard 1993:48).

While this unfriendly memory of Anabaptist takeover became an attractive subject for many scholars and historians, it turns out that some are not effective and even has contributed greatly to the “odious opprobrium” against Anabaptist rule in Münster (Bender 1944:8) “because of their narrow starting points or misjudgments of the sources” (Reventlow 2010:176). Indeed, this polemical historiography of Anabaptism has evoked the enduring dark image of Münster and reflected prevailing anti-Anabaptist histories of the contemporary scholarship (Driedger 2016:3). Under the reproduction of polemical frameworks, Anabaptist rule in Münster has become the paramount example of historical chain of riots and heresies (Haude 2000:1).

Anabaptists, together with the Turks, were the great enemies of the sixteenth-century Holy Roman Empire, and “Münster” displayed the worst example of this heretical movement yet. As representations of them in the daily press and in learned writings reveal, the Anabaptists conjured up images of the criminal and the vagabond, the foreigner and the rebel, the devil’s handmaiden and the blasphemer, the insurrectionist and the barbarian. A polyphony of fears, some more powerful than others, converged in the Anabaptist (Haude 2000:20)

Yet, there are a few challenges to this dominant view. Since the pioneering works of C. A. Cornelius (1819-1903), some scholars began to unfurl their critical views about deeply contested Anabaptist reign of Münster (Driedger 2016:15). They strove to reconstruct the Münster event through careful

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<sup>241</sup> Admittedly, there are two major contemporary sources on the Anabaptist Kingdom: a personal account written by the shoemaker Heinrich Gresbeck, who betrayed the city to the besieging troops, and the historical work of the Münster schoolmaster Herman von Kerssenbroch. While the former’s depiction of events was written nearly forty years after the fact, the latter recorded his observation a decade after the fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom. Both primary sources have been translated into English, under the title of *False Prophets and Preachers: Henry Gresbeck's Account of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster* (2016) and *Narrative of the Anabaptist Madness: The Overthrow of Münster, the Famous Metropolis of Westphalia* (2007) respectively.

and critical consideration of sources and this has manifested a more sympathetic view to Münster's Anabaptists accused of heresy and rebellion (Kautsky 1897:249, Kirchoff 1962:77-170, Stupperich 1958:12). In this light, the relationship between the radical and the peaceful Anabaptists has emerged as a controversial subject (Kirchoff 1970:357-70). This is not new trend. Historically the opponents of Anabaptists have tended to lump all Anabaptists as the fanatical and revolutionary, while the Mennonite writers seem to differentiate between the revolutionary enthusiasts and more peaceful and biblical Anabaptists (Klötzer 2007:217-56). Kautzky and others, for example, have claimed that Anabaptism was a revolutionary movement and not a religious reformation (Kautsky 1897). E. B. Bax, following their footsteps, concludes the Anabaptists as "the forerunners of Modern Socialism" (Bax 1903), a kind of "medieval communism" (Bender 1957:36). W. J. Kühler relegates the Münsterite development as a deviation from the Anabaptist Biblical line, while elevating Menno Simons and his followers true Anabaptists (Kühler 1932). Vos, following with Kautzky, identifies the Anabaptist movement as the revolutionary one, despite the debacle of Münster turned it into a peaceful movement (Vos 1920:311-90). To the eyes of Henry Dosker, Presbyterian historian, the Anabaptists were the sixteenth-century Bolsheviks (Dosker, 1921:65). More recently, A. F. Mellink aligns himself to the Kautzky-Marxian line, considering the whole problem as an economic struggle of the desperate masses, who used a religious vocabulary to state their needs (Mellink 1953 quoted by McLaughlin 2008:105). Anabaptists were also described as the "left wing of the Reformation" (Bainton 1941:124-34, Armitage 1887:399). Historian Andrew Miller, in his conclusion, defines Anabaptists as the "scandalous fanatics," the incarnation of the ancient Gnostics (Miller 1994:189-190).

Alongside this line of interpretation, such remarkable course of the Reformation in the Westphalian metropole has been variously interpreted such as; a revolution of the common man (Brendler 1966); an anticipation urban insurrection (Schilling 1975:193-238); a sectarian revolution (Rammstedt 1966); a reign of terror (Wolgast 1976:179-201); a millenarian psychodrama (Herwig 1979:173-84); an episode in collective religious fanaticism (Stupperich 1965); and the final aftershock of the "Early Bourgeois Revolution" (Laube 1974:345-52).<sup>242</sup> But, K. H. Kirchoff's re-examination of the social structure of the Münsterite Anabaptism and of their access to power has brought a new dimension to the interpretation of Anabaptist rule in Münster. In it, the dominant portrait of Münster Anabaptism as the "Protestantism of the poor" alone pales into insignificance (Kirchoff 1970:357-70). His interpretation is based on the quantitative studies (Stayer 1986:288). In his studies, Anabaptism in the Low Countries was a broad movement of all classes and estates, including the upper hand and the

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<sup>242</sup> For more details, see Hsia (1988:52).

Münsterites also were a complex group that included well-to-do people (Kirchhoff 1973:87).<sup>243</sup> Implicit in it is that Anabaptist rule in Münster cannot be seen as a proletarian movement which characterizes Münster's Anabaptists as the lower echelon of society (Kirchhoff 1970:357-70). This means, in Münster, social revolutionary motives are something, but not everything. It rather undo the conventional interpretations by demonstrating that Anabaptists in Münster had enjoyed relative prosperity and their leadership was linked with the traditional elite group (Kirchhoff 1970:357-70). To be more specific, Anabaptist takeover of the city of Münster was a sort of joint event between the radical Melchiorite immigrants, who were particularly run by two Johns: Matthjisson and Bockelson,<sup>244</sup> and the group of native civic reformers, who also were primarily led by two Bernhards: Rothmann and Knipperdolling (Bakker 1986:105).

Also, in his study, Anabaptist violence at Münster is to be understood in the course of external events in and around Münster. The rising influence of Anabaptism in Münster alarmed the prince-bishop, Franz von Waldeck (ruled 1532-1553) and gave him a reason to increase pressure on the city as the territorial ruler (Reventlow 2010:179). It is little wonder that a mandate of prince-bishop and the military siege had intensified the situation. But it also united all inhabitants of the city together (Reventlow 2010:179). War between Anabaptist Münster and the prince-bishop was then an inevitable corollary (Driedger 2013:4). The violence of Münster in this light was a sort of defensive activity against the threats of the aggressive siege army (Kirchhoff 1962:77-170, 1970:360, Kautsky 1897:249). Here, it seems reasonable to assume that "Anabaptism was the religious expression of urban independence and Anabaptist rule in Münster was the rule in the emergency conditions of a defensive war" (Driedger 2013:4).<sup>245</sup>

From it, the two new main characters of Anabaptist Münster come into being, that is, the immigrant Melchiorites, the radicals, and the native civic reformers, the reactionaries. This alerts one to the new portrait of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as the critical and creative tension between the traditional civic government and the informal prophetic leadership; between the old native noble elites and the new immigrant religious dissenters (Hsia 1988:55). Thus is created by the idea of co-existence between radical and peaceful Anabaptists in Münster. Here both parties are closely intertwined not as

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<sup>243</sup> Some, however, have criticized Kirchhoff's interpretation, questioning that his studies rest on slim documentary basis, covering only 5% of the populace and thus do not represent the general public in Münster (Oltmer and Schindling 1990:481).

<sup>244</sup> In Münster roughly half the adult males (800 of about 1600) and one-third the adult females (1600 of about 4800) were immigrant Melchiorites (Kirchhoff 1973:24 quoted by Bakker 1986:111).

<sup>245</sup> For this line of interpretation, see also (Kirchhoff 1989:277-422 quoted by Klötzer 2007:219).

contradictory but as complementary (Waite 1992:459). Yet, one caveat in such a Copernican Revolution in the interpretation of Münster is the silence of the common people in Münster. This new trend of interpretations (Kirchhoff), in one sense, helps explaining that Anabaptist rule in Münster was carried by the critical and creative mixture of the two parties: the Prophet-Reformer. But, in other sense, it fails to discover the common people in Münster who had played a decisive role not only in sustaining the Prophet-Reformer in harmony, but also in creating new check and balance between the two. This conversely demands that the particular attention should be made to the representatives of both parties, namely, John Matthjisson, the radical and Bernhard Rothmann the reactionary. But it also includes the necessity of reinterpreting them from the perspective of and relationship with the common people in Münster for more a balanced and proper understanding.

## 5.2 ANABAPTIST KINGDOM OF MÜNSTER AS A PLACE OF HYBRIDITY

The development of Reformation in Münster was not a new trend. In its structure, the Evangelical movement in Münster was following the footsteps of many other German cities (Moeller 1982).<sup>246</sup>

A popular preacher echoed Luther's message and called for reform, attacking monasticism and clerical abuses; citizens rallied to his cause, adding their resentment of the church's economic competition to the call for moral regeneration; spontaneous sacramental and liturgical innovations were tolerated by the magistrates, who disagreed regarding their response; the reform movement became part of the struggle between burghers and magistrates, which often took the form of opposition between the guilds and the city council, and a final, usually bloodless constitutional reform incorporated many of the demands of the Evangelicals, while averting a social revolution; cloisters were closed, clerics took civic oaths, ecclesiastical properties were secularized, and reforms institutionalized in a new Evangelical church ordinance; and finally the magistrates came out with more authority, a few ruling families lost power but the social order was preserved and protected (Hsia 1988:53).

Before turning Anabaptism, the events in Münster, from 1531 to the spring of 1533, were common in nature with this model of urban reformation (Moeller 1972:39-115). Bernhard Rothmann, Münster's leading Protestant preacher, began to appeal to the city council "to take up the cause of religious reform," while at the same time, criticizing clerical abuses of the prince-bishop (Hsia 1988:53). As the struggles between Catholics and Protestants and between the prince-bishop and the city escalated, "the Evangelical movement turned into a popular political movement" (Hsia 1988:53). The close affinity between Rothmann and the guilds pressured the city council not only to protect Rothmann against the

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<sup>246</sup> Bernd Moeller, in his pioneering work, has showed the important point of departure for the Reformation in the cities. According to his investigations, the cities, indeed, acted as harbinger of the Reformation and the Reformation was therefore undertaken by the city council (1972:39-115). From it came to the notion that there was neither an evangelical movement outside of, or opposed to, the council. Moeller added then that there would have been no chance of success for an evangelical popular movement in the face of a hostile council. Thus, characteristic was mostly followed by its slow and gradual reform; all fanatic stirrings or attempts to draw socio revolutionary consequences from the gospel were rejected by the council with the support of the preachers (Seebass 1972:24-30). Yet, it is to be remembered that in actual fact, there was in the city alternative group, inclined to resistance, that is, the lower level of the population who were invoking Christian freedom and thus a radical Reformation as a new spearhead. The city of Münster was not an exception in this regard.

Catholic prince-bishop, but also to declare Münster an evangelical city (Bakker 1986:106-8). Backed by the guilds and the Rothmann's Reformation party, civic election in February 1533 "returned a solidly Evangelical city council, with the guild elite replacing the Catholic patriciate, who had evacuated the city and an Evangelical ordinance was promulgated in April to consolidate the gains of the Reformation" (Hsia 1988:53). Thus was created by the establishment of the Protestant reform in Münster carried by the cooperation between the city council (magistrates) and Rothmann (and his followers) in the guilds (Bakker 1986:106-7).

Since Rothmann's following reforming activity smacked of Zwinglianism, which finds the real religious authority not in magisterial monopoly but in the congregational autonomy as a whole (Hsia 1988:54), it soon caused to alert Lutheran magistrates, who were so allergic to turning Swiss (Hillerbrand 1969:39-46). Rothmann's radical sacramental position, having its root in Wassenbergers, even added fuel to their complaints (Bakker 1986:109). This, as a result, damaged the alliance of reformers and magistrates; Rothmann and the civic government (Bakker 1986:106-7). The split became public in the summer of 1533 when Rothmann and his followers aligned themselves with the teachings of radical preachers (Anabaptists) and confronted Lutheran ministers (Hsia 1988:54). While the city council was in a dispute, the common men, represented by the guilds, pledged support for Rothmann and opposed the magistrates who attempted to exile him (Hsia 1988:54). This context of "intra-evangelical party struggle" urged Rothmann to choose. Eventually his allegiance to the guilds moved him closer to the common men than to the council (Bakker 1986:109). It was just a few months later when Rothman accepted baptism. In January 1534, he and his followers had themselves baptized (Bakker 1986:109). Rothmann saw such developments as part of the larger picture of religion and politics in Münster's reformation (Bakker 1986:109-10). Encouraged by Rothmann's turning Münster, two Dutch Prophets, John Matthijsson and John Bockelson, boldly declared that the end of the world was at hand and all Christian believers should seek refuge in Münster as the New Jerusalem (Stayer 1995:268-69). Thousands of future Dutch Anabaptists responded by flocking to Münster despite massive execution was made by the magistrates (Jensma 1979 quoted by Styaer 1995:269). The civic election of February 1534 affirmed that Münster finally became Anabaptist (Hsia 1988:54).

Yet this Anabaptist turn in Münster's reformation made the city vulnerable. Since the Imperial law defined Anabaptism as a capital crime, this gave the prince-bishop, Franz von Waldeck, a legal reason to retaliate against Anabaptist Münster by proceeding the military campaign (Driedger 2016:3-4). The prince-bishop immediately placed the city of Münster under siege and threats of the army, consisting of both Catholics and Protestants, became escalated (Hsia 1988:54). In these circumstances, Münster

needed to protect itself and it seemed inevitable that the leadership of new regime had applied “the enforcement of rebaptism on all inhabitants and the exile of dissidents” in a way to defend the city (Hsia 1988:54). In this light, the violence of Münster Anabaptism “was not an expression of the group’s very nature. Instead, violence was a reaction to worsening conflicts” (Driedger 2016:17). To be sure, Anabaptist new leadership in Münster remained tension between the immigrant Dutch prophets and the native reformers (Hsia 1988:54). It was an unstable but creative mixture of Prophet-Reformer; despite the former resorted greatly to “their personal charismatic and extra-institutional power” (Hsia 1988:55), the latter were neither prophet-hireling nor inspired by the prophets’ courage when they responded to this challenging situation. This alliance of Prophet-Reformers also provided a good counterbalance where both would keep each other neutral. Here, “the remaking of Münster into the New Jerusalem depended on critical tension between the old civic elite and the new religious leadership”; between the reactionary Münsterites and the radical Melchiorites (Hsia 1988:55).

From this vantage point, three phases of the Melchior-Münsterite movement in Münster came into being. Each period had its own main character. “The first extends from the summer of 1533, when [native] Rothmann adopted the radical sacramental position of the Wassenbergers, to February 1534. During this period the Melchiorite movement was powerful..., but it still lacked official sanction and it still responded to its opponents with peaceful avoidance. From February 1534, with its “political miracles” to Easter of that year, Anabaptist Münster was at the focal point of an apocalyptic crisis which legitimated the prophetic authority of the immigrant John Matthjisson. Militancy and radical community of goods corresponded to this crisis. From April 1534 to the fall of the Anabaptist regime in June 1535 Münster’s apocalyptic enthusiasm was in decline, but at the same time desperate efforts were made to preserve the energies and idealism of the earlier period under the inventive, institution-building leadership of John Bockelson,” (Stayer 1991:131) as the eclectic mix of the radical prophets and the reactionary reformers.

Yet, all must be seen in the dynamic interplay of the common people of Münster who had existed in before, during, and after Anabaptist turn in Münster’s Reformation. Not only as the point of contact, but also as the central point, they had tried to radicalize the Reformation on the one hand, and rationalize it on the other hand, expecting an entirely different new society based on the gospel. Thus is created by a critical look at the role of common people in Münster through their dynamic relationship –or, the dialectic of *guru-avatar* –with the Prophet-Reformer. From it emerges as the new portrait of the radical Reformers and the common people in Münster, namely, (1) John Matthjisson as being-in-the-immigrant-Melchiorite-prophets, the radicals, (2) Bernhard Rothmann as being-in-the-native-

civic-reformers, the reactionary, (3) John Bockelson as being-in-the-eclectic between the two power structures, and (4) the common people (*minjung*) in Münster, beyond the radical, the reactionary, and the eclectic. In this dynamic interconnection, Münster Anabaptism is therefore seen as the place of hybridity, wherein *avatar*-hood of the radical Reformers and *guru*-ship of the common people were closely intertwined for the realization of new type of Communal Reformation.

### 5.3 THE PROFILES OF THE MÜNSTER REFORMERS

#### 5.3.1 John Matthjisson as Being-in-the-Immigrant-Melchiorite-Prophets, the Radicals

It is now undisputed that Melchior Hoffman, the furrier-turned Anabaptist preacher, “brought Anabaptism from Southwestern Germany to the Netherlands, where it won mass support such as it never again attained elsewhere in Europe” (Stayer, Packull and Deppermann 1975:111). Despite Hoffman spent only a brief time preaching at Emden in East Frisia (the spring of 1529 and the summer of 1530), he stamped his own personality, theology, and apocalyptic mood decisively upon the Dutch Anabaptist movement, to the point that its adherents are also called “Melchiorites,” or “Hoffmanites” (Stayer 1972:205, Jones 1909:398). His message appealed mostly to the common people who were deprived of material and cultural goods enjoyed by others and who longed for a more meaningful religious experience (Krahn 1968:124). Just as the peasants in the South –inspired by Thomas Müntzer –appealed to divine law, in the North laymen were inspired by Melchior Hoffman’s message (Waite 1989:175). Since Hoffman himself was an artisan, his preaching was greeted with warm welcome by that same social stratum (Waite 1990:29). Given that the Melchiorites were overwhelmingly from the artisanal stratum (Waite 1986:250), it came no surprise then that only few leaders had some religious training (Krahn 1968:213). Melchiorites naturally looked for leadership from within their own rank. This is the reason why many famous leaders, such as John Matthjisson (baker), John Bockelson (a Rhetorician and merchant), and David Joris (a glass-painter), fit this description (Waite 1986:252-53).

Coupled with Hoffman’s imprisonment in March 1533, the prohibition against believer’s baptism created ferment among the Melchiorites of the Low Countries (Mackay 2007:16-7). The gravity of believer’s baptism was so great to them; for many Melchiorites identified this “real” baptism with “the seal that distinguished the pious from the godless in Apocalypse” (Mackay 2007:17). Thus was created by a climate where the dreaded events in Apocalypse could occur in their lifetime. This led the Melchiorites to align themselves with the early Christians; “the stronger the persecution and suffering of the faithful, the greater was the hope and expectancy” (Krahn 1968:130). Despite their higher apocalyptic enthusiasm, the Melchiorites had no clear conception of the Second Coming; would the Kingdom of God be ushered in by him with or without the help of His saints? (Krahn 1968:130). In

this context, radical elements started to exploit the situation and John Matthijsson, a baker from Haarlem, became the initiator of a new trend by taking advantage of disappointment over time delay of the end of the world, previously set by Hoffman (Jelsma 1998:53).

Soon after Melchior Hoffman was imprisoned in Strasbourg in 1533, John Matthijsson, baptized by Hoffman,<sup>247</sup> began his prophetic activity in Amsterdam (Pleysier 2014:60). The city became Matthijsson's headquarter where his emissaries were sent out to various Melchiorite communities in the Low Countries (Mackay 2016:12). Through this way, his leadership was heightened even to the extent to subdue some of Hoffman's earlier adherents (Mackay 2016:12). John Bockelson was one of them, who had eventually succeeded Matthijsson (Krahn 1968:134). Led by direct dream and visions, Matthijsson proclaimed himself as the Enoch of the Last Days<sup>248</sup> and reinstated believers' baptism, suspended by Hoffman (Stayer 1976:227-28). Echoing Han Hut's "eschatological baptism" (Spinks 2006:86), Matthijsson connected this baptism to a mark of the 144,000 elect who would oppose the Anti-Christ in Apocalypse (Deppermann 1987:289). At a certain point, this included the distinctly millenarian and militant view, which "crystallized into an urge to take up arms and fight" (Cohn 1961:21). Matthijsson believed that the world was sunk in corruption and would have to be cleansed before Christ's return and the people to do this task were the baptized ones, the Anabaptists (Klaassen 1992:46).

Münster was one of the few cities to be most receptive to Matthijsson's messages. Upon their arrival on January 5, 1534, Matthijsson's emissaries had quickly obtained influence among the radical preachers and baptized them, including Bernard Rothmann, the city preacher (Bakker 1986:109). Within a week some 1,400 citizens of Münster (about 25% of the population) and immigrants from Holland, who had arrived there previously, were also baptized (Dülmen 1977:289 quoted by Klaassen 1992:47). As a result, Münster soon became Anabaptist (Mellink 1985:127). Eight days later, Bockelson appeared in Münster with other Matthijsson's emissaries (Kirchhoff 1970:362).<sup>249</sup> These favourable conditions inspired Matthijsson himself to come to Münster in early February (Worth

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<sup>247</sup> Melchior Hoffman must have baptized him during his short stay in Holland in 1531, possibly in Amsterdam when he baptized some fifty persons there (Cornelius 1965:404, quoted by Krahn 1968:120).

<sup>248</sup> Interestingly enough, Matthijsson's wife had likely rejected his claims to be a prophet called by God. Meanwhile, he had met the pretty brewer's daughter who knew the gospel well. They then came to an agreement that she would be his wife and that they would leave secretly to get away from her parents and begin their mission in Amsterdam (Klaassen 1992:46).

<sup>249</sup> When Bockelson arrived at Münster on Jan. 13, he had already found the Anabaptist turn in the city; about one fourth of the adults in Münster were baptized and of these, the majority was probably women (Kirchhoff 1970:362).

2005:115). The stormy entrance of this powerful man threw the radical group into confused panic. Hoffman, their spiritual father, had suspended baptism and they had received no other instructions, but Matthijsson, a new leader, claimed that he was called to reinstate it to prepare for God's return (Pleysier 2014:61-2). It was prophet against prophet, inspiration against inspiration (Klaassen 1992:46). Who was right? Matthijsson's prophetic authority and power, in this light, seemed to be far surpassed Hoffman himself.<sup>250</sup> He extended the time of grace from Christmas 1533 –the time Hoffman had expected the end of the world –to Easter, April 5, 1534 (Kirchhoff 1985:24 quoted by Stayer 1986:275). Even Matthijsson attempted to speed up the coming of the Lord by calling on the saints to help up with the establishment of the New Jerusalem as opposed to waiting for God, or pious magistrates to act (Bax 1903:112). Finally he relocated the setting for the New Jerusalem from Strassburg to Münster (McDaniel 2007:66, Klaassen 1981:329).

Exercising his personal charismatic power, this new kid on the block in Münster quickly assumed the real leadership of the city (Eichler 1981:46), despite the formal authority structure, with its city council and elected mayors, continued to exist (Hsia 1988:55). The surrounding situations benefited most Matthijsson and his radical followers. Firstly, the background of the political decentralization of the Holy Roman Empire, invariably a Habsburg, allowed the Melchiorite unrest in the Low Country in general and their takeover of Münster in particular (Vogler 1988:110-15).<sup>251</sup> From the weakening of Imperial control, Münster was simmering with tension between the civic independence and episcopal rule, which culminated in Anabaptist takeover (Driedger 2016:4). Secondly, the religious and political inability of the local authorities gave Matthijsson advantages to set up the Anabaptist cause without strong opposition (Williamson 2000:27). By failing to immobilize the activities of the strong charismatic radicals, the local authorities made themselves somewhat obsolete (Krahn 1968:135-61) and thereby opened the way for the radical preachers to take hold (McLellan 2012:25). Indeed, before Matthijsson and Bockelson came to the city, Bernhard Rothmann, the city preacher, had persistently refuted the local authorities and they had ample opportunities to regulate him (Stayer 1972:227-80).

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<sup>250</sup> Why was John Matthijsson taken so much more seriously than his predecessor or successors? One possible answer is that all of Matthijsson's deeds were sanctioned by the Spirit. Therefore they were beyond examination and criticism. The only applicable comparison is the actions of the prophets in the Bible. Even the maddest command of Matthijsson received meaning through appeal to God. His decisions were, therefore, not tied to established ordinances or traditions but were dependent only on spontaneous revelations and were accordingly irrational (Rammstedt 1966:62-3 quoted by Stayer 1986:275).

<sup>251</sup> In the early sixteenth century, the various territories in the Low Countries were simply another part of the Empire, in which German dialects were commonly spoken, and this very similarity of language would contribute to the ease with which the Melchiorite movement of the Low Countries was so readily received in neighbouring Münster. The events of Münster played themselves out against this situation (Vogler 1988:110-15).

But the governing body's repeated inaction allowed Rothmann to continue to influence the city (Jelsma 1998:54) and his turning Münster eventually made the whole community vulnerable to the outside influence, namely, the immigrant radical prophets (McLellan 2012:25). It was through both external and internal conditions that Münster underwent such a radical Anabaptist turn.

The Anabaptists takeover of the city of Münster on February 1534, indeed, elevated Matthjisson's status into the rank of Enoch-*redivivus* (Williamson 2000:29). To the Melchiorites, this Anabaptist turn in Münster was the "political miracle," just like the miracle in the Red Sea crossing for the Israelites (Kuratsuka 1985:261 quoted by Stayer 1999:268) and there was Matthjisson behind this miracle. "The content of the miracle was the deliverance of the peaceful Münster Anabaptist congregation from the overwhelming numerical superiority of their enemies" (Stayer 1986:276). Thus, Matthjisson's apocalyptic militancy gained momentum; the end was indeed at hand and God had given the sword to the elect, the Anabaptists, to keep the hope for imminent salvation alive among themselves (Kirchhoff 1970:357-70).<sup>252</sup> Since God's hand was so visible now, Matthjisson's violent apocalypticism began to grab hold of the Münsteraners.<sup>253</sup>

This political miracle sanctioned Matthjisson's charismatic dictatorship. He indeed claimed all authority in Münster (Williamson 2000:29). At this point, those who would not listen to the prophet John were to be expelled from the city (Snyder 1995:148). The anti-intellectual tendency also prevailed in the city. Matthjisson even declared that it was the unlearned, who had been chosen by God to redeem the world. This established a monopoly in the interpretation of the Bible and resulted in destroying all books except the Bible (Dülmen 1974:90-1 quoted by Klaassen 1992:48). "All other works had to be brought to the cathedral-square and thrown upon a great bonfire. This act symbolized a complete break with the past, a total rejection of the intellectual legacy of earlier generations" (Cohn 1961:290). Matthjisson's unchecked power constituted a form of forcible communalism<sup>254</sup> in the city,

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<sup>252</sup> From it came to the hypothesis that apocalyptic militancy in Münster was a product of John Matthjisson, the radical prophet, and "it is basically correct to describe the whole period from the summer of 1533 to late February 1534 as a peaceful Melchiorite phase of the Münster Reformation" (Stayer 1986:276-77). Yet, this interpretation seems to be paled under the new perspective which sees the Münster event as the critical and creative tension between the two groups, namely, the immigrant radical Melchiorites and the native civic notables.

<sup>253</sup> One of the visible signs on which that conviction among the Münster Anabaptists was the fact that they had a city. There was much more to this reality than the simple physical control of the episcopal city of Münster which had come into their hands quite legitimately. For city was not only a physical fact. It was also the product of the imagination, nurtured primarily by the image of Jerusalem, the city of God (Klaassen 1992:84).

<sup>254</sup> Some, however, have argued that the communism in Anabaptist Münster should be distinguished from the mainstream of Anabaptism. They have maintained that the vast majority of Anabaptists supported voluntary giving but definitely not compulsory communism. For the Anabaptists in general, the concept of property as a God-given trust, inseparably united

substantiated by Acts (Williamson 2000:29). “It was by no means required but, all who refused became prospects for expulsion” (McLellan 2012:26). Yet, Matthjisson’s power abruptly ended. Following his prophecy that the Second Coming would take place, at least, by Easter 1534, citizens lined the city walls in expectation of viewing the spectacle of God destroying the heathen (Dülmen 1974:16 quoted by Klaassen 1992:50). But, the salvation did not come until Easter and this made Matthjisson too tantalizing to stand still. Thus he, being convinced by his own self-prophecy, decided to desperately sally forth with a few companions,<sup>255</sup> but was quickly slaughtered by the besieging the prince-bishop’s soldiers.<sup>256</sup> This turned out to be a foolish rush and shocked the whole citizen.

To sum up, it is evident that Matthjisson was a specialized figure, hailed by the radical Melchiorites in the Low Countries, whose views were different and distinctive from the native Münsterites. Exercising charismatic authority, he quickly emerged as the new prophet and played a decisive role in turning the city into radical Anabaptism. Matthjisson’s connection of believers’ baptism to millennial eschatology allowed his followers not only to embrace apocalyptic militancy as the prelude to the Second Coming, but also to relocate Münster as the New Jerusalem, the place of salvation for God’s people. Distinctive is to be seen in Matthjisson’s role as not only the leader but also the servant of the radical immigrant prophets for accelerating the Second Coming by the help of the revolutionary saints, which is, the Anabaptists. In a word, Matthjisson served as being-in-the-immigrant Melchior prophets, the radicals, unto death.

### **5.3.2 Bernhard Rothmann as Being-in-the-Native-Civic-Reformers, the Reactionary**

Before the radical prophets had immigrated into the city, there was a group of native notables, the civic intellectuals in Münster. They sometimes confronted, but also cooperated with the radical immigrants “to safeguard their power and to prevent the disintegration of the congregation” (Rammstedt 1966:70 quoted by Eichler 1981:51). Before Anabaptist takeover, they led the evangelical movements in Münster, and after the Anabaptist takeover, they still remained a significant force to counterbalance

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with a belief in mutual aid. Thus, to them, all things in common meant they do not permit another to be in want; “their communism was a communism of need.” It is therefore, they added, to be noted that Anabaptist communism was to be regarded as an expression of the love-ethic for a spiritually united group, and was never intended for society as a whole, although there was of course a noted exception to this, namely, the Hutterites (Klassen 1964:28-49, Krahn 777-82).

<sup>255</sup> “Matthjisson may have sought death in order to fulfil the prophecy in Revelation 11 that Christ would return after the death of his two witnesses: Melchior Hoffman, who was still in prison in Strasbourg, and now the second witness, himself, who had fulfilled his commission on Easter 1534” (Laubach 1993:187 quoted by Klötzer 2007:237).

<sup>256</sup> Even so, some in the city believed that Matthjisson would arise and visibly ascend into heaven, according to Revelation 11:12 (Fast 1962:336 quoted by Klaassen 1992:50).

the radical Melchiorites. These native reformers, on the one hand, had used the prophetic authority of the immigrants for their religious and political stability, while at the same time, having checked and controlled their level of radical activities. One of the ample examples was Knipperdolling's objection to Matthjisson, who was now the leader of Anabaptist Münster (Löffler 1923:64-66 quoted by Eichler 1981:50). Against Matthjisson's radical plan to put to death the godless –which is, the unbelievers – remaining in the city, he, both as the mayor of the city and the Anabaptist, rather made a counter-proposal to drive them out from the city (Kerssenbrock 1899-1900:517, Baring-Gould 1891:273). Yet, most of all, it was Bernhard Rothmann, the city reformer, who played the leading role in Münster Reformation, among the native reactionary groups (Hsia 1988:52-3). As a historical figure, Rothmann is totally bound up with the Reformation in Münster. Apart from his activities there between 1529 and 1535, almost nothing about him was clearly grasped. Rothmann's career fell into two distinctive phases: the first was as a civic reformer in his own right and the second was an ideologue and propagandist for the Melchiorite prophets who eventually replaced him (Bakker 1982:191).

Born about 1495 in Stadtlohn as the son of a blacksmith, Rothmann had been raised in poverty, stirred the social conscience by the Peasants' War of 1525, and begun to challenge the Church for its failure to support the farmers (Arthur 1999:14-5). Thanks to his remarkable gifts, Rothmann received his education at the cathedral school in Münster and at Deventer with the Brethren of the Common Life (Krahn 1968:123). In 1529, he resurfaced as preaching assistant at St. Mauritz, a church just outside Münster and began to preach the gospel as an admirer of Luther (Bakker 1982:191). In 1531, this young protestant preacher visited so-called the Reformation centres such as Marburg, Wittenberg, and Strassburg and in 1532 he finally led in the introduction of a Reformation in Münster (Krahn 1968:123). The situation in Münster when Rothmann arrived was complicated. The institutional structure was broadly determined by three mutually antagonistic forces: the regent class who controlled the city council; the guilds (popularly based) who wielded increasing power; and the clergy (headed by the Catholic bishop) (Bakker 1986:106-7). Behind a facade of Polybian constitutional harmony –the bishop reigned, the council ruled, and the guilds acted as the tribunes of the people –a persistent three-cornered power struggle dominated political developments in Münster (Bakker 1982:192).

The first effects of the Reformation were anti-clericalism and iconoclasm (Bakker 1982:191-93). Attempts to silence Rothmann did not work, primarily because of the city council's tacit consent to keep in check the privileges of the Catholic clergy (Bax 1903:126). In this light, the actual tactic of reform was simple. Rothmann preached against the Catholic clergy and thus stirred up popular enthusiasm for the gospel; the bishop's threatening response would antagonized the population; the

council would then use the civic and religious outrage as an excuse for tolerating Rothmann's biting sermons against clergy (Bakker 1982:193-94). After a few cycles in this process of escalation, the council, pressed by the guilds, announced that only the Rothmann's gospel preaching would be tolerated in the city's churches (July 1532) and the bishop was forced to acknowledge the Reformation (the Treaty of Dülmen, 1533) (Bakker 1982:194, Hsia 1988:53). The triumph of the Reformation in the city had shifted the locus of religious authority from the clergy to the laity, making the aristocrat's position obsolete (Bax 1903:133). But, it was not yet clear which party of the laity was to gain control. The regents, as the dominant group of council, assumed that the authority would be theirs, while the guilds, from the standpoint of their communal ideology, presumed it would reside in the community (Bakker 1982:193-94). The problem of religious authority then turned into the political power struggle and this gave Rothmann the power of leverage in legitimating the position either of the council or the guilds (Bakker 1982:194). Rothmann generally leaned more in the direction of the guilds (Bakker 1986:109).

In September 1532, Roll, an ex-Carmelites, but now a Sacramentarian, came to Münster from Wassenberg in Jülich to make Münster an evangelical city (McLellan 2012:24). Roll's sacramental theology, with its stress on a new people of Israel, found a ready audience. This time Rothmann was already in contrast with Lutheran theologians (Hsia 1988:53). He no longer understood the Lord's Supper in Luther's manner as a means of the divine grace, rather interpreted it as a confession of discipleship (Klötzer 2007:227).<sup>257</sup> Encouraged by it, Roll and his associates extended their covenantal implications of the sacramental theology to baptism.<sup>258</sup> Infants, they argued, should not be baptized (Bakker 1982:197). At first Rothmann resisted them, but after further discussions, he had also received a Zwinglian conception of sacrament, together with their rejection of infant baptism and support of adult baptism (Stupperich 1970:229-30 quoted by Stayer 1986:271). In August 1533 the council called Rothmann to account for his opposition to infant baptism and this disputation turned into a victory for

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<sup>257</sup> It is now generally recognized that despite his Lutheran position, Rothmann's doctrine, both in theology and in political ethic, was closer to Zwingli than to Luther (Bakker 1982:194-95). The current scholarship has found in Rothmann's view on justification as well as sacraments, more deep resonance with a Reformed covenantal sign than a Lutheran promise of grace (Ozment 1975:153). But a far more decisive factor is Rothmann's interest in a Christian *Obrigkeit* as important for Christians to be involved. All implied then that the substance of Rothmann's theology was primarily "Reformed"; the nuts and bolts of Rothmann's theology was therefore found in its compatibility with a "people of God" conception, resulting in a natural alliance with the guilds in the civic power struggle (Bakker 1982:196).

<sup>258</sup> From here, some (Brecht and Klötzer) argued that Anabaptist ideas were introduced into Münster first by the evangelical preachers, Rothmann, Roll, and other Wassenbergers, rather than by John Matthijsson's disciples (Breach 1985:66 quoted by Snyder 1995:156, note 32). Furthermore, since Melchiorite apocalyptic teachings were not present in Münster before 1534 and Hoffman suspended adult baptism during the period, all seems not possible to identify Melchiorite influence on the issue of baptism in Münster (Klötzer 2007:251).

Rothmann (Kuratsuka 1985:248 quoted by Stayer 1986:273). Then, Lutheranism in Münster was waning. The attempt to import an effective Lutheran reformer for Münster turned out to have come too late (Stayer 1986:273).

Rothmann's turning Swiss earned Lutheran theologians' suspicion and brought a new, intra-Protestant controversy in Münster over baptism. The religious strife was rekindled and the population, once again, divided into three mutually antagonistic groups (Williamson 2000:28); the remaining Catholics; the Lutherans, backed by the council (magistrates); and the Reformed Rothmannists, supported primarily by the guilds (burghers) (Bakker 1982:198). But, as anti-pedobaptism was against imperial law, the council sought to remove Rothmann (Stayer 1986:285). Since the opening struggle between the two evangelical parties had increased the risk of a Catholic restoration, the guilds persuaded the council to settle for a compromise (Bakker 1982:198). Roll and his associates were then expelled, while Rothmann was allowed to stay but forbidden to preach (Klötzer 2007:229). This solved nothing, however. The religious agitation continued and a new uneasy stalemate prevailed. Rothmann wanted to carry out a spiritual Anabaptism through his Lord's Supper. He still hoped to carry through a radical Reformation marked by adult baptism for the entire city (Klötzer 2007:229-30).

On January 5, 1534 a couple of representatives of John Matthijsson were present in Münster. Rothmann, Roll and other leading figures accepted rebaptism and baptized their congregation (Krahn 1968:124). This was the situation that John Bockelson encountered when he arrived in early January 1534 (Bakker 1982:198). The tide of city had shifted in favour of the Anabaptist faction (Cornelius 1965:370 quoted by Stayer 1986:273). Some 1,400 people already had accepted rebaptism in the city –that would have been about 20% of the adult population (Snyder 1995:147, Klötzer 2007:230). Shortly thereafter, the baptized faced mortal danger. The prince-bishop demanded the arrest of the persons responsible for initiating the new baptism. In addition, a rumor spread through the city that the prince-bishop was on his way to Münster with a troop of mercenaries (Stayer 1986:287). In its wake, for those within the city, the support the Anabaptist party seemed to be the best option for the city's independence under the impending circumstances. In the midst of many political opponents –both Catholics and moderate reformers –had already left the city, the election for city councilors fell to the Anabaptists (February 23) (Stayer 1986:281). Bernhard Knipperdolling was elected.<sup>259</sup> Against it, the prince-bishop had really set up military headquarter in the nearby town of Telgte in preparation for a siege (Stayer

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<sup>259</sup> On that day, six council members were re-elected, while eighteen others were chosen to this office for the first time. It is quite notable that about half of them belonged to the higher socio-economic stratum (Kirchhoff 1973: 68 quoted by Klötzer 2007:233).

1986:281). On February 24, John Matthjisson entered Münster at the invitation of Knipperdolling, claiming prophetic authority and, at the same time, all non-baptized inhabitants of Münster were forced either to leave or to accept rebaptism (Snyder 1995:147).

In the long run, the arrival of the prophet John permanently swept Rothmann from centre stage. He lost the ability to influence developments directly and was reduced to articulating and propagandizing the religious ideology of the besieged community under the leadership of John Matthjisson firstly and then of King John Bockelson (Bakker 1982:199). Indeed, his internal role was that of a stabilizer, whereas his external role was to be a propagandist (Klötzer 2007:251). The final fall of Münster meant the final fall of Rothmann's fate. After June 25, 1535, Rothmann, despite his body was not identified, never again appeared in the historical record (Kerssenbroch 1899-1900:842 quoted by Krahn 1968:160).

Although Rothmann's authority in Münster continued to ebb and flow with the arrival of John Matthjisson on February 1534, his most important tracts dated from this period; between October 1534 and January 1535 (Wray 1962:229-38). Three of them, "Restitution," (1534) "On Vengeance," (1534) and "The Hiddenness of the Word of God" (1535), especially helped to shape the ideological development of Münster Anabaptism (Waite 1990:89). In fact, the theological foundation of the New Jerusalem was laid by this young Münsterite theoretician (Reventlow 2000:180). The general impression Rothmann wished to give was that the Münsterite Anabaptists were about to play a crucial role in a historically delineated drama of salvation (Stayer 1967:181). In this sense, Rothmann was an adherent of synergism. Not only did God himself choose different means from age to age in realizing human salvation, human beings, too, were required to change the ethical means by which they cooperated in that salvation. At one period God required of his people patient suffering, at another He called his people to glorious revenge: "The glory of all the Saints is to wreak vengeance...Revenge without mercy must be taken of all who are not marked with the sign [of the Anabaptists]" (*Vengeance* 69 quoted by Cohn 1961:274). To know how to serve God, one, therefore, must be able to locate himself in a temporal unfolding divine revelation (Stayer 1967:181). There now developed a theory of Christian revolution molded from Scriptures.

Rothmann interpreted history as a succession of apostasy and restitution (Klaassen 1981:330-33, Reventlow 2010:181) and the restitution as reparation of apostasy. It is the time of the establishment of all those things which God has ever mentioned through the voices of his prophets (Stupperich 1970:215 quoted by Reventlow 2010:181). In another connection, Rothmann developed his conception

of the three worlds; the first world disappeared through the Flood; the second, the present world, would perish by fire and be purified by it; the third world would be the New Heaven and the New Earth in which the people would live in justice (*hiddenness* 65 quoted by Vogler 1988:106). His focus was of course on the end of the second age, his own time. Rothmann saw the present day as the final apostasy, which was pregnant with the eternal restitution (Reventlow 2010:181). The Reformation then stood out as the major sign of the end of the world; the rediscovery of the Gospel must mean the nearness of the Second Coming, the final and eternal restitution (Stupperich 1970:219 quoted by Reventlow 2010:181). Rothmann held that although restitution began with the Reformation when God awakened Luther, it had not yet been concluded (Klaassen 1992:77). Since the “learned” magisterial Reformers, like Erasmus, Luther and Zwingli, had abandoned the cause, its right was now given to Melchior Hoffman, John Matthijsson, and John Bockelson, “who were regarded as completely without worldly learning” (*Restitution* 16-7 quoted by Klaassen 1981:333).<sup>260</sup>

Thus, most of the mayhem associated with the Day of the Lord became the business of the king of Münster, so that John Bockelson was assigned the status of a sort of mystical father of Christ;<sup>261</sup> “Now, dear brother, the time of vengeance has come to us. God has awakened beloved David; arm for vengeance and punishment on Babylon and its people” (Stupperich 1970:297 quoted by Reventlow 2010:184). Münster was then placed at the focal point of the history of salvation; the in-breaking of Kingdom of God already started in this holy city (Reventlow 2010:183). The followers of John Bockelson were fighting no limited war to assert their religious and civil liberties against the Babylonian tyranny, the rule of the false Christians (Reventlow 2010:183). They had been commissioned to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ by humbling all his enemies throughout the world (Stupperich 1970:285 quoted by Reventlow 2010:183). Rothmann, thus, conceived the restitution as the prelude to the great eschatological climax. Once it was completed the second age would be destroyed in fire and Jesus would come to judge the quick and the dead (Stayer 1967:191). Rothmann in this light justified Münster’s role as the embryonic Kingdom of Christ and thus the fallen throne of David be once more raised up (Stayer 1967:190).

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<sup>260</sup> This is reminiscent of Hoffman’s teaching that whereas Christ revealed himself and his will to the poor and simple, antichrist revealed himself to the leaders and scholars in the church (Klaassen 1986:20).

<sup>261</sup> Rothmann’s identification of Christ with Solomon rather than David was made to justify the glorious vengeance of the saints as a prelude to the Second Coming of Jesus. Yet, this is also related to John Bockelson’s desperate attempt to maintain his position through the praxis of institutionalization of leadership as the eclectic leader between the two power structures. Details on this matter will be discussed in later part of “John Bockelson as Being-in-the-Eclectic between the Two Power Structures.”

The theme of raising the fallen throne of David was of unique significance among Rothmann's preconditions for the Second Coming. It was the exegetical key that would open to the Münsterites the stored-up violence of the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions. The prophecies of the conquering Davidic Messiah did not pertain to Christ. To Rothmann, it does not make sense at all to understand David as Christ and is completely wrong, for not David, but Solomon is symbolic of Christ (*Vengeance* 77 quoted by Stayer 1967:191). It was in Münster that God had established "the kingdom and throne of David which the true and peaceful Solomon will occupy and possess in the future" (*Restitution* 104-105 quoted by Stayer 1967:191). "David in the image prepared by battles and punishments a peaceful kingdom for Solomon...then the peaceful Solomon is come, ruled in peace and high-priestly glory the whole of Israel and built in marvelous wisdom God's temple" (Stupperich 1970:295 quoted by Reventlow 2010:184). So, both Rothmann and Bockelson assumed "the stool of David in order to hand it over in a short time to Christ, the peaceful king of Solomon" (Kirchhoff 1989:400, Laubach 1993:198-200 quoted by Klötzer:2007:243).

In this time of restitution God will rally his people in order to put an end to the king of the whole world (Pleysier 2014:67-8). The wrong order shall be eliminated, although government authority was a God-ordained order, "this order has long been wrong because the authorities not only forgot their duties and took unfair advantages but also turned against God himself and his world" (Stupperich 1970:219 quoted by Vogler 1988:107). Therefore, restitution is the beginning of the time of vengeance that now has come (*Restitution* 273 quoted by Klaassen 1981:334). It was also sure for Rothmann that the restitution triggered by the Reformation was the final one. With it the time of suffering was past, the moment of glory and vengeance dawned: "justice ruled and the mouth of the godless stopped" (Stupperich 1970:273 quoted by Reventlow 2010:183). The seal is broken and the trumpet already blown. The God-fearing, the suppressed, the suffering freely lift up their heads, for their deliverance is not far off (Stayer 1967:189). Rothmann here looked back on the basic miracle of the deliverance of the Anabaptist on February 9-11 as the seal of God's apocalyptic blessing on Münster (Stupperich 1970:280-81 quoted by Stayer 1986:277). Thus it was no accident but the fulfilment of prophecy that the restitution in Münster came in self-defence against the prince-bishop (Stayer 1967:189). It was the Lord who led the Münster Anabaptists to wield the sword through "spiritual revelation" (*Restitution* 110 quoted by Stayer 1967:190).

Such a message was not new both among the Reformers and Anabaptists who never took the sword (Reventlow 2010:183). Hans Hut and his followers in Upper Germany had eagerly awaited the moment when by divine power they would slay the godless, but they knew that they must wait until Jesus

returned in the clouds (Meyer 1874:242 quoted by Klassen 1959:204). The most difficult task for Rothmann was not to convince his readers that suffering would one day be replaced by vengeance as of that the Scriptures were full (Stayer 1972:249). His history and eschatology had placed Münster at the point of cosmic crisis, but to justify the Münster Kingdom something else was needed. Rothmann must show why it was necessary to draw the sword in this age with Christ still unreturned (Stayer 1967:189). The essence of his answer to this question was that “vengeance belonged not to Christ, but to the saints” (Stayer 1972:249); the enemies of Christ must be subdued by God “with and in his saints” (*hiddenness* 77 quoted by Stayer 1967:190).

Coupled with the besieged condition in Münster, this constituted a significant apologetic for active defense of the Anabaptist Münster; “the children of Jacob’ now felt called not only to defend themselves but also to help God punish the ‘children of Esau’” (Krahn 1968:139). Their vengeance was, in this light, “a necessary prelude to Christ’s Second Coming” (Stayer 1972:249). Rothmann then refuted arguments that God will come down from heaven, with his angels, in order to destroy the godless. It is true that God will come but, “vengeance is a prior task of the servants of God... We have to be his tools and must attack the godless on the days that the Lord will determine” (*Vengeance* 75 quoted by Klaassen 1981:335). This vengeance, he added, must occur on earth, not in heaven and changed the Münster Anabaptists from passive, sheep awaiting slaughter, to active crusaders, who wielded the sword of justice (Stupperich 1970:285 quoted by Reventlow 2010:183).

In sum, Rothmann’s theological journey represents his self-perception of before-and-after Anabaptist turn in Münster’s Reformation. In the pre-Anabaptist stage, Rothmann led the Reformation of the city and the success of his reform activity owed heavily to the close affinity with the guilds (Hillerbrand 2007:120). Rothmann was unwilling to have the council dictate to him the nature and extent of the Reformation of Münster. The council, in return, was equally unwilling to have Rothmann’s religious innovations jeopardize the security of the community (Bakker 1986:107-8). This conflict led Rothmann to claim that the council’s authority in matters of religion was legitimate only to the extent that it corroborated and reinforced his authority as the community’s prophet (Bakker 1986:109). This claim found a ready support among the guild membership, for it was the exact analogue of the guilds’ long-standing claim that the council’s authority was legitimate only in so far as it was corroborated by them as the people’s tribunes (Bakker 1982:201-202).

The character of Rothmann’s theology remained intact despite the advent of the Melchiorites (Bakker 1986:113). The influx of immigrant Melchiorites from the Netherlands certainly influenced both the

course and the tone of development of the Reformation in Münster (Kirchhoff 1973:24 quoted by Bakker 1986:111). These admixtures of Dutch prophets had introduced the major distinctive Melchiorite doctrines, such as monophysite Christology, but they “merely extended some elements in Rothmann’s previous theology; they did not in any fundamental way change it” (Bakker 1986:111). Yet, as the threats of the siege became intensified, Rothmann’s apocalyptic expectancy was transformed “from the restrained warning to the crusading spirit” (Bakker 1986:112). Rothmann, at that time, used his pamphlets for blatant Anabaptist propaganda and attempted to gain support from the apocalyptic followers of John Matthijsson, regarding them as only “genuine, unconstrained statements of Münsterite self-understanding” (Bakker 1986:113). However, his high apocalyptic tone was, once again, replaced by a “note of resignation” when defeat was starting Münster in the face (Bakker 1986:112). Rothmann’s last pamphlet, written just before the fall of Münster on June 25, 1535, proved that he returned to his original eschatology: patient suffering as a prelude to the final triumph (Bakker 1986:112). Here, Rothmann’s political legitimacy had become “radically a-political, a-political *faute de mieux*” (Bakker 1986:112-13).

To be sure, Bernhard Rothmann, as a representative of the native notables, remained engaged in the Anabaptist Münster by history and by choice, shaping balance of power that favoured rationalization of radical reform. Under his leadership, this body of civic-minded notables reluctantly sided with the radical prophets, riding on the massive Anabaptists from the Netherland, as the only means to preserve the endangered religious and political freedom of the city (Kirchhoff 1963:7-21 quoted by Bender 1970:357-70). The precarious besieging situation required their temporal tolerance; the external threats prevented them from internally engaging the open power struggle with the immigrant prophets (Bakker 1986:114). “Hence they could attenuate, but not openly oppose the more spectacular measures of the Dutch prophets” (Bakker 1986:114). Thus was created by a tactic agreement; the radical Melchiorites could only make headway with a measure of the native Münster notables. This meant, self-help effects in Münster went both ways to rescue itself and survive against the danger and pressures of the siege. What was distinctive Anabaptist Münster was, therefore, the co-existence of twin power who kept each other in check. In fact, a crucial part of Münster Anabaptism is to be seen as the critical and creative tension between the Prophet-Reformer and in this way, the importance of Rothmann came into being as being-in-the-native-civic-reformers, the reactionary, to counter-balance the immigrant prophets, the radicals.

### 5.3.3 John Bockelson as Being-in-the-Eclectic between the Two Power Structures

The Prophet-Reformer interplay in Münster gave rise to the new figure of King John Bockelson as the eclectic between the two power groups. The political miracles of Anabaptist takeover of Münster (Easter of 1534) was, from the beginning, the product of the dual power of the Prophet-Reformer. Yet, the Prophet John Matthijsson's death on Easter, April 5, 1534 –in effect a suicide –became the turning point. The Münsterites, trapped within the city walls, witnessed to the collapse of the prophetic authority, one pillar of the new Kingdom (Kirchhoff 1970:39 quoted by Stayer 1986:279). This abrupt death of charismatic leader at first galvanized John Bockelson, Matthijsson's young disciple, to take action to minimize the chaos. One may fail to understand correctly such actions of John Bockelson, the second-in-command at the immigrant prophet group, unless this impending and precarious situation is fully grasped. Bockelson was considered by the remnant people the best figure, who was able to fill the prophetic vacuum, even if he in fact lacked the spiritual and intellectual maturity needed in a time of crisis.

The famous portrayal of John Bockelson as “King of the world” was rather part of a defamation campaign by the prince-bishop, who needed further help for the battle against Münster (Kirchhoff 1989:400, Laubach 1993:198-200 quoted by Klötzer 2007:243). Bockelson rather from the beginning claimed for himself the role of mediator between the council and the people;<sup>262</sup> between the immigrant prophets and the native reformers (Klötzer 2007:234). A much closer to his real figure was, therefore, essentially found in his position as the eclectic leader who stood between the immigrant Melchiorites and the native Münsterites; between Matthijsson, the radical prophet, and Rothmann, the reactionary reformer. Bockelson must have been aware that he never regained Matthijsson's prophetic legitimacy and authority as well as Rothmann's theological insights and knowledge. The only option for this less-charismatic tailor king, therefore, seemed to be parasitic on the halo of his great two predecessors both intellectually and prophetically. The nucleus of King John, in this sense, is to be found in his process of negotiation between the two powers, rather than his bizarre performance of megalomaniac leadership.

From this standpoint, King John's unending invention of institutions for Anabaptist Münster provided only counter-evidence to his lack of personal authority (Rammstedt 1966:68-86 quoted by Stayer 1986:275). ). To be sure, contrary to his notorious nickname as the charismatic leader, John Bockelson,

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<sup>262</sup> It is in this light noteworthy that Bockelson, after being a new king, entitled himself “King in the new Temple” (Klötzer 2007:244).

from his earlier stage, had keenly realized his lack of prophetic authority though “the pathetic failures of his attempts to raise uprisings at *Oldeklooster* in Frisian and in Amsterdam in the spring of 1535” (Stayer 1995:270). Bockelson’s prophetic ineptness is also found in the period of his reign in Münster as a King. With uncertainty of Münster’s status as the New Jerusalem, Bockelson was toying with an idea, unthinkable of Matthijsson’s reign, to abandon the city for an armed invasion of the Netherlands (Jansma 1979:41-55, Stayer 1991:129). This doubtful legitimacy of King John triggered a serious backlash from some militant Dutch Melchiorites who wished to replace him by John Batenburg, a hardline warrior (Stayer 1986:277). They even used the failure of King John’s prediction, in which Münster would be delivered before Easter 1535, as an excuse for their opposition to an inept King (Stayer 1991:129). Distrust in Bockelson’s authority inevitably resulted in the weakness of his power. Bockelson was advised by the notables to withdraw from earlier institutions, imposed by Matthijsson and Rothmann, and accepted the result: it included changes and reshuffling of the community of goods and the redistribution of houses and landed property (Stayer 1991:270). This suggests then that how regularly and cautiously his authority was checked by resident notables, another leading figure behind the Anabaptist turn in Münster (Stayer 1991:270). Since this elite group remained powerfully, Bockelson’s government institutions, such as the Twelve Elders and Davidic kingship, were by-products of “careful power-sharing” between the two: the resident civic notables, the reactionary and the immigrant newcomers, the radicals (Stayer 1991:270).

In this connection, King John’s distinct behaviours and politics can be read differently. The institution of polygamy in the summer of 1534, for example, was not his own creation resulted from personal lust. Rather it was the joint product of a less charismatic King and more powerful elite group. The latter was joining hands with Bockelson to impose the practice of polygamy “as an attempt to officer the numerous women by dividing them into patriarchal household” (Stayer 1991:270).<sup>263</sup> After all, if this collective noble leadership behind King John had not accepted it, the idea of polygamy could never have commenced in Münster. Furthermore, toward the final days of siege, turning the community of goods into little more than “wartime rationing” was another outcome decided by this careful power-sharing (Stayer 1991:123-38). All implies then that the bright pageantry of Bockelson’s rule had nothing to with his real personal power (Kirchhoff 1973, Rammstedt 1966 quoted by Stayer 1999:270). More plausible is rather his eclectic leadership as a mediator between the native notables and the immigrant newcomers; the civic reformers and the radical prophets. Thus, the essence of his leadership in political, socio-economic and religious dimension is to be seen not as the exercise of unchecked

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<sup>263</sup> This could be confirmed by the fact that these polygamous relationship included women beyond childbearing years (Grieser 1995:32).

powerful authority, but as careful eclectic of the dual power structure between the radical prophets from Matthijsson's group and the reactionary reformers from Rothmann's group.

### 5.3.3.1 Political Eclectic

After a dangerous crisis caused by Matthijsson's sudden death, King John, as a successor, brought more or less political and religious stability to Münster. Indeed, at first glance, the new biblical order seemed to come with the reign of King Bockelson in Münster as the New Jerusalem.

...the preacher baptized [the people] with three handfuls of water from a pail in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit and gave them a copper token with the inscription "DWWF"<sup>264</sup> to wear around their necks... The token served for admission into the gates. The quote from the Gospel of John meant that God's word had begun to take on reality. With the introduction of baptism as the new basic order, the old structures of estates and social status were abolished. Under the reign of King John, now there were only Christian brothers and sisters –no clergy or burgers, no nobles or serfs (Klötzer 2007:234-35).

But, in the real sense, Münster was in a series of "careful power-sharing arrangements" and all these built up to create tensions (Stayer 1991:129). In reconstructing the Anabaptist community in Münster, native Münsteraners took on many of the new positions of power. This was in a sense a political compensation; the Münster guilds had played a pivotal role in the Anabaptist rule in Münster and this gave them a legitimacy to share the power on the city council (Hsia 1988:67). Since they were primarily the guildsmen, Rothmann, not King John, was solidly behind them. More significant is the fact that these newly elected ones were new men, "who had at most held minor civic offices before, and none had served on the city council before 1533" under the Evangelical council (Hsia 1988:67). They were new men, "more committed radical religious ideas and to more through transformation of society" and thus more receptive to Anabaptist vision that "informed the egalitarian ethos of the guilds" (Hsia 1988:67-8). These new men under Rothmann's leadership had supported the Anabaptist movement, thinking it would bring them corporatist communal politics, which defended the equality of all community as a whole (Hsia 1988:68). Here, it was Rothmann, not King John, who stressed and encouraged them in their struggle "to restore corporatist politics in Münster against the elitist domination of the self-styled *Obrigkeit*" (Hsia 1988:69).

It seems evident then that there was twin-political leadership in Münster: the Prophet and the Reformer, or the immigrant Melchiorites and the local notables (Kirchhoff 1973:68-77 quoted Stayer 1991:129). The native elite reformers regarded adult baptism as a useful tool to integrate citizens and non-citizens as well as men and women, while the prophets saw it as apocalyptic preparation for the *parousia*

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<sup>264</sup> DWWF (*Das Wort wird Fleisch*), meaning, "the Word becomes flesh" (Cornelius 1965:27-8, Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:18).

(Klötzer 2007:235). This was the reality behind the appearance of absolute power vested in tailor King John. Such twin-power was giving top priority to reshuffle of the government structure. After Easter 1534, Bockelson, under the permission of the civic notables, started dissolving the elected council altogether, and named “Twelve Elders,” all modelled after the institutions of the ancient Israelites (Klötzer 2007:238). Although the Twelve Elders, in this light, assumed the excessive concentration of power “as identical with the divine will, as superior to all law” (Baring-Gould 1891:290), this was part of power-sharing manoeuvre between King John and the elite notables to bring balance the power structure by ridding the previously elected officials who were devoted Matthjisson only (McLellan 2012:26-7). Although the Twelve Elders were composed of people from various origins, including residents of Münster, Westphalians, Netherlands, “significantly, half were residents, half new arrivals” (Klötzer 2007:238). Officially “the chief task of the Elders was jurisprudence based on the divine law derived from Scripture” (Klötzer 2007:238), but much of efforts went into establishing a strict system of vigilance against the attacks by the prince-bishop force (Baring-Gould 1891:290-91). This carefully-planned tactic by two power structures had eventually institutionalized the prophetic office; the Twelve Elders were completely in the service of the institution (Eichler 1981:45-61). In a public ceremony, for example, the prophet gave “to the first [Elder] a naked sword and order him to fight according to God’s command, then he gave the sword in the same way to the second, to the third, and so on until the last” (Geisberg 1856:248 quoted by Klötzer 2007:238).

Bockelson kept this political eclectic when he gave each of elders a new position in the royal household (Bax 1903:199). On the surface, by virtually dissolving the board of town elders and confiscating the sword of justice, he seemed to bolster his sole headship. In fact, the authority of the city council was effectively bypassed and Knipperdolling, Bockelson’s right-hand, was appointed as the official sword-bearer with power over both life and death (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:47-8). But, this did not consolidate his authority for there was also a careful political maneuvering behind that. The institution of royal household was, from the beginning, carefully regulated. Its inner-circle comprised nine persons, including Bockelson;<sup>265</sup> four outsiders, four Münster residents (Klötzer 2007:243-44). Furthermore, among the 148 official members of King John’s court, about half came from Münster and 25 of them were former office-holders. The former office-holders had more prominent position at the court, despite they were not in majority (Kerssenbrock 1899/1900:68-77). What was significant here was that the creation of the royal court gave rise to privileged minority, even untouchable by the

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<sup>265</sup> Those are (1) Bockelson; (2) Knipperdolling; the former priests (3) Bernd Krechtinck; and (4) Gerrit Boekbinder; an alderman (5) Heinrich Redecker; a member of council (6) Gert Reininck; a brother of Bernd Kechtink, (7) Heinrich Krechtink; a court master (8) Hermann Tilbeck; and (9) Bernhard Rothmann as royal spokesman (Klötzer 2007:243).

King John. In one of the early decrees of the Twelve Elders, Bockelson gave explicit recognition to a right of inheritance which had never been interrupted in Anabaptist Münster. The administrator of inheritances was to be none other than Knipperdolling, Burgher-master (Kerssenbrock 1899/1900:586).

At any rate, with this careful power-sharing arrangement, King Bockelson's leadership was constantly checked and even seriously challenged. Not only the elite notables were reluctant to align themselves with Bockelson, but also Knipperdolling, the closest aide to Bockelson, even attempted to set up his own spiritual kingship against King John (Baring-Gould 1891:314-17). Nonetheless, Knipperdolling's immediate restoration to office even after this aborted plot, once again, implied the inability of Bockelson's leadership (Cornelius 1965:149-50, Williams 1962:374). All demonstrate then that Bockelson tried to let some of the tension go out of the situation, but this always ended up entangled in his own net because of his lack of charismatic authority and political power.

### **5.3.3.2 Socio-Economic Eclectic**

Bockelson's power-sharing tactic disclosed the new leadership's reluctance to align itself to the radicals (McLellan 2012:26). It began to stall and limit the previous legacies of the radicals. One result was an "erosion of the strict community of goods instituted by John Matthijsson" (Stayer 1991:129). At the outset, this belief in communal property was legitimated through Biblicism, particularly substantiated by Acts 4 (McLellan 2012:18). The institution of this practice was, therefore, seen as the realization of the "New Jerusalem" (Reventlow 2010:179). Also, it was a necessary response to the emergency of the city. In February and March 1534, the significant exchange of population took place in besieged Münster; about two thousand non-Anabaptists were expelled, while about twenty-five hundred Anabaptists immigrated into the city (Stayer 1991:128). This urged Matthijsson as a prominent leader to take an immediate action and from it, the practice of community of goods came into being to ease the problem (Kirchhoff 1973:24 quoted by Stayer 1991:128).

The possession of deserters and those expelled as well as the property of the church and the monasteries, became public property which was managed in accordance with the newly developed laws and regulation. Many refugees from the surrounding places as well as the Netherlands arrived in Münster. These people had left all their possessions behind. They found shelter in the various monasteries and were cared for out of public funds. Community living was a natural development (Krahn 1968:142).

The community of goods in this sense was connected with a "refuge problem" (Stayer 1991:128). Matthijsson's leadership had been tested by crisis and proved his problem-solving ability. However that may be, the Anabaptist propaganda for the communism attracted many immigrants, in particular,

women and the poor (Stayer 1991:129).<sup>266</sup> Matthijsson legitimated the reordering of property arrangements through his preaching that “the possessions of the emigres should belong in common to those who remained” (Kerssenbroach 1899-/1900:556-58, Stayer 1991:129). Rothmann also preached “all things are common to every Christians” (Stayer 1991:129). Thus were enforced by a series of regulations to ensure the practice of the community of goods:

...outlawing the use of money inside Münster; confiscating ecclesiastical properties and the possession of burghers who had fled the city; and appointing twelve elders who were to supervise the stockpiling of surplus food, clothing and wealth in communal stores and to oversee their distribution to the needy (Hsia 1988:55).

The executors of community of goods in Münster were the deacons.<sup>267</sup> Deacons preserved and distributed the goods of emigres chiefly to assist immigrants, but in principle to aid all needy members of the community. In fact, during the summer of 1534, “ten to twelve hundred oxen were consumed, together with a quantity of other meat, butter and cheese, besides codfish and herring” (Bax 1903:186). The application of communal property in Münster, in this light, had two-fold purpose; “one was ideological and the other practical. The first was rooted in Christian Anabaptist tradition and the second in the unique situation which the besieged Anabaptists found themselves” (Krahn 1968:141). Not only “acting according to the historical example of the earliest Christian communities recorded in the Acts of the Apostles” but also “responding to the real need to house, clothe, and feed the many immigrants,” the radical Anabaptists in Münster had played a leading role in abolishing private property in the city (Hsia 1988:55).

But, it took on a new meaning for Bockelson’s reign. The direction of community of goods in Münster, as it was practiced under Bockelson, began to deviate from its original purpose. The native elite group did influence King Bockelson to a great extent, leading to a more favourable policies and regulations to themselves. Soon, it resulted in justifying and defending the vested interest of the ruling elites. Despite the establishment of the community of goods, the social structure of the Anabaptist property-holders native to Münster remained intact (Kirchhoff 1973:35-44 quoted by Stayer 1991:125); “persons who had been rich property-owners in the old order were represented in disproportionate numbers among the political leaders of the new regime” (Stayer 1991:125). The distribution of wealth among the Münster was even deteriorating. While all who were in high standing in Münster still

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<sup>266</sup> An ample example was a letter from a woman from Münster which requested her sister outside to send her daughter for joining in Münster; “I’m not concerned whether she has clothes or not. Send her to me; she’ll have enough here...and the poorest have become as rich through God’s grace as the burgher-masters or magistrates of the city” (Rammstedt 1966:90, quoted by Stayer 1991:129).

<sup>267</sup> Sources in this regard conflict. Kerssenbrock refers to seven deacons, while Gresbeck writes of three deacons each parish, or eighteen all together (Kerssenbrock 1899/1900:69, Cornelius 1965:34).

enjoyed their privileges, the majority of the poor and of women were forced to share the burden (Kirchhoff 1973:87). The practice of community then became the shadow of communism: it was “nothing like the egalitarian transformation of patterns of life and work achieved by the Hutterites (Plumper 1972:186 quoted by Stayer 1991:124). As the siege of the prince-bishop had become intensified, its alteration grew worse (Krahn 1968:143). Not only did community of goods be reshaped into a kind of war-rationing, but also women, children and old men, who could not fight, were forced to leave the city (Kerssenbrock 1899/1900:172-73). Bockelson agreed all of them out of necessity – the need for affirming military defense and appeasing the ruling elites (Stayer 1991:126-27).

Anyhow, under the prophetic leadership of John Matthjisson, community of goods corresponded to the apocalyptic crisis, as a form of social control (Stayer 1991:131). When this enthusiasm was in decline with the death of Matthjisson, desperate efforts were at the same time made to preserve the energies of good old days under the inventive leadership of John Bockelson. Yet, quite the contrary, “[Bockelson’s] authority was personal and indirect, so the actual promulgation of community of goods came from a consensus of the prophets, preachers and Council” (Stayer 1991:134). Here, the status as the egalitarian community in Münster, based on the equal distribution of communal goods, reduced into a new aristocracy where “the hegemony of the ruling elites over common men continued” (Stayer 1991:130).

In a similar vein, Bockelson instituted the practice of polygamy on July 23, 1534, one of the most controversial innovations. It was also made out of necessity – the need to align himself to the prominent notables to stabilize his position (Smithson 1935:106-7). At the first stage, polygamy was used for ensuring Bockelson’s political power (Hsia 1988:55-6). Even though Bockelson quickly emerged as the new leader after Matthjisson, his lack of political base urged him to marry Divara, Matthjisson’s young widow, who was esteemed by her followers as a prophetess (Williamson 2000:31). Since Bockelson was already in marriage with the daughter of Bernhard Knipperdolling, the only way allowed him to marry Divara was a divinely sanctioned system of polygamy. It served him as a double purpose; not only did elevate his status as a prophet through a union with Divara, but also maintains his close tie to the native Münster notables (Kobelt-Groch 1996:302).

At the later state, more practical and urgent reason came into being. The prince-bishop’s pressure of the siege became heightened, the institution of polygamy was necessary for Bockelson as an extension of controlling the remnants in Münster (Williamson 2000:29). In one sense, the men formed a minority

–there were about three times as many women,<sup>268</sup> and since adultery and fornication were both capital crimes in the Holy City, polygamy was the only way to regularize the sexual needs of the women in the community (Bakker 1986:115). On the other sense, Bockelson, together with the ruling elites, had troubled in ensuring whether the vast number of women were allegiant to his leadership (Williamson 2000:32). The besieged condition enhanced its necessity. Polygamy was in this sense a practical way to effectively control and check the women, by legitimating it through Biblicism, especially the Old Testament patriarchs (Roper 1991:405-8).<sup>269</sup> Furthermore, as the defense of the city was much more successful than anticipated, the Anabaptist Münster leadership began to take into account the possibility of a prolonged rule. The city had to remain inhabitable, but the average age should not rise too much. Although it was important to increase the number of births, every young woman that remained barren was a lost opportunity (Jelsma 1998:68-9). So, one plausible way seemed to encourage individual men to impregnate multiple women (Arthur 1999:93).<sup>270</sup>

Unlike the institution of community of goods, which no one could speak against it, the introduction of polygamy brought the internal tensions, from the beginning (Hsia 1988:55). After several days of intense discussions with the city preachers, Bockelson proclaimed polygamy on July 23 (McLellan 2012:27). But his lack of authority was not successful to silence the disgruntled voices (Snyder 1995:282). Bockelson, first of all, had to overcome the reform preachers' resistance, including Rothmann, to matter of polygamy. It took days of intense religious pressure to convince some parts of the community that it was God's will that they all marry and procreate (Williamson 2000:29). Even then the issue sparked a violent revolt of the native Münsterites (Pearse 1998:89, Cohn 1961:269). How severe the resistance was assured is shown by all-encompassing demands; it aimed at rescinding polygamy; returning to each his property; reinstating the burgher-master, council and all other usual practices; and even at surrendering the city to the prince-bishop (Horsch 1935:138). However, Bockelson was released by the help of ruling elites when they recognized that this rebellious party decided to deliver the city to the prince-bishop (Horsch 1935:138). This failed counter-revolt, in the suppression of which the women were particularly active, ended all possibility of further challenge to King Bockelson and the power elites (Pearse 1998:89). Thus was followed by the propaganda from

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<sup>268</sup> The exact numbers vary a great deal, but clear was the appearance of higher number of women than that of men. The estimates give 2,000 men, 8,000 to 9,000 women, 1,000 to 1,200 children (Cornelius 1965:107 quoted by Jelsma 1998:68).

<sup>269</sup> Examples of polygamy in the Old Testament refer to Exodus 21:10; 2 Samuel 5:13; 1 Chronicles 3:1-9, 14:3; 1 Kings 11:3; 2 Chronicles 11:21; and Deuteronomy 21:15 (McLellan 2012:18).

<sup>270</sup> Bockelson set a personal example in the matter of multiple marriages. In the fall he had four wives, in the winter six, and by the following spring sixteen wives. Yet it seemed not that the king was driven not so much by the sensual passions, considering the fact that none of king's wives became pregnant by him (Klötzer 2007:244).

the ruling clique. Rothmann's rationalization of polygamy and of Davidic Kingship served as justification of Bockelson's political rehabilitation with the connivance of ruling notables (Bakker 1986:114-5).<sup>271</sup> This once again demonstrates that Bockelson played piggy in the middle.

To be sure, the practice of communism and polygamy in Münster became chiefly responses to the siege and the connected refugee problem. It reached its high point in the heady weeks following the February miracle under Matthjisson's reign. Afterwards it showed its crude reality as a war communism, modified and made still more unappealing by King Bockelson's responsiveness to the power elites (Stayer 1986:134). In short, in Bockelson's Machiavellian diplomacy, community of goods and polygamy were the culmination of his socio-political eclectic role which served as a swindle for the benefit of the two ruling powers, namely, the Münster native notables and the Melchiorite immigrant radicals.

### **5.3.3.3 Religious Eclectic**

When Bockelson succeeded to his predecessor's position, he had an unenviable double job; not only did maintain apocalyptic enthusiasm among the rank and file of the besieged, but also made the balance between the two political powers, namely, the immigrant prophets and the native notables. Although Bockelson was less of a charismatic leader than Matthjisson, he was more of a politician than his master (McLellan 2012:26). From his background as a player and poet, Bockelson distinguished himself with his oratory ability and convinced the leaderless communicants to accept him as their new leader (Bax 1903:198, Cohn 1961:268). Yet, Bockelson was, in a sense, an unfortunate competitor under the shadow of the charismatic leadership of John Matthjisson. Indeed, Matthjisson, as a self-appointed prophet, possessed "a personal magnetism which enabled him to claim, with some show of plausibility, a special role in bringing history to its appointed consummation" (Cohn 1961:285). "His acts were sanctioned by his pneuma" and nobody could speak against him (Eichler 1981:47). Coupled with the chiliastic expectations, Matthjisson's prophetic leadership appealed to his followers to assume his "messianic roles to shape and change the political and social institutions" of Münster (Lerner 1983:6).

Yet, the situation at Bockelson was the opposite of Matthjisson. Bockelson suffered from a lack of

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<sup>271</sup> Yet, some have tried to see the role of polygamy in Anabaptist Münster not only as social and political, but also as religious and spiritual complex, by emphasizing both King Bockelson's prophetic status and Rothmann's religious motivations. For more details in this regard, see Williamson (2000:27-38), Bakker (1986:105-16), and Hillerbrand (1988:507-11).

authority, principally due to his doubtful prophetic gift and its accompanying charisma (Rammstedt 1966:75 quoted by Eichler 1981:47). “His prophecies were highly rational and consequently were not satisfying to the congregation” who was accustomed to Matthijsson’s charismatic authority (Rammstedt 1966:76 quoted by Eichler 1981:47). Thus, the death of Matthijsson functioned Bockelson as both an anchor and a trap. Even though Bockelson quickly rose through the ranks of the stunned community, becoming a new leader after Matthijsson, it did not ease doubts of congregation on the absence of his spiritual authority. It rather made him as a comparison to the charismatic predecessor and elevated the inability of his leadership to a higher level (Rammstedt 1966:76 quoted by Eichler 1981:47). This enabled Bockelson to think of legitimating his position. He began to pledge to seek support from the native notables –Rothmann and Knipperdolling, while considering spontaneous mass assemblages, who questioned his leadership, to be a threat (Eichler 1981:48). From it derived Bockelson’s new tactic, namely, the institutionalization of prophecy (Weber 1978:249, Eichler 1981:49). To compensate for his lack of prophetic leadership, Bockelson began to take the process of routinization of charisma, which manifested the cruelty and terror of his religious cult (Rammstedt 1966:79 quoted by Eichler 1981:48). Thus, prophecy and punishment had conspired to bring Bockelson to a status as “the institutionalization of leadership” (Eichler 1981:57).

In this process of routinization of charisma, Bockelson’s own responsibility for unrealistic prophecies and promises could be avoided, “for all events supernatural forces were made responsible in order to feel one’s dependence in one’s behaviour on God, in order to live in a deterministic world” (Rammstedt 1966:79 quoted by Eichler 1981:48). For example, when the besieged congregation expected the relief from the Netherlands, Bockelson declared its fulfilment at Easter as a prophecy (Költzer 2007:248). But no salvation had come until Easter and king Bockelson switched promptly his story that the promise of deliverance meant “in an inward, spiritual sense not as an external reality” (Költzer 2007:248). Shifting responsibility to the congregation who relied on the outside brothers rather than on God, Bockelson suddenly claimed that Christian vengeance should be withdrawn (Cornelius 1965:130 quoted by Klötzer 2007:248). Thus, under his permission, military exercises in the cathedral square turned into a form of sporting events (Klötzer 2007:248). But, in anticipation of the upcoming battle, Bockelson once again encouraged the contingents, who were celebrating communion, riding from communion service to communion service (Klötzer 2007:239).

In an effort to combine pragmatism with his prophetic role, a big effort at Bockelson was to ensure his court with the height of sophistication (Cornelius 1965:85-6 quoted by Klötzer 2007:244). “Whenever in public, he would appear accompanied by members of the court, splendidly dressed in the finest

robes, and adorned with one of his two gold crowns” (McLellan 2012:28). This was not an expression of hypocrisy, but a desperate effort to display his leadership to the community (Bax 1903:220). Even during the final stage of the siege, Bockelson did not shrink from the institutionalization of leadership. He even organized a mocking mass which was against the Catholic practice (Jelsma 1998:68). It began as a religious activity, making a mockery of the prince-bishop and its theme revolved around the victory of good over evil. In this carnival-like ridicule, “rats’ head, bats and bones were sacrificed” (Cornelius 1965:150 quoted by Jelsma 1998:68). The weakening of Bockelson’s charisma was, in this way, compensated for by the congregation who began to align themselves to the institutionalization of leadership.

The more hopeless the situation of the besieged became and the more incredible their faith in the *parousia* appeared, so much the more heightened grew their desire for miracles...Despite the complete institutionalization of community life, no conflict between institution and prophecy arose, since the latter also became institutionalized. Prophecy was completely in the service of the institution (Rammstedt 1966:80 quoted by Eichler 1981:49).

This brings the interpretations of King Bockelson’s surreal, bizarre performances to the whole new dimension. The cruelty and terror of his regime, though often cloaked in religious expressions, were primarily a means of compensating his lack of prophetic leadership. By turning-prophecy-into-institution, Bockelson expected two-fold vindication; one was the recognition of his good leadership by the ruling elites and the other was the compensation for lack of his charisma by the congregation. All suggest then that Bockelson’s cultic activities were not the pride of his absolute dignity and power, but a sort of the desperate outcry and tragic laughter, derived from the recognition of his lack of charismatic authority. This indicates that there were much of negotiations and compromises behind Bockelson’s religiously bizarre performances. Indeed, Bockelson tried to set about dissolving the existing tensions and doubts through more-or-less cathartic and theatrical religious activities as a means of appeasing both the ruling elites and the congregation.

In sum, a careful reading of the Anabaptist Münster tells that John Bockelson’s leadership was more than the vanity and the lust of a former tailor and innkeeper. Merely characterizing him as a cunning demagogue seems not convincing. A wrong impression is also conveyed when his theatrical performances is simply linked to his prophetic authority. He was neither a charismatic Prophet, nor a learned Reformer. Rather Bockelson found himself between the radical Melchiorites and the reactionary notables. Thus, what distinctive characteristics of Bockelson is not cruelty and terror, but conspiracy and compromise. It is more plausible then that a true portrait of Bockelson is to be seen in his eclectic role between the radical prophets of Matthjisson’s group and the reactionary reformers of the Rothmann’s group. In short, Bockelson was neither the radical, nor the reactionary, but the eclectic

as being-in-the-two power groups.

## 5.4 THE PROFILES OF THE MÜNSTER MINJUNG: BEYOND THE RADICAL, REACTIONARY AND ECLECTIC

The profiles of the radical Reformers challenge one to read the Anabaptist Münster in the mono-dimensional presentation of history. Rather they pose a critical look by showing how that story includes distinctive and dynamic tension among the various groups. This in particular manifests in three leading figures, namely, John Matthjisson as being-in-the-immigrant Melchiorite prophets, the radicals; Bernhard Rothmann as being-in-the-native civic reformers, the reactionary; and John Bockelson as being-in-the-eclectic between the two power structures. This offers the need for more close and critical reading of Münster Anabaptism. The finding minjung in Münster as the subjects of history is one important contribution to this reading. By positing the minjung in Münster, who has long been excluded, as part of historical protagonist, a more balanced and healthy picture of Münster Anabaptism comes into being. A greater engagement with the minjung (common people), in this light, includes both “sympathetic” and “critical” reading;<sup>272</sup> it is sympathetic in terms of witnessing to their *han* – sorrow, suffering, and sinned-against, but it is also critical in terms of participating in their *dan* –the praxis of agonized violence of love. At issue here is to shed new light on the minjung in Münster Anabaptism –by focusing especially on women as minjung of the minjung –whose role goes beyond the radical, reactionary and eclectic.

### 5.4.1 Women in Münster as Victims and Participants

#### 5.4.1.1. Überwasser Nuns

It is far from the truth that the Anabaptist movement in Münster was the product of a social revolution by the low strata of society. Rather the movement was, from its inception, welcomed by all strata of the population (Rammstedt 1969:122 quoted by Jelsma 1998). More remarkable was the positive role of women in this city, consisting of the overwhelming population. Indeed, it was a number of enthusiastic women who made the city of Münster the Anabaptist event (Jelsma 1998:70). Perhaps Anabaptist new teachings came to them with a new hope; a way of liberation –there was neither male nor female, neither slave nor free in Anabaptism (Jelsma 1998:69). Anyhow, the reality of Anabaptism in Münster was that women had played a greater role than elsewhere (Jelsma 1998:70). Indeed, despite its limited gender role, there were Anabaptist women who were able to play active roles in prophesizing and missionary works (Haude 2007:426). In Münster Anabaptism, the ability to prophesy was

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<sup>272</sup> The researcher owes this term and its extended meaning to Margaret Mile (2005: xiv).

generally recognized as God's vessels or instrument and this resulted in female Anabaptists' ability to take the lead;

...during this first stage in Münster, women began to preach, for example, the daughter of tailor, Georg thom Berge, who addressed a huge crowd for two hours on 8 February. Another woman then walked through the town shouting, until her voice gave up. Then she tied a sheep's bell to her girdle in order to continue her alarming work. Gesturing she pointed to heaven from where the judgment would come. It was also a woman who already in this initial stage prophesied that the King of Zion would descend from heaven to renew Jerusalem. At that moment John Matthijsson had not even arrived in the city (Jelsma 1998:71).

This of course could not satisfy everybody. The behaviour of some women in particular turned out to be a stumbling block to many—if not all—male leadership. Thus was followed by ridicule and contempt. To their eyes, women raved like lunatics; “they began to see apocalyptic visions on the street, and of such intensity that they would throw themselves on the ground, screaming, writhing and foaming at the mouth” (Cohn 1961:283). This became one of the main reasons that the significant number of wealthy citizens had left the town with contempt (Löffler 1923:27 quoted by Jelsma 1998:71).

This negative view from outside was not new among the Anabaptist women (Haude 2007:429-31). As such, male leadership was standard in Anabaptism, viewing men as shepherd or patriarchs of their community (William and Mergal 1967:207). In this patriarchal leadership, “women retained entirely subordinate, both at home and in church” (Irwin 1979: xxi). Women even had to call their husband ‘lord’; “all of women, both young and old, have to be ruled by the men” (Stupperich 1970:258 quoted by Jelsma 1998:71). In all the regulations, “women were to their husbands as their husbands were to Christ; the salvific path for women was, therefore, a tortuous one through a double intermediacy of men and Christ” (Stupperich 1970:269 quoted by Hsia 1988:59).<sup>273</sup> It came as no surprise then that Anabaptist male leaders saw such religious ecstasy and prophecy of women in a negative way (Weber 1922:104). They all remained suspicious of women's leadership aspirations as a potential counter-power that could challenge their patriarchal order (Waite 2013:496). Then, immediate actions had been taken. The messages of women visionaries were forcefully silenced and the direct access to salvation and sanctity for Anabaptist women were fully denied (Hsia 1988:59).<sup>274</sup> In early stage, some women spoke out, but “patriarchal structures were stronger and swiftly shook early moves toward the

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<sup>273</sup> Bernhard Rothmann wrote; “Man must re-appropriate his dominion over woman with a manly attitude. Everywhere women have got the upper hand. They lead men just like a bear is led on a chain. As a result the whole world has been immersed in adultery, impurity and fornication. Almost everywhere the wife wears the breeches. But God places everyone in his order, the man under Christ, the woman under the man, and that in full submission. Women must be obedient in quietness” (Stupperich 1970:258 quoted by Jelsma 1998).

<sup>274</sup> Anabaptist men, especially many husbands who were in the face of persecution and execution, left a considerable amount of spousal guidance, which was expressed as concern for one's wife's salvation. They, in this way, tried “to exercise their control over their wives even after their death” (quoted by Haude 2007:454-55).

emancipation of women” (Goertz 2004:76). Thus, the initial promise of Anabaptism now turned into the new ball and chain on the reality of women subjugation (Haude 2007:437). To be sure, within the shell of the initial excitement and promises of the movements, the substance of Anabaptism in Münster was subjugation of women by men “by restricting their social and religious roles, by transforming them into obedient wives and daughters of polygamous, patriarchal and sacred tribe” (Hsia 1988:60).

From it derives a distinctive portrayal of Anabaptist women in Münster: victims. Evidently, women in Münster were victims. They were;

victims of the husbands and male family members who left them in the city to tend family property, while the men themselves fled the Anabaptist takeover; victims of an Anabaptist leadership intent on instituting an even stronger patriarchy by introducing polygamy; victims of starvation, fighting, repression after the city’s fall (Grieser 1995:33).

But, these women were not mere silent sufferers, but willing participants as models of courage (Shantz 2009:21-34). In the midst of deteriorating external conditions, the disciplines and regulations were strictly enforced to ensure the defence of the city. Thus, an essential task was newly allotted to everyone, both brothers and sisters, as artisan or in the maintenance and repair of the fortification (Baring-Gould 1891:293). The guards on the walls were regularly inspected by the Elders, day and night (Baring-Gould 1891:290-91). But most of all, the women played a crucial role. When the city was bombarded in preparation for an attack, the women, both older and younger, worked all night to repair the damaged walls (Baring-Gould 1891:293). When the prince-bishop troops tried to take the city by storm they were received not only with cannon-shot but with stones, boiling water and flaming pitch (Baring-Gould 1891:311-2, 353) and in so doing, women were able to spike many of the guns. To be sure, women in Münster took an active part in securing and defending the city. “Despite their generally inferior position, [Anabaptist] women were essential for the maintenance, growth, and survival of the [Münster Kingdom]” (Haude 2007:430-31).<sup>275</sup> All in all, Anabaptist women in Münster were voluntary actors, “taking control of their lives” (Grieser 1995:33). It was these women in Münster who played dominant roles in defending the New Jerusalem through their strength, courage, steadfastness, boldness and bravery. Indeed, “they prophesied, they agitated for reform, they resisted the leadership, and they fought alongside the men” as willing participants (Grieser 1995:33).

The ample example of women in Münster as active participants can be found in the record of the

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<sup>275</sup> What motives, then, might have incited women to join the Anabaptist movement in general and the Münster in particular? One possible motive was the religious aspect –the persuasiveness of Anabaptist teaching. Yet other motives, such as economic safety or familial inducement, also played a decisive role as well. For the former reason, see Irwin (1979:20-1), Wyntjes (1977:168) and for the latter, see Clasen (1965:182), Haude (2007:449-49), and Hsia (1988:51-69).

chronicle of Überwasser Convent. Here, interestingly enough, the collaboration between laywomen and nuns had been made for the reform in Münster Anabaptism (Grieser 1995:38). According to a historical report (Kerseenbrock), on January 4, 1534 protests against allowing Lutheran influence into the city were being waged by a group of women and Lutheran minister Fabricius' popularity was extremely low (Stupperich 1973:9-50 quoted by Grieser 1995:37). The next day, Überwasser nuns, who also aligned themselves with Rothmann, acted in concert with these women and they marched together toward the city council chambers, calling for Fabricius's expulsion (Grieser 1995:37). Their complaints against the Hessian Lutheran were two-fold; one was his theology and the other was his manner of speaking and ignorance of the local dialect (Grieser 1995:37). When their demands were refused by the councilors, "the women ridiculed them, called them papists and threatened their eternal punishment" (Kerseenbrock 1899-1900:6:467-68 quoted by Grieser 1995:37). Überwasser nuns' motivation in aligning with the protesting women demonstrated their belief that "the Word of God be preached in language accessible to the [ordinary] people" (Grieser 1995:38). Significant implication here was that Münster women, both nuns and laywomen, placed themselves at the forefront of the agitation for the radical reform (Grieser 1995:34). Furthermore, judging from the fact that nuns were the first re-baptizers by Rothmann (Grieser 1995:38), there had apparently been strong ties between nuns and the reform party in the city (Grieser 1995:39). Thus was created by the important religious role of the reforming nuns. "Their boldness in going before the city council, their willingness to preach on the street, and their efforts to convert their unwilling sisters, all suggest that these nuns were activists, taking control not only of their own religious lives, but seeking to shape the religious life of the whole city" (Grieser 1995:39). By actively participating in the religious interest, Münster women became the subject of their own reformation (Grieser 1995:38).

#### **5.4.1.2 Hille Feicken: The Minjung Judith of Münster**

Although the sources are silent about much of her biography, it seemed evident that Hille Feicken was a committed Anabaptist from Sneek in Friesland (Snyder and Hecht 1996:289-90). She came to Münster at the end of February, or the beginning of March 1534, "not for curiosity or material need, but for reasons of faith," giving away all her possessions (Snyder and Hecht 1996:289). According to her later confession, she was married to a man, named "Psalmus" whose identity could well have been Peter Simon (Snyder and Hecht 1996:290). He was "by-no-means ordinary" (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:64) and probably occupied a high rank in Münster as a member of the Council of Twelve (Snyder and Hecht 1996:290).<sup>276</sup> The solidarity with the Anabaptist community gave Hille a

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<sup>276</sup> Scholars have tried to identify this prominent Frisian man as the one in the Anabaptist group who stormed the

strong conviction that God had led her to this place (Snyder and Hecht 1996:292). The increasing threats and dangers from the outside even awakened her consciousness about the mission of God. While actively participating in defensive works with other women (Snyder and Hecht 1996:292), this beautiful young girl began not only to see in the prince-bishop Franz the great Holofernes, but also project into herself the heroic Judith,<sup>277</sup> who rescued her people from their deep distress (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:27-8).

Hille was so convinced that she received God-given task; “day and night God gave her no rest carrying about this mission” (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:66). Then Hille dared to risk the extraordinary; she eventually left the city, driven by the commitment to save Münster from the episcopal siege (Haude 2000:14). This fifteen-year-old girl’s goal was to re-enact the biblical example of Judith in the siege of Bethulia, who beheaded the Assyrian commander Holofernes while he slept (Williams 1992:570). She believed that the Lord God would show her the way (Cornelius 1965:404 quoted by Klötzer 2007:240). With this conviction, on June 16, 1534 Hille crossed the enemy line and it was just weeks later from the prince-bishop’s first attack against the Münster (Snyder and Hecht 1996:288). Hille’s determination to liberate the besieged city led to her plot to kill the prince-bishop, “using, if necessary the same feminine wiles” (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:64). Having “enhanced her already general attributes of beauty” (Arthur 1999:86) with fine clothes and jewels, this beautiful girl brought with her a truly handsome “Nessus shirt,”<sup>278</sup> soaked in poison (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:64). This mission of God made consequent differences between Hille and biblical Judith less lurid. In fact, Hille, unlike Judith, was not a rich widow; she did not enter the enemy camp with a maid, but alone and not in the night but in broad daylight; finally this young girl did not bring a sword, but a poison shirt to murder the prince-bishop (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:64). Yet, these differences did not affect Hille’s action because it was her deep trust that God, not herself, wanted it that way (Snyder and Hecht

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Oldeklooster (Old Cloister) near Bolsward in Friesland, and was killed in the battle. Peter was also considered as the brother of Menno Simon, the pacifist leader who opposed Bockelson vigorously (Snyder and Hecht 1996:290).

<sup>277</sup> “In the Old Testament tale of Judith and Holofernes from *The Book of Judith* (not included in the Hebrew or Protestant biblical canons), the beautiful Judith’s home city of Bethulia was under siege by Holofernes, a general of Nebuchadnezzar. After becoming drunk at a banquet, Holofernes repairs to his tent with Judith, who kills him and brings his head back to Bethulia, which had thus been saved from conquest” (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:36). From it came to a plausible assumption that the Münsterites considered the Old Testament a priority than the New Testament, since Judith is an Apocryphal heroine of the Old Testament period. This might be one of the distinguishing marks of Münsterites from other Anabaptists whose priority mostly put on the New Testament (Prokhorov 2013:200). G. H. Williams also assumes the prevalence of Old Testament sermons preached in Münster (Williams 1992:570).

<sup>278</sup> “The Shirt of Nessus comes from Greek mythology as follows: Hercules requested that the centaur Nessus carry Hercules’s wife Deianira across a river, during which Nessus molested her. Hercules then shot Nessus with a poisoned arrow, which prompted Nessus to give Deianira his tunic as a gift for Hercules, which would supposedly make him love only her. The shirt, however, was poisoned and eventually led to Hercules’s death” (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:69).

1996:292).

When Hille went out to the prince-bishop's camp, she expected to be let through, but was arrested instead (Williams 1992:570). Taken to the prince-bishop's high bailiff, she faced an interrogation (Baring-Gould 1891:295). Pretending that she wished to betray the city (Williams 1992:570), Hille told him that she and her husband were disillusioned with their preachers' teachings and now they wanted safety for them (Baring-Gould 1891:296). In return, she added, all she knew about the city's defenses that learned from her husband were given to the prince-bishop so as to conquer Münster without a single casualty (Arthur 1999:87). At this point, Hille must have been persuasive, for the bailiff decided to take her to see Waldeck, the prince-bishop (Baring-Gould 1891:296). Yet, she was no more successful than John Matthjisson had been some ten weeks earlier. Unfortunately for Hille, another resident of Münster, named Herman Ramert, sought asylum at the same time (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:64). This Münster deserter offered a more-timely gift than a fancy shirt. He warned the prince-bishop that Hille's entire story was a lie (Baring-Gould 1891:296). Truth was that she was rather on a mission to assassinate the prince-bishop with a poisoned shirt (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:64). Thus was followed by immediate interrogations under torture. Hille soon confessed that "she had intended to become a second Judith to try to save her city from the prince-bishop" (Arthur 1999:87, Haude 2000:14). After further torture on the wheel, Hille faced execution with smile and conviction that "she would return safe and sound to [New] Zion" (Baring-Gould 1891:296).

Implicit in it was that Hille's plot was an open secret in the city (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:64). In fact, before taking it into action, Hille had consulted her plan with the Münster leadership: Bockelson, Knipperdolling and Rothmann (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:66). They considered it too prosaic to implement, but let her try (Arthur 1999:86). For they had nothing to lose in allowing this brave young girl to take the risk. If Hille could succeed, "the siege would surely collapse and their fame would be immeasurably enhanced. If she failed, little was lost save her life" (Arthur 1999:86). Yet, this does not mean that she aligned herself completely with this Münster leadership. Rather, as her interrogations suggested, Hille was quite critical; "since she did not feel responsible for any earthly authority, but to God alone" (Snyder and Hecht 1996:291). To her eyes, Münster, God's chosen city, was still far from experiencing gender equality; the strongly patriarchal organization of the city endowed manhood with power and authority, while at the same time stressing women's subordination and silence (Snyder and Hecht 1996:291). This resulted in Hille's negative judgement on governmental authorities. For all Anabaptist leadership in Münster –including Knipperdolling, Bockelson,

Matthijsson or even Rothmann –talked only in the language of brotherhood (Haude 2007:428). Thus, none of them was legitimate and “God’s word had been lost somewhere *en route*,” as something Hille was compelled to do (Snyder and Hecht 1996:291-92).

Hille’s emulation of the biblical heroine had left important consequences. First, it gave a completely different light on the death of Matthijsson by showing that Hille inspired, not was inspired by, Matthijsson (Snyder and Hecht 1996:293). From the beginning, Hille’s inspiration was recognized by Matthijsson, the charismatic leader, as a welcome guest (Snyder and Hecht 1996:293). To Matthijsson, retelling of the Judith story, led and protected by God, could be the perfect solution for the New Jerusalem which was in deep trouble (Snyder and Hecht 1996:293). But there was one problem. The biblical heroine was woman whose independent image was not favoured in Münster leadership (Snyder and Hecht 1996:293). Thus was created by the adaption of the story which was fitted into the male-dominated milieu (Snyder and Hecht 1996:293). Matthijsson, then, utilized in his discretion Hille’s inspiration. In this way, the problem and limitation of gender role was dissolved; “as a male, it was not possible for him to take the role of the biblical heroine himself, but it was possible that he appropriated her way of thinking, her spirit, and her success” (Snyder and Hecht 1996:293). This explained Matthijsson’s somewhat enigmatic sortie which eventually led his tragic demise. In the process of adaptation, Hille’s inspiration was completely in the service of Matthijsson and this consequently provoked him to embark a new mission to save his people from the besieging army, despite it turned out a mere suicidal rush (Snyder and Hecht 1996:293).

Second, Hille’s action represented that she was a subjective, active participant in her destiny. Indeed, Hille was willing to take the risk of going over into the enemy camp (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:64). It was out of her own volition; no one sent her (Snyder and Hecht 1996:294). Thus, the death of Matthijsson would not catch up with her. Rather Hille made it as opportunity to “hold tenaciously to her intention and seek to realize her plan” (Snyder and Hecht 1996:294). Hille’s strong commitment to her mission even made the consent of male leadership obsolete, because she rejected to serve “as a tool for someone else” (Snyder and Hecht 1996:294). This conversely proves that there were considerable distrust and discontent of the male leaders about Hille’s plan. Before carrying out her mission, Hille, therefore, had to overcome barriers in the form of male leaders of Münster –first John Matthijsson, and later John Bockelson (Snyder and Hecht 1996:294). Indeed, Helle’s Judith plot did not put into action under Matthijsson’s rule. Although Hille’s inspiration was granted by him, she could carry out her mission only after Matthijsson’s death (Snyder and Hecht 1996:294). The same was true for Bockelson. He had little interest in Hille’s romantic plan, but much attention to the spotlight she

received. Bockelson was reluctant to such independent actions of little girl and it became part of reasons to introduce polygamy, fearing Hille's independent attempt (Haude 2000:14). Out of his lack of prophetic authority, he might have seen Hille as a threat to his rule, just as he saw in Psalmus, her husband, a threat to his own leadership (Arthur 1999:89-90). Against all such hindrances and disturbances, Hille, fifteen-year-old girl, remained steadfast and put her plan into action to bring a new hope and deliverance to the New Jerusalem.

As such, Hille Feicken had lived in the city of Münster for only a few months (Snyder and Hecht 1996:294). She found in Judith of the Old Testament a role model. This little-yet-courageous girl wished to become the Judith of Münster who would bring a magnificent rescue with God's help. However, the real significance was not on her blind imitation of the biblical heroine in every details, but on the new recognition of her identity as a woman, minjung of the minjung. This enabled her to connect it to the actual conditions in which she found herself (Snyder and Hecht 1996:294). With such new vistas, Hille's goal to liberate the besieged city gained new momentum. The consequent deviations between Hille and the biblical Judith, in this light, served not as a deterrent but as a catalyst. These differences rather encouraged her not to give up her plans, but to carry out her actions as the Judith of Münster. Furthermore, Hille's commission to liberate the besieged city from the enemy, mirrored a consciousness of the people of Münster, who decided to take the matter into their own hands. This was, in other words, a self-awakening, self-consciousness, and self-determination of the Münster minjung. It on one sense affected Matthijsson, the leader of Münster, to take it seriously to the extent that he adapted it according to his own discretion. Yet, this power of the powerless, on the other, was seen as a threat to the existing Anabaptist male leadership. For it challenged male-oriented milieu which provided an excuse for the practice of Anabaptist masculinity, such as the introduction of polygamy. Hille, in this light, played an exceptionally important role among both the external –the prince-bishop and internal –Anabaptist authority –male leadership. Here she looked for the realization of God's mission when she took her role as the minjung Judith of Münster who was called to liberate both brothers and sisters beyond her traditional female role in Münster.

#### **5.4.2 The Münster Minjung as the New Psalmists as well as the Protagonists**

The common people of Münster were painful mourners on one sense, but joyous singers on other sense. The besieged conditions even failed to hinder them from identifying themselves completely and totally with the psalmists who brought a new meaning of hope against hope (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:87). The few surviving sources consistently mention that the Anabaptists in Münster had sung "German psalms" and "songs of praise" (Cornelius 1965 quoted by Brecht 1985:362). A singing of

psalms was, in a word, the daily bread of the Münster congregation in the pre-and-post Anabaptist Kingdom period (Kerssenbrock 1899/1900:403 quoted by Brecht 1985:363). How would it be possible? There is no question that Münster Anabaptists believed their city to be the New Jerusalem (Dülmen 1974:81, 103 quoted by Klaassen 1992:86). “A whole town had become a church, in other word, the church had been absorbed into the new kingdom. The people knelt as easily in the streets as in the church. Sermons were preached in the church buildings but also in the squares of town, and psalms were sung, wherever people congregated” (Stupperich 1970:256 quoted by Jelsma 1998:55).

Under King John, it became routinized and institutionalized, but even this was done not by compulsion, but by assent of the people (Eichler 1981:49). The Münster congregations had sung at the conclusion of the preaching service, of communal meals, observances of communion, celebrations and the coronation of John Bockelson (Brecht 1985:363). Decisive is its antiphonal method, which is, call and response style of singing. Thus was functioned by King Bockelson as a cantor, the Münster people as a congregation.

During a celebration in the courtyard of the Münster cathedral, an Old Testament reading given by the king was followed by a German psalm sung antiphonally by the clergy and schoolmasters, and the soprano voices of the “little boys” and the gathered people. Thereupon, another reading by the king was followed by another antiphonal hymn (Brecht 1985:363).

All of these performances then would contribute to placing them to the common heritage: the people’s song. Its purpose is to involve both a cantor and a congregation with this song and thus to develop it as a congregation activity as a whole. In this way, “the real function of [King Bockelson] as cantor has become extinct, and the reference to the people’s song is avoided, as the cantor is no longer considered a people’s leader” (Gouel 1991:73-85).

To the Münster congregations, there was the reason for singing specific songs which is now known in only four instances.<sup>279</sup> One of the songs is called, *War Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit* (“If God Were Not beside Us in This Hour”). On April 5, 1533 when the Münster congregation was undergoing a transitional period from the evangelical-reformed faith to Anabaptism, the Überwasser Church was under an iconoclastic attack (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:19). It was on Palm Sunday and Bernhard Rothmann celebrated communion there amid the antiphonal singing of psalms (Baring-Gould 1891:232). One report says that they “croaked nasally the 124th Psalm passage ‘the snare has been broken and we have escaped’” (Kerssenbrock 1899/1900:191 quoted by Brecht 1985:363). This

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<sup>279</sup> Here, the researcher is primarily indebted to the concentrated study of Martin Brecht (1985:362-66). The songs of the Anabaptists in Münster, which will be followed, are mostly subjected to his findings and interpretations.

third verse of the psalm, referring to the release of the bird from the fowler's snare, especially offered a sense of comfort and hope to the distressed congregation who were faced with the insecurity of the besieging condition (Brecht 1985:363). In this light, the attribution of this hymn to Luther was insignificant. The Anabaptists were rather encouraged to adopt and sing this antiphonal psalmody following the repulsed attack on the city on August 31, 1534 (Brecht 1985:364). Indeed, while the entire population of Münster was desperate for rebuilding the weakest wall, ladies were singing (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:87), reminding that the first verse best reflected their own experience of that day: "If God had not been on our side –we should have had to despair" (Cornelius 1965:81 quoted by Brecht 1985:364).

*Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* ("Glory Alone to God on High") was also sung by the Anabaptists in Münster. Apparently the so-called German Gloria became the Münster Anabaptists' favourite song (Brecht 1985:364, Baring-Gould 1891:290). This was frequently sung in many occasions, such as, at the coronation of John Bockelson (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:90) and at the conclusion of a celebration in the cathedral courtyard (Cornelius 1965:83, 134 quoted by Brecht 1985:364). Ironically enough, the song was also practiced at the execution of Queen Elizabeth Wantscherer on June 11, 1535, when she criticized and rebelled against John's authority (Lippe and Reck-Malleczewen 2008:149). Such singing provided a glimpse into the mentality of the Münster congregation. Phrases such as "God is pleased with us" represented the Anabaptists' self-consciousness, identifying themselves as God's elect people (Brecht 1985:364). Whereas the petition in the fourth verse for protection from the "forces of the devil" mirrored their self-understanding of the currently besieging situation; it resulted not from their revolutionary conquest, but from the surprising attack of the prince-bishop, the anti-Christ, which urged them to act in self-defence (Kirchhoff 1962:77-170, Stupperich 1958:12).

*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* ("A Mighty Fortress Is Our God") is another song in which the Münster Anabaptists were singing. Against the ever more rigorous siege, John Bockelson reshuffled the women, who had remained in the city, and divided them into "platoons" to aid in the city's defence (Brecht 1985:364). While marching off to their stations, such makeshift women-platoons began to sing "a German song called 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God'" (Brecht 1985:364). This hymn, rendering of the theme of Psalm 46, "reinforced their determination to resist" (Brecht 1985:364). Here Luther's authorship of this hymnody paled into insignificance (Brecht 1985:364). Being encouraged by the successful defence of the city on August 31, 1534 (Baring-Gould 1891:312), Bockelson, as the cantor, had praised the aid of their mighty God and had led the people's song by quoting from the second verse: "With force of arms we nothing can" (Cornelius 1965:81, 128 quoted by Brecht 1985:364).

Finally, although the songs of the Münsterite Anabaptists were mostly attributed to the hymnody of the Reformed, there was an exception (Brecht 1985:365). According to the testimony of one Münsteraner, who escaped from the besieged city, but was taken captive by the prince-bishop forces, “it was prophesied that in a millennium no such joyous New Year had been rung in as the one which was about to begin; therefore [the Münsterites] had composed a psalm to be sung at the royal table: ‘God Will Reveal a New Thing in This New Year’” (Dülmen 1974:194 quoted by Brecht 1985:365). Judging from Bernhard Rothmann’s “Report of the Vengeance to Come,” the expected “new thing” could be seen either as the dawn of a “day of vengeance” against the godless, or as the inauguration of the millennium (Stupperich 1970:284-97 quoted by Brecht 1985:366). The New Year, in this sense, may best be reckoned to begin immediately after Christmas in 1534 when Münster was filled with an intensive sense of immanence (Baring-Gould 189:313-14). In particular, two things in Rothmann’s writing corresponded to the appellation in the “psalm” reported by a runaway Münsteraner. It seemed evident that verses 1 and 6-9 of Psalm 149, related to vengeance against the heathen, were intentionally selected by Rothmann (Brecht 1985:366). Thus was followed by his interesting variation of Psalm 149:1. The original reading, “Sing to the Lord a new song,” was substituted for another reading, “a new song to the King of Zion” (Brecht 1985:366). With that change the psalm was re-made as homage to the king of Münsterite Zion, John Bockelson. Rothmann’s next verses were, therefore, no other than his joyous expectation of a great turning point in history which came reigned in Münster in that December of 1534; “The shrine now is broken, All doubt is put away. May we see David’s kingdom. Come on earth this day, for which we rejoice always. The godless foes are all undone! O joy of joys!” (Stupperich 1970:294 quoted by Brecht 1985:366). This song fragment thus referred to the central hope of the Anabaptists who had a sense of satisfaction that political messianism would be fully punished for all the injustice and evil which they had experienced here (Brecht 1985:366). Here, the Münster congregation did not recite Luther’s hymnody parrot-fashion. They rather determined themselves to be the composer who expressed their collective expectation and hope in the midst of suffering.

All indicates then that the Münster congregations were the new psalmists who had undergone a drastic transformation from lamentation to praise; from suffering to glory. The people of Münster were the singers of lament but at the same time the singers of joy, for they understood that suffering is the path to glory (Rom. 8:17). Indeed, suffering with Christ and being glorified with Him encouraged the Münster congregations. As was the case with Christ, so too was with them who followed Him. Their suffering would be rewarded by Christ and rule with Him. Certainty was then that those who now

oppressed them would be expelled from the renewed world. To them, this psalm, therefore, should continue to be sung even when the expectation of an imminent in-break was disappointed and they should remain as the psalmists who saw suffering not as the end but as the beginning to glory. This made them self-psalmists who were singing in the fight, believing that the path to glory would go by way of the cross. Thus was created by the image of Münsterites both as the protagonists (*guru*), who had achieved their liberation by themselves and the psalmists (*avatar*), who have received their salvation by the Messiah.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION: THE ANABAPTIST KINGDOM OF MÜNSTER AS THE HYBRIDITY OF THE MÜNSTER MINJUNG AND THE REFORMERS**

Against the traditional view, the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster can be seen as a kaleidoscopic portrait, backed by the radical immigrant prophets, the reactionary native reformers, the eclectic between the two powers, and finally the Münster minjung. This means, the epitome of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster is to be found its creative and critical tension between these various groups. In its figurative fashion, the Münster rhapsody was played by the quartet, consisting of the radicals, the reactionary, the eclectic, and the common people. Noteworthy was the central role of the Münster minjung (common people) who, like the music conductor, led the whole ensemble in playing together. Indeed, these little people –in particular the poor and women from all stations of society –played an important role not as passively the object, but as actively the subject in the sense that they have their own power and authority in making and sustaining the history of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster.

First, in Münster, one underlying phenomenon was the sweeping apocalyptic expectations and their realization coincides with the active behaviour of the people. The event in a way mirrored the radicalization of the radicals. Passing through Luther's and Zwingli's Reformations and their repudiation, this radicalization became apparent in the notion that restitution began with Luther but needed to be completed. This included the destruction of the old order and the establishment of the Anabaptist reign as the new order, namely, the New Jerusalem. It was no other than the immigrant of Melchiorite Anabaptists who had spearheaded this radical movement in Münster. They gave rise to the apocalyptic crisis by justifying the city's role as the embryonic messianic kingdom on earth. This wave of excitement especially attracted to the lowest strata of the common people in Low Countries, who were on the bottom rung of the social ladder. They were captivated by this sudden, unexpected breakthrough, when a city had been liberated for the new covenant without bloodshed. They saw this political miracle as the sign of an open door to the new reality of a community of love, where the rich could no longer eat and drink the sweat of the poor (Stupperich 1970:256 quoted by Jelsma 1998:55).

In this light, the radical Dutch prophets had championed the powerless; they became articulators of the intense yearning of ordinary people for liberation from all the age-old oppressions of the powerful (Jelsma 1998:55-6).

Second, there was also an undercurrent of the reactionary native civic notables beneath the radical immigrant prophets. The Prophet-Reformer power-sharing indeed ensued in Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster. This Münsterite civic group acted as the reactionary in one sense, but they in other sense stood as strange bedfellows to preserve the religious and political freedom of the city. In this tactic agreement, the native civic reformers, rather than the radical prophets, played more decisive role in establishing the ideological basis of the Anabaptist Kingdom, manifested in Bernhard Rothmann. It was the native Münsterites' sense of civic legalism which transformed Melchiorite eschatology from suffering to crusading. Possession of legitimate power and the city tradition of defending its right enabled the immigrant Melchiorites to view Münster first as the New Jerusalem –a place of refuge for the saints which could be legitimately defensible –and later as a crusading kingdom (Bakker 1986:115).

From it derives a significant revision that the decision to employ the sword was a gradual process in response to external conditions and internal power struggles. Initially the Münster Anabaptists were ambivalent or undecided about the use of the sword and only gradually did they come to espouse its employment (Kirchhoff 1970:357-70, Stayer 1972:228, 230-33, Brady, Oberman and Tracy 1995:269).<sup>280</sup> This pales the fact that Anabaptist movement in Münster had devised revolutionary plans or plans of conquest. Rather, it was considered as the right to govern itself and to defend its freedom. The people of Münster remained within bounds, even when they tried to defend the city against the attacks of the bishop. This had happened before. In an earlier period the city council declared Münster an evangelical city, and the bishop had tried to intervene, using violence but they had closed the gates to him. Burghers stood guard. None of the princes had accused them of revolutionary then. They did what was their right to do; they defended themselves. Now that the city had become Anabaptist the prince-bishop laid siege again. The town population was at first much surprised to find themselves suddenly at war (Cohn 1961:286) and then was indignant when all of a sudden the surrounding princes

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<sup>280</sup> This evolution in thinking on the sword among the Münster Anabaptists is well reflected in the writing of Bernhard Rothmann, the chief ideologue and propagandist for the Münster Kingdom (Dipple 1999:91-105). There was, however, the stark contrast between Rothmann and the Münster minjung. While for Rothmann, the rationalization for the righteous to take up arm was rooted in the idea of an apocalyptic crusade for the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom of John, the Münsterite minjung found its root from their own suffering situation. Rothmann thus wished him (and John) to remain the minjung's leader (*guru*), while the minjung wished him (and John) to become their *avatar* as well as their *guru*. Both agreed that the age of suffering was giving away to the age of vengeance, but failed to agree to share their role-play in, for, and with the common people in Münster.

supported the prince-bishop (Jelsma 1998:58-9). Time and again they returned to the same theme. There had not even been a declaration of war (Stayer 1972:235). They were treated as if they were rebels instead of free citizens who had the right to defend their city against attacks (Stupperich 1970:207-8, quoted by Jelsma 1998:59).<sup>281</sup>

Third, from the critical and creative tension between the radical and reactionary group, the eclectic leadership was born. With the sudden death of John Matthjisson, the radical, the power of gravity fell into John Bockelson. His credentials were actually not impressive compared with his predecessor. He was a tailor, a salesman, and an amateur actor, all of 25 years of age. The main task of this less charismatic King was, therefore, to balance the two political powers as the eclectic. In order to bolster his position, Bockelson relied on two Münster citizens, Rothmann and Knipperdolling, who had been of no particular importance under Matthjisson. His political power-sharing had strictly controlled and regulated the scope and purpose so that his proposal of theocratic council of twelve elders may well be integrally related to the ensuing power struggle between him and the native elites. This, too, manifested in his socio-economic and religious eclectic. The practice of community of goods was reshaped into war-time rationing, while at the same time, the institution of polygamy was used and promoted under the approval of the ruling clique. When the internal and external situation became desperate, the consequent tensions were channeled into religious dissolution in the theatrical and cathartic forms. This was a sort of tragic laughter that emerged from his eclectic position. Bockelson's maneuvering climaxed in an attempt to switch his role from the charismatic prophet to the charismatic saviour as the new Solomon to compensate for his lack of prophetic authority.

Last but not least, there was the Münster minjung (common people) whose significance and contribution went beyond the radical, the reactionary, and the eclectic, but had been minimized or ignored for long time. The Münster event especially raised the aspiration as well as the opportunity of women, minjung of the minjung, as the reforming pioneers. It was, for example, Überwasser nuns who took an active and leading role in the Anabaptist takeover. This group of sisters was, in fact, the protagonist of the movement; they were the protesters against the Lutheran ministers; they were the preachers for the unwilling sisters; and they were the proponents of city reformers. This "second-class"

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<sup>281</sup> It is true to say that in many cases, it was the harsh rhetoric and violent response of authorities that played a crucial role in the escalation of conflict. Government reaction produced the results they were intended to combat –in this case, the intensification of Anabaptist opposition (Driedger 2007:519-20). Driedger explains relations between Anabaptists and government by the concept of "deviance amplification," the spiral of mutual rejection (Wallis 1977:205-11, 214-24). This, too, seems fit to the situation of Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster. The distinctive is that the Münster minjung responded to this governmental tactic both critically and creatively, not only as the protagonists but also as the psalmists.

people were also spiritual activists, appealing to the call of the Spirit. They were, in this sense, angry prophets whose visions revealed a murderous hatred of existing society and inspired violent actions of the part of other believers. They even prophesied the impending advent of New Jerusalem before John Matthijsson arrived in the city. It was women in Münster, especially single working women –spinsters, widows, and young servant girls, who opposed polygamy, the internal oppression; and it was Hille Feiken, a fifteen-year-old girl, who confronted the attack of prince-bishop, the external one. All suggest then that women in Münster were victims, but they were also participants and protagonist of their own destiny.

Furthermore, the Münster minjung became the new psalmists who sang a new song of the vision of New Jerusalem, the new Polis of shalom against the hopeless situation. How was it possible? It was because, in the suffering and broken context, the Münster minjung found the cross of Jesus, the messiah, who showed the pattern of suffering as the path to glory. Here, they were no longer the subject of their suffering, but they become the object of His suffering. In the new Polis of Shalom, the destructive power of prince-bishop was broken and thus they were freed. To be sure, in divine suffering, they could overcome their suffering with a new song. This eschatological belief made them remained as the palmists as well as the protagonists of their own destiny; on one sense, they were called to rewrite their own history, but on other sense, they were called to witness to Jesus, the true psalmist as well as the true Messiah.

To be summarized, the event of Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster requires the synoptic reading with the recognition of the complexity and the interrelationship of the various figures. First, there were the immigrant radical Melchiorites under the banner of chiliastic and revolutionary belief. They considered themselves as the 144,000 elect whose obligation was to set up the Kingdom of God and destroy the ungodly. Yet, there was also the group of native civic notables, who not only had created the preconditions for the Kingdom, but also had preserved their influence once it was established. The prophets' radical activities were then counter balanced by such the reactionary reformers' involvements. A sort of eclectic leadership of John Bockelson, the Münster King, was none other than the production of this Prophet-Reformer tension. This type of leadership was accepted by both parties as a desperate measure to preserve the religious and political freedom of the city under the current status of increasingly isolated situation.

Nonetheless this synoptic reading reveals the Münster minjung (common people) as the important co-agent of this event. They were in a sense the protagonists who went beyond the radical, the reactionary,

and the eclectic. They, on one sense, acted like the radicals in the case of Überwasser nuns and Hille Feiken, the Judith of Münster; they, on the other, participated in the reactionary activities like women in Münster who opposed polygamy. But they, like the ruling elites, did not fall into the pit of the eclectic position. Rather they had accomplished their unique task, beyond both the radical and the reactionary role as the new psalmists. They had rejected to become neither the lamentable victims nor the merciless revengers, but decided to become the singers of Jesus, the suffering Messiah, who moved from lamentation to praise, from suffering to glory. In this light, the Münster minjung were responsible for maintaining the necessary equilibrium between both the protagonists and psalmists. In a word, they, in so doing, could stand still as the protagonists with a face of psalmists, who had experienced of becoming the minjung-Messiah, a sign of the victory of the clown over the crown; of the kingdom of Münster (minjung) over the kingdom of Monster.

It, in particular, includes the necessity of posting Münster Anabaptism as the place of hybridity, depending on its dynamic interconnection between the *avatar*-hood/prophetic practice of the radical Reformers and the *guru*-ship/messianic practice of the common men. To be sure, by experiencing inner dynamics through (1) John Matthjisson, as being-in-the-immigrant-prophet, the radicals, (2) Bernhard Rothmann, as being-in-the-native-civic-reformers, the reactionary, (3) John Bockelson, as being-in-the-eclectic between the two power structures and finally, (4) the Münster minjung, beyond the radical, reactionary, and eclectic, the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster had become the place of hybridity, the kernel of the Communal Reformation, wherein various parties were dialectically driven to maintain both as *guru* and *avatar*; subjects and objects; great men and common men; victimizers and victims; and sinners and sinned-against.

This place of hybridity is asymmetrical, uncertain and in flux, but also holds the possibility of new emerging power –the praxis of *dan*, constructively resolving *han*. As such, the Münster is the setting of radical Reformers' historical life and the place of the crucified common men, the suffering minjung. In it, the common men encounter the radical Reformers and the latter are encountered as the *avatars*, the incarnation of the common men. To be more specific, the Münster is hybridity, starting from the common men, the suffering minjung, and the *avatar*-hood of radical Reformers is the mediation of it. Also, this Münster is the place where the common men would play the messianic practice whose aim is to take the crucified minjung down from the cross, accompanying the prophetic practice of the radical Reformers. This place of hybridity, therefore, shows how the radical Reformers and the common men converge, as well as collide, in order to foster healing, liberation and salvation on both sides. In a word, the Münster is the place of *Hyun-Jang*, the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung and at the

same time it is the place of *dan*, resolving *han* of the minjung.

## **CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION**

### **RE-READING THE ANABAPTIST KINGDOM OF MÜNSTER AS THE MINJUNG-MESSIAH INTERPLAY**

#### **6.1 MÜNSTER MINJUNG AS BEING-IN-THE-MESSIAH**

In this thesis, the researcher attends to the necessity of applying people's history of Christianity, or grassroots history, into the sixteenth-century radical Reformation, particularly the tragic Münster episode (1534-35), a black sheep in the Reformation. The thesis is also interested in a possibility of engaging Korean Minjung Theology with this approach for deepening and developing its position as a critical and creative reconstruction. Its aim is to show how they complement each other in altering and rehabilitating –without destroying –the one-sided picture of the radical Reformation in general and the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster in particular. This approach to history links to a view from below, which pays greater attention to Christian masses –the voiceless, the ordinary faithful –to bring a healthy and balanced interpretation to the history of the Reformation.

By calling for the importance of a view from below, the research requires the re-reading of the Reformation from below: the way the common people had reacted and contributed to the Reformation. Here, by challenging the traditional interpretations, inspired primarily by the 'great' deeds of the 'great' men, its emphasis is given not the princes and theologians, but the peasants and simple folks. In this light, a close relationship between the radical Reformation and Anabaptism comes into being; both are deeply anchored by the social and religious experience of the German Peasants' War of 1525, the revolution of the common men. The radicals of the Reformation had anticipated the socio-economic demands of the Peasants' War, while Anabaptism had reacted as a religious aftereffect of the Peasants' War. Here both had expressed the common people's ambitions to take matters into their own hands. Both believed that the Reformation ought to move faster and further than the magisterial Reformers wanted to do. Significance is that both movements were a communal event. The common men of both urban and rural areas turned the theological ideas of a few Reformers into a vast social movement. Thus is created by a validity of the re-reading of the Reformation from below, which entails the exposition of the life and faith not only of the leaders, but also of the rank-and-file common people who have rendered the Reformation radical and communal as a whole. Here, the radical Reformation and Anabaptism are seen as the Communal Reformation and the German Peasants' War of 1525, or the revolution of the common men, is stressed as part of it.

Taking a cue from the communal nature in the radical Reformation, the research develops a historical reading of Münster Anabaptism based on four radical Reformers, namely Thomas Müntzer, Hans Hut, Melchior Hoffman and John Bockelson (John of Leiden). Here, a perspective from below works as a catalyst in finding a common denominator in the profiles of four radical Reformers: the close and privileged connection to the common men. Indeed, these radical Reformers had inexorably set them up in a certain way of being-in-the-common men in their struggle to reform. All of them, in their chain of connection, were willing to share their lot with the common men. Thomas Müntzer, for example, had initiated the revolution of the common men of 1525. Hans Hut, as Müntzer's comrade-in-arms, fanned the dying revolutionary ember among the defeated common men, including future Anabaptists. Melchior Hoffman, a disciple of Hans Denck who baptized Hans Hut, championed the suffering lower class in Netherland, the Melchiorites, and his movement found expression in the city of Münster, its king was the tailor John Bockelson (John of Leiden), one of Hoffman's Dutch disciples. All suggest then that the most distinct common aspect of these radical Reformers was their contingency with, and commitment to the common men. This means, they understood their Reformation as the Reformation that must take a stand on being-in-the-common men. In this mutual and dynamic correlation, both were not in the dualistic principle of either-or, but in communal relation of both-and.

A people's perspective connects this communal relationship of the radical Reformers and the common men to the dialectic of *guru-avatar*. On one sense, the four radical Reformers stood out in their *avatar*-hood, that is, the incarnation of the common men. They found the need for the Reformation in the reality of the suffering common men. Yet, this *avatar*-hood involved not only realizing about the reality, but also taking responsibility for it. Thus, through such the organic solidarity, or identification with the common men, the radical Reformers were willing to become the *avatar* of the common. On the other sense, the common men stood out in their *guru*-ship. They were changed by a close encounter with the radical Reformers; they became visible and wising up enough to find their own voices by articulating their own concerns and challenges. In this way, the common men began to make the Reformation their own and became the *guru* of the radical Reformers. Thus, both of them had contributed to the Reformation as the *guru* and *avatar*: the radical Reformers as the *avatar* of the common men and the common men as the *guru* of the radical Reformers. This eventually produced the dialectic of *guru-avatar* in dynamic tension. Like the Möbius strip, the *guru* and *avatar* are not juxtaposed, nor is the one absorbed by the other, but rather remains in a reciprocal and dynamic relation. Therefore, depicting the radical Reformers as the *avatar* of the common men does not diminish their practical *guru*-ship, or characterizing the common men as the *guru* of the radical Reformers does not dispense with their potential *avatar*-hood. Here, the dialectic of *guru-avatar* underlines both the mutual interpenetration

and interdependence between the two who work together as the co-agent of the Reformation. By giving each of the radical Reformers new dignity, such as; (1) Thomas Müntzer as being-in-the-retributive common men; (2) Hans Hut as being-in-the-restorative common men; (3) Melchior Hoffman as being-in-the-revelatory common men; and (4) John Bockelson as being-in-the-rhetorical common men, this new perspective from below alerts Münster Anabaptism to the reformer-common men interplay, or the *guru-avatar* interplay, as being-in-the-Communal Reformation.

This dynamic correlation of the radical Reformers and the common men is reinvented by Korean Minjung Theology. First, Korean Minjung Theology connects the common people in the radical Reformation to the Korean minjung in its dynamic equivalence. As its phrase indicates, the starting point of this indigenous Korean contextual theology is the rediscovery of the minjung under the political and economic injustice. Thus, the social biography of the minjung, or their collective suffering experiences, becomes the keyhole for interpreting the Bible and history. From it, on the one sense, derives a socio-political definition of minjung, “those who are politically oppressed, economically exploited, socially marginalized, and culturally alienated” (Han 1969:63-77). Yet, minjung in Korean Minjung Theology does not remain static, rather they stay dynamic and multifaceted (Yun 2007:88). Thus, on the other sense, a theological translation of minjung as people of God also gains momentum (Hyun 1982:15). In this light, minjung in a rigid and stereotyped character pales into insignificance besides minjung in a dynamic and holistic position (Yun 2007:88). Here, the minjung represents the whole suffering underside of the dominant society and history, beyond mere the working class in socialist term (Chung 2008:264). Taking a cue from this dynamic and changing concept of minjung, the common people in the radical Reformation stand for more than political activists and more than *Volk* (Bonino 1988:159). Furthermore, in Korean Minjung Theology, both socio-political and Pentecostal (spiritual-religious) minjung are seen as a coherent whole (Yoo 1988:220). Although the former primarily fight for social and political injustice and the latter work on spiritual healing of the church (Yun 2007:92), both see a cleansed church and reformed society as an inseparable agenda for the minjung. This double-identification of minjung, then, becomes a helpful bridge to the common people in the radical Reformation.

Second, Korean Minjung Theology brings the meaning and significance of the Jesus-event to the radical Reformation from below. In Minjung Theology, the kerygma, or the contents of the apostolic preaching about Jesus, is insignificant besides the Jesus-event, namely, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus (Lee 1988:11). In the thinking of Minjung Theology, Jesus is the epitome of “co-sufferer of the minjung” (Kim 1982:15); for this Son of Man emerged from the suffering minjung and

identified with them. Jesus' crucifixion, indeed, resulted from his solidarity with and commitment to the suffering minjung. In the same vein, the resurrection of Jesus must be the resurrection of the minjung. Any kind of "liberating event" for the minjung, therefore, turns into the Jesus-event (Lee 1988:14). In this sense, the Jesus-event can be seen not as a once-and-for-all, but as a continuing and recurring historical event, deeply embodied in the suffering reality of the minjung, here and now (Suh 1991:243-45). Thus, it continues to happen today again and again among the suffering minjung in their struggle and hope. This brings a shift of perspective to see the radical Reformation as part of the Jesus-event, or a minjung-event, where the common people (minjung) and Jesus are encountering together in suffering.

Third, minjung Christology, or minjung-messianism throws new light on the role of the common people in the radical Reformation. Contrary to "the exclusive representation Christology" of the magisterial Reformation (*solus Christus*), minjung Christology understands itself as "the inclusive solidarity Christology" in light of *perichoresis* (co-inherence) between the minjung and the Messiah (Moltmann 2000:256). In fact, minjung Christology, the idea of self-redemption of minjung, is framed by the Jesus-event. At the same time, as the Jesus-event presumes its dynamic equivalence to the minjung-event, minjung Christology also presupposes its functional equivalence between the minjung and the Messiah. In it, both Jesus and the minjung perform the messianic role through their suffering (Ahn 1987:96, Suh 1983:181, 217). In Minjung Theology, therefore, the minjung and the Messiah are not separated (Ahn 2004:138). However, caution is given to differentiate "identification" and "identity" in regard to this issue of minjung-Messiah identity (Suh 2010: xiv-xvi). While the minjung-messianism brings to the forefront a reciprocal relation between the minjung and the Messiah, it does not adopt the direct and ontological identification between the two (Chung 2008:266). There is almost interchangeable relationship between the minjung and the Messiah, but both are not the same identity (Kim 1981:72). Minjung Christology, in this light, stands closer to "victim-oriented Christology," which is epitomized by the parable of Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35). In it, it is the man who suffered from the robbers, who plays the messianic role. In this way, minjung are not without power; rather minjung can become even the Messiah. By participating in the suffering of the minjung, rather than replacing Messiah in soteriology, minjung becomes part of Jesus-event and in that sense they are Messiah (Choi 1998:345-69). This minjung-messianism then brings the common people in the radical Reformation back into the historical Jesus-event, where such Christian motley crews have played the messianic role, not because they are strong and powerful but because they are weak and powerless.

Finally, the characteristics of the radical Reformation is reinvented and transformed by the idea of *han* and *dan* in Korean Minjung Theology. Often rendered as bitter grief, or feeling of sorrows, *han*, the Korean word, carries it with connotations lost in any simple English translation. Indeed, *han* possesses a constellation of meanings, which is never innocent (Joh 2006:25-7). It is “a pent-up force looking for a place to vent,” based in aggression, resignation, and nihilism (Padgett 2010:41). Despite its “thick descriptions,” *han* is akin to an anthropology that refers to a “wounded heart,” or “black hole” in the soul as the residue of violence unleashed upon the innocent (Park 1993:15-20). From it derives a privileged connection of *han* to the experiences of the minjung and thereby Korean Minjung Theology turns the anthropology of *han* into a theological rhetoric of the minjung. *Han*, in this light, becomes a cipher for the Korean minjung who “are born from the womb of *han* and are brought up in the womb of *han*” (Yoo 1988:222). Thus is created by a certain paradox of *han* in Minjung Theology both as a threat and a hope (Suh 1983:64). *Han*’s threat is a bloody revenge and violent revolution. At the same time, *han*’s hope is a constructive energy for healing and liberation (Considine 2014:59). This constructive response for solving *han* is *dan*. *Dan*, or cutting-off, is the antidote to fearful forces of *han*, which is trapping the minjung in the cyclical pattern of oppression (Suh 1983:65). By cutting-off of the desire for continued retribution to the oppressor, *dan* overcomes *han*, so that the minjung does not become like their master, the perpetrators of violence (Lee 1994:153).

In its practice of *dan*, Korean Minjung Theology does not preclude the possibility of resorting to an “agonized violence of love” that restores the human dignity (Kim 1977:10). The praxis of *dan*, in this light, takes a “violence of love” as a “pragmatic necessity” for the salvation of minjung from *han* (Considine 2014:65). Here *dan* is seen as a kind of eventual *han-pu-ri* (resolution of *han*), in which God and revolution are intertwined. As *han* gives the crucial significance to *dan* as its remedy, the dialectical interplay of *han* and *dan* compromises of “the unity of God and revolution” as its strategy (Kim 1977:12). In this sense, *dan* sublimates *han*’s intense negativity to a higher spiritual power, namely, the God who shed his blood to bear minjung’s *han* in order to foster salvation, liberation and healing (Suh 1983:155-82). This praxis of *dan* further provides a distinctive soteriology into Minjung Theology, namely, salvation for the sinned-against, namely, the victim of sin. In it, greater concern is the cries of the sinned-against for healing and liberation than the tears of sinners for forgiveness and redemption (Considine 2015:44). By prioritizing *han* before sin, Korean Minjung Theology connects God’s offer of salvation to the *han* of the sinned-against in this world (Park 1993:70). This way of soteriology is complementary, not contradictory, to a vision of Christian salvation because it emphasizes how God works for the salvation of both violator and victim; oppressor and oppressed; and sinner and sinned-against (Considine 2014:67-8). In so doing, Korean Minjung Theology

challenges Church to revisit, critique, and re-think the problem of salvation from sin only, or redemption of sinner only, not because it is incorrect, but it is too narrow (Considine 2014:72).

This theme of *han* and *dan* in Minjung Theology then provides insight into one aspect of people's history of Christianity particularly in connection with the nature of the radical Reformation. Its unity of God and revolution –based on an agonized violence of love and salvation for the sinned-against, not only sinners –acts as a salutary reminder to the traditional view, which has emphasized sinning by the radicals almost exclusively, while failing to focus sufficiently upon being the sinned-against (*han*), the common people. This enables one to approach the radical Reformation anew so as to shift its concern from the problem of the sinners and forgiveness of sin toward the *han* of the sinned-against and their healing and liberation (*dan*), even though it “neither eliminates the importance of forgiveness of sin nor minimizes the breadth and depth of human sinfulness” (Considine 2015:45).

Giving Korean Minjung Theology privileged treatment, the research presents four minjung theologians with their different methodologies, namely, (1) Suh, Nam-Dong's the Spirit of *Missio-Dei*, (2) Ahn, Byung-Mu's socio-biblical analysis of the *ochlos* (the outcast), (3) Kim, Yong-Bok's Messianic Politics, and (4) Hyun, Young-Hak's Korean mask dance. These different methodologies are, however, mutually united in presenting minjung as the real and historical subject who plays the messianic practice for their own salvation. This manifests in the *avatar*-hood of minjung theologians. This messianic practice of minjung provides them dynamism for carrying out the task of their *avatar*-hood that involves doing a prophetic praxis designed to confront, reform, and transform the current injustice in Korean society. It, in other words, leads the minjung theologians to a prophetic practice that is aimed at bringing about the total transformation of society. In this light, the messianic practice of minjung serves as a critical invitation to the prophetic practice of minjung theologians. More figuratively, the minjung theologians are called to “take the crucified people, or suffering minjung, down from the cross” (Sobrinho 1993:48) and when they heed it, take responsibility for it, and carry it through a prophetic practice, the minjung theologians are caught up in the *avatar*-hood, the transformative participation in the minjung's messianic practice.

By bringing these four Korean minjung theologians and their methodologies into critical encounter with four radical Reformers in Münster, the research reaches a new path for a creative synthesis between the two; (1) Thomas Müntzer seen from Suh, Nam-Dong weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the retributive minjung in the Spirit, (2) Hans Hut seen from Ahn, Byung-Mu weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the restorative minjung in the *ochlos*, (3) Melchior Hoffman seen from Kim, Yong-Bock weighs

his *avatar*-hood toward the revelatory minjung in the Messianic Politics, and (4) John Bockelson seen from Hyun, Young-Hak weighs his *avatar*-hood toward the rhetorical minjung in the Korean mask dance. This is stressed as the idea of double-mirror reading. The first-mirror reading outlines the *avatar*-hood of four radical Reformers –Thomas Müntzer, Hans Hut, Melchior Hoffman, and John Bockelson –starting with commiseration to the common men. Then it moves to the second mirror reading; from the diachronic reading to the synchronic reading; from the *avatar*-hood of the radical Reformers to that of the minjung theologians whose course of action called for is to “take the crucified [minjung] down from the cross” thorough their prophetic practice. Thus is created by the fusion of two mirrors. The first mirror reading of the radical Reformers and the second mirror reading of the minjung theologians should be placed together, forming the double-mirror reading, reading from both diachronically (“by differences due to passages through time”) and synchronically (“by differences occurring through situational changes –social, political, cultural, gendered, and so on”); both historically and socio-politically (Chopp and Taylor 1994:13). This situates the radical Reformers and the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster within the more dynamic and holistic framework in light of the *avatar*-hood that implies the ongoing cooperation between the prophetic practice of the radical Reformers and the messianic practice of the common men, namely, the suffering minjung.

This way of reading then leads to the new portrait of Münster Anabaptism as the place of hybridity, depending on its dynamics between the *avatar*-hood of the radical Reformers and the *guru*-ship of the common men; between the prophetic practice of the radical Reformers and the messianic practice of the common men. By characterizing the inner dynamics of Münster Anabaptism as a kaleidoscopic portrait, backed by; (1) John Matthjisson as being-in-the-immigrant Melchiorite prophets, the radicals, (2) Bernhard Rothmann as being-in-the-native civic reformers, the reactionary, and (3) John Bockelson as being-in-the-eclectic between the two power structures, the minjung hermeneutics gives (4) the common people in Münster new dignity as the minjung who has played a decisive role, beyond the radical, the reactionary, and the eclectic. From it the research offers a new possibility of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as the kernel of the Communal Reformation, wherein various parties are dialectically driven to maintain both as the *guru* and the *avatar*; the subjects and the objects; the great men and the common men; and the sinners and the sinned-against. In this dynamic reciprocity, Münster Anabaptism is seen as the place of hybridity, or silent revolution, which holds for healing, liberation and salvation on both the sin of victimizers and *han* of the victims.

This view of Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as the place of hybridity ensues further the two-fold emphasis; it concentrates not only upon the interconnectedness and interdependence between the

minjung and the radical Reformers, but also upon the recollection and reunification between the minjung and the Messiah as the source of the continuing Communal Reformation. Then, Münster Anabaptism in a dialect process of *han-event-dan* comes into being. The discovery of the *han*-ridden minjung in Münster Anabaptism leads to the discovery of the *han*-solving (*dan*) Messiah in the Jesus-event. This view of *han-event-dan*, in this light, integrates *Minjung Reformer* into *Christo Reformer* as a coherent whole. Thus, the discovery of minjung in Münster as the protagonist is linked to the discovery of the Messiah as the protagonist of the minjung. This means, in other word, there is the Communal Reformation between the minjung and the Messiah in Münster; the former could play the messianic role by participating in the latter in suffering and struggle. From it, *Minjung Reformer* in Münster opens the way for the dual transformation: the incarnation (*avatar-hood*) of the Messiah in the minjung and the deification (*guru-ship*) of the minjung in the Messiah. In Münster, like a Möbius strip, there is the minjung who needs the Messiah's incarnation (*avatar-hood*) and at the same time, there is the Messiah who expects the minjung's deification (*guru-ship*). This does not mean that the Messiah, by alone, is not powerful to carry out the Reformation (liberation). Rather this stresses the Messiah's compassionate justice on the *han*-ridden minjung in Münster. The Messiah's *han* is a consequence of his love that "is too strong to be apathetic toward the minjung's suffering and that even makes the Messiah vulnerable (Park 2000:85). Thus, it is the minjung's commitment to return to the Messiah to alleviate His *han* through their messianic praxis of *dan*.

At this point, the Messiah's commitment to the minjung is also embodied in Münster, attending critically and continually to the minjung's suffering reality for its transformation. At the heart of Münster Anabaptism, then, lies on the Messiah's radical rendezvous with the minjung to bring out the good news in the dynamic Communal Reformation. The Münster event indicates that the minjung-Messiah interplay includes not only the incarnation of the Messiah into the minjung, but also the deification –another form of incarnation –of the minjung into the Messiah. In this regards, the Messiah and the minjung are not in inverse, but direct proportion. It calls for participating and liberating relationship of the two as co-partners. Indeed, Jesus-event is itself radical Reformation which opens the door for the Communal Reformation of minjung-Messiah interplay as an ongoing re-formation of Jesus-event into the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the minjung here and now.

To sum, Münster Anabaptism regenerates the identity of the minjung in Münster as being-in-the Messiah. Thus is created by the dynamic relationship between the minjung and the Messiah in Anabaptist Münster. To be more specific, the minjung in Münster are entering into the Jesus-event through their messianic praxis in the Messiah. Just as the radical Reformers, seen from Korean

Minjung Theology, are called to witness to the minjung in Münster, so are the suffering minjung to the suffering Messiah in Münster. Also, just as the radical Reformers remain not as mere *avatars* of the minjung, but become part of the minjung themselves through their prophetic practice, so do the minjung in Münster; they remained not as mere *avatars* of the Messiah, but rather play the messianic role through their messianic practice. Here, the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, seen from Korean Minjung Theology, becomes both analepsis and prolepsis of the Jesus-event, where *Minjung Reformer* forms *Christo Reformer* and *Christo Reformer* reforms *Minjung Reformer* as *Minjung-Messiah Transformator*, not as a once-and-for-all, but as a continuing and recurring historical event for the realization of the minjung as being-in-the-Messiah.

## 6.2 EPILOGUE

This research is not a historical comparison between two historical movements –the 16<sup>th</sup> century radical Reformation and the 20<sup>th</sup> century theological movement in Korea. But, it is rather a historical constructive theological attempt, “shifting the emphasis to the process rather than the product” (Wyman 2017:314). Inviting Münster Anabaptism into the conversation and collaboration with Korean Minjung Theology, this approach contributes to the reconstruction of the tragic Münster episode. In this way, Münster Anabaptism is stressed as the place of communal praxis, which is constructed by a plethora of voices, including the great men and the common men; victimizers and victims; sinners and sinned-against. In it, each of which is affected by and seeks to affect the realization of the Communal Reformation. This dynamic openness brings Münster Anabaptism a new interpretation, reconstructed “as hope-filled response to crises of suffering” (Chopp and Taylor 1994: ix). What distinctive characteristics of Münster Anabaptism is, therefore, its attentiveness to the on-going sensitivity of hybridity which holds the dialectic of *han-dan*; the dialectic of *guru-avatar*; not as a complete story but as an open-ended conversation.

To preserve this dynamics of the minjung as being-in-the-Messiah, therefore, will and must be a continuing source of encouragement and inspiration of the Reformation for today and tomorrow. For this will encourage Christians to re-read and re-write the history, not a new but another history being constructed. Its own reading of the Reformation, then, leads to its own leading of the Reformation. To be sure, it is through the eyes of the minjung that the church and its theologies need to be reformed time and again. Yet, this ought to be attentive to *Reformatio Dei*, which sees and hears the Messiah as the subject of the Reformation in solidarity with the minjung and thereby does not juxtapose uncritically “the ‘history of the people’ with a ‘history of theology’” (Vosloo 2009:61). Here, the minjung can and should remain as being-in-the-Messiah as the epitome of *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

Nonetheless, the scarlet letter of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster dies hard. It is still considered as an abomination of the Reformation and its tragic end is attributed to its own karma. Thus, the Kingdom of Münster has remained as the Kingdom of Monster, the sin city, like Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet, the historical constructive theological approach leads to the changing and revised questions. Would this dark and ugly face of Münster not rather prove the prevalence of *han* (as the wounds of sin) and the people of *han* (as the victims of sin)?, or Would it not rather make sense to see Münster as the place of hybridity which not only offers its coexistence of both sin of the victimizers and *han* of the victims, but also holds potential for healing, liberation and salvation, which is the praxis of *dan*, on both sides? If the term Messiah cannot have any meaning without being related to the suffering people (*minjung*), the madness of Münster Kingdom should not be left as its own shame. It rather turns into a new paradigm which creates the new possibility of reconciliation and restoration.

Seen in this way, there is a lot of reconstruction but there is also a lot of space for deconstruction in the Münster tragedy. Thus, the questions over whether to see Münster Anabaptism as a unique phenomenon, or as a paradigm for the *minjung* and their reformation, or as a tombstone (*han*) or as a birth place (*dan*) for the *minjung* and their Jesus-event, once again come up. But, its answer can no longer take the conventional claims and interpretations for granted. Rather, in the historical constructive theological outlook, the emphasis is given to dynamic tensions in an open-ended and imaginative reconstruction. So realizing it gives us a position to choose; should we continue to set up history being constructive, or limit the interpretative possibility in the past?

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