

The Changing Concept of ‘New Religions’ from a Religio-typological Context*

Chongsuh Kim**

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1. ‘New Religion’ in a Traditional Typology of Religious Organizations

M. Weber initially composed the typology of religious organizations, known as ‘the church-sect theory’, but he never considered the position of the New Religion (or cult). It can be defined that New Religion has been concerned in the typology of religious organizations from the time when E. Troeltsch in his book of *Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (1931) asserted the religious performance of human beings in the three categories of (1) churchly, (2) sectarian, and (3) mystical. While Troeltsch typologies

* This paper was presented in English at the 2013 Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni (CESNUR) conference in Falun, Sweden, and the author has revised it for publication this time.

** Seoul National University

the mystical performance from the secular world, he predicted that the radical religious individualism based on 'the ideal mysticism' or 'spiritual religion' would be gradually enlarged in the contemporary society. As it has been emphasized by W. Swatos, an American sociologist of religion, such setting up of the mystical type became a theoretical basis for New Religion to be included in the typology of religious organizations.¹⁾

Of course, there have been a lot of discussions about the typology of religious organizations after Troeltsch. However, the fact that New Religion continuously kept a regular status as an important type in the second dimensional typology of religious organizations that commonly and universally acknowledged by M. McGuire and others, still seems to remind the context of the Troeltsch tradition.

	Self-conceived Legitimacy	Group/society tension	
		Positive	Negative
Unique		CHURCH	SECT
Pluralistic		DENOMINATION	CULT

<McGuire's 'Organizational "Movement" of Religious Collectivities'²⁾>

As above McGuire, as the basic variables of the making types of religious organizations, firstly counted the tension with the secular society and secondly the awareness of the self-conceived legitimacy over established religious groups of the society. So, religious organizations that are positively understood to the society are church and denomination,

1) W. Swatos, "Church-Sect and Cult: Bringing Mysticism, Back In," *Sociological Analysis* 42/1, (1981): 17-26.

2) M. McGuire, *Religion: the Social Context*(Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981), 111.

while sect and New Religion (or cult) are negatively understood. And if religious organizations that monopolistically (or universally) cognizes the self-legitimacy over established religious groups of the society are church and sect, religious organizations that are pluralistically (or coexistently) understood are denomination and New Religion.

Therefore, from the purport of this article which aims to discuss the inter-relationship between recent New Religions and sects, they in the secular society are fundamentally treated in the same way with impressions of negativity and exclusion. It has been thought differently that while sect monopolistically or universally cognizes the self-legitimacy to established religious groups, New Religion understands it pluralistically or coexistently. In other words, the sect is a comparatively small and exclusive religious organization, but aims to keep churchly characters of traditional organizations. New Religion likewise is small and exclusive, but they aim their coexistence with other religious groups differently from leading churches. Therefore, it might be said that New Religion has been secularly and religiously recognized as an alien group in the society.

Thus, the most of the theories of the inter-relationship between sect and New Religion have been based on such religio-typological demarcations so far. For instance, if sect aims the religious mainstream of the society and New Religion has a strong alien character, sect movement strengthens religious tradition and new religious movement enlarges when traditional belief is feeble. So eventually it has been indicated that there will be a tendency that the growth of sect and that of New Religion show an inverse proportion. Unlike the traditional theories that all religious groups will collapse with secularization, each strengthening of sect and New Religion in the empirical researches means that the correlation appears negatively. In other meaning, the change of sect and new religious movements has signified that the religious context itself is important.³⁾ And

3) For the case of the United State, R. Stark, "Church and Sect," In Hammond, P. E., ed., *The Sacred in a Secular Age*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 146. There are similar arguments in Europe. See, E. Barker, "New Religions and Cults in Europe," In Eliade, M., ed., *The Encyclopedia of*

by such reasons not only Judaism, Catholics and conservative Protestants but also even sects of established religious groups have been often mentioned as the major critical bodies of New Religion. The sects who argue doctrinal orthodoxy have involved the competition of stealing members with New Religions through the quarrel of heresy issues.⁴⁾

However, we need to remember that the various existing typologies of religious organizations have only suggested the characters of ideal type, as Weber did so. In other words, when we face the factual realities of sect and New Religion, the distinction between the two is not so clear and simple. Above all, it could be because the concept of New Religion itself is very vague to define. In particular, it is often happening that when one intends to treat New Religion, he/she talks about the things of sect. For example, one often criticizes Rev. Billy Graham as a leader of New Religion, because the living greatest preacher of world-wide Protestantism performs a collective hypnotism in the mass of people. The sects of established American Christianity such as Mormons, Christian Science, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses are also classified as New Religion.

On the contrary, it is presumed that the most important issue of distinguishing between sect and New Religion is originated from the fact that the alien character of New Religion itself is very relative. For example, there has been a long-term controversy in Korea over the Unification Church whether it is a sect of Christianity or one of New Religions. It is taken for granted that when the Unification Church was transplanted in US and Japan, it was treated as a New Religion because of its alien character. And it is reasonable to agree that when mainstream denominations of Presbyterianism, Methodism, and Baptism of Korea which have a strong American inclination see the Unification Church with the doctrinal principle of Yin and Yang idea, they do not regard it as a sect of

Religion 10(New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 406-407.

4) T. Robbins & D. Anthony, "New Religions and Cults in the United States," In Eliade, M., ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 10(New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 402.

Protestantism, but as a New Religion. Nevertheless, from the perspective of Korean Buddhists and Confucian adherents, the Unification Church is obviously a Protestant sect, not a New Religion in any condition. The Unification Church used to insist their religious identity as a Protestant sect, but recently they offer partly transformed interpretations about themselves.

Of course, it must be beyond the boundary of this paper's subject to judge whether the Unification Church is a Protestant sect or a New Religion on the basis of the relative alien concept. Merely, it is important to perceive that the contemporary discourse about the locus of the Unification Church in Korean socio-religious context still clearly spins around the typology of religious organizations. From such a perspective, the correlation between sect and New Religion in the global society that will be treated in this paper will be very suggestive to understand the religious organizations of East-Asian nations including the Korean society.

2. The Protestant Sects Treated as 'New Religions'

The roots of Western and Eastern occult tradition have a long history, but the so called, today's international New Religions mostly appeared from the end of 1960s to the beginning of 1970s. Especially, it is argued that the social anomie after Vietnam War⁵⁾ and the sudden alleviation of the ongoing persecution over the Asian religions⁶⁾ are the reasons of new religious upsurges in the United States. Truly, New Religions derived from the East and various human potential development movements prospered in this period with some peculiar religious groups initiated from established religions.

5) R. Wuthnow, "Religious Movements and Counter-movements in North America," In Beckford, J. A., ed., *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*(Sage Publications Ltd., 1986), 4 ff.

6) J. G. Melton, "The Changing Scene of New Religious Movements: Observations from a Generation of Research," *Social Compass* 42/2 (1995): 268.

However, such a radical boom of the New Religion did not last for a long time. The New Religions of the United States already stagnated in the middle of 1970s. And their places were over taken by the very conservative orders of Christianity such as Moral Majority of Jerry Falwell.⁷⁾ The similar situation happened in Europe as well. But, one can think that it would be a plausible phenomenon. As were often the cases with most of social areas after the second half of the twentieth century, new religious movements of Europe were also transplanted from the United States. Namely, most of new religious movements of Europe except Rajneesh group came in through the United States. It means that those movements were operated by Americans or the headquarters were located in the US or most of them followed after the American models.⁸⁾ As a result, the New Religions internationally boomed in 1960s but already began to decline in the middle of 1970s. Instead, the conservative orders of Protestantism amazingly prospered after that period.

Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the religious groups which appeared in the discussion of the international new religious groups after 1970s were in fact the Protestant sects. For instance, let's think about 'People's Temple' of J. Jones who led the members to Guyana in 1978 and caused a group suicide of more than 900 members. This People's Temple, which caused the worst disaster of New Religion incident in the twentieth century and deadly provided a disadvantageous effect to new religious movements afterward, in fact, belonged to the Disciples of Christ which was a well-organized order of Christianity. Therefore, it was a member order of the National Council of the Churches of Christ (NCCC) in the United States and that of the World Council of Churches (WCC) that were the ecumenical movement organizations the mainstream orders of Christianity participated in.⁹⁾

7) R. Wuthnow, *Op. Cit.*, 15-18.

8) J. A. Beckford & M. Levasseur, "New Religious Movements in Western Europe," In Beckford, J. A., ed., *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*(Sage Publications Ltd., 1986), 36-39. However, Beckford adds that the people participating in the New Religion of Europe are characterized as younger and socially the middle class in comparison with those in the United States. *Ibid.*, 39-41.

Further, the so called, the Branch Davidians of D. Koresh, whose more than 80 members were eventually burned and sacrificed by building incendiaryism when the police operated an arresting action in Waco, Texas in 1993, was also a member order of the above ecumenical movement organizations. The mass communications reported that while the police opposed against Koresh, he kept the believers as hostages. But some scholars supported the argument that "there was no hostage in the Branch Davidians. The salvation they needed was only being delivered from the (police) authorities".¹⁰⁾ Therefore, there were discussions that the Branch Davidians should be seen in the context of millenarian movements of the US Christianity.¹¹⁾ As we know, such eschatological view of the Branch Davidians is generally characterized by most early Christian churches including the group which wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In addition to the Branch Davidians, the Solar Temple spread in Switzerland and Canada after 1995 caused the group suicide of members and 'Oum Shinrikyo' has been also criticized because of their eschatological character, but it is likewise said that in fact such eschatology has seemed to appear in many cases of the traditional religions.¹²⁾ Further, Apple White, the leader of 'Heaven's Gate', which

9) J. G. Melton, *Op. Cit.*, 272. In fact, J. Jones received the best pastor's award of the Unites State in the previous year of Guyana event.

10) J. D. Tabor & E. V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 4.

11) J. R. Lewis ed., *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco*(Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994); S. A. Wright, *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Such points became so obviously unveiled when the survived members were in a trial against the States after the incident. For the millenarian theological character of the remained members, see Eugene V. Gallagher, "The Persistence of the Millennium: Branch Davidian Expectations of the End after 'Waco'," *Nova Religio* 3/2 (2000, April): 303-319.

12) Such eschatological tendency has been similarly said in case of 'Earth First!,' a militant environmental new religious group, which extremely limits the artificial industrial production and encourages to return to the hunting life of Paleolithic Era. (S. M. Gelber & M. L. Cook, *Saving the Earth: The History of a Middle-Class Millenarian Movement*[Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990])

believed the salvation of the UFO following after the Comet Hale-bopp and eventually caused the group suicide of 39 members in San Diego, California, in 1997, also had an eschatological background of Christianity.¹³⁾ Such groups were distinctively reported as New Religions because of the issues of child abuse and leader's messy sex life and so on, but it is said that those issues were often the cases with most of sects.¹⁴⁾

Meanwhile, these days, the fanatic group of worship services with poisonous snakes is often mentioned in the new religious bodies of the United States. Around the Appalachians, some spiritual groups literally interpret the passage of "they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all ..." (Mk. 16: 17-18) and practically use snakes during the services. They often appear in the mass communication because of their grotesque aspects, but it has been rather talked about as legal cases not to regard it as free exercises of religion because there is a clear and present danger.¹⁵⁾

However, some scholars like D. Kimbrough see such groups handling snakes and even drinking deadly poison in Kentucky as the Protestant sects firmly standing on the spectrum of evangelical faith. Further, such groups, against reasonable Christianity of early twentieth century, are also called as the resistance of fundamentalists who literally believe the Bible.¹⁶⁾ Journalist D. Covington demonstrated his experience that he went into

13) After the shocking group suicide incident of 'Heaven's Gate', there have been various efforts to understand its characters. For the recent researches on the mechanism of obedience and the cyber-space periodical implication, see Winston Davis, "Heaven's Gate: A Study of Religious Obedience," *Nova Religio* 3/2 (2000, April): 241-267; Hugh, B. Urban, "The Devil at Heaven's Gate: Rethinking the Study of Religion in the Age of Cyber-Space," *Nova Religio* 3/2 (2000, April): 268-302.

14) J. P. Jenkins, "Beyond the Fringe: Recent Writing on New and Unorthodox Religious Movements," *Critical Review of Books in Religion 1996*(Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 51-52.

15) R. B. Flowers, "Freedom of Religion Versus Civil Authority in Matters of Health," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Social Science*, 446 (1979): 154-156.

16) D. L. Kimbrough, *Taking Up Serpents*(Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

the religious order to observe but he himself got into the swing of it. As gradually empathized, he wrote about handling snakes himself and coming to preach and then let readers impress about the process of his spiritual development.¹⁷⁾

Meanwhile, H. Cox of the Harvard Divinity School points out the Pentecostal spirituality as the leading supporter of a new global religious reformation and emphasizes its importance in this age.¹⁸⁾ By the way, there are arguments that such religions which handle poisonous snakes connect the inclination of Baptist and Pentecostal movements with signs and wonders of biblical miracle.¹⁹⁾ Ultimately, it means that they have a strong sect character which aims the mainstream Christianity rather than New Religion.

3. The Sectarianization of 'New Religions'

On the other hand, it is indicated that even the groups like 'New Age' which used to be confidently seen as New Religion try to make the doctrinal level of exchanges with the mainline Protestantism.²⁰⁾ It has also been reported that even what used to be unique thoughts or techniques of the New Age has been seen in small Protestant groups which brought revolution to mainline Christian orders.²¹⁾ The distinction between mainstream religion and fringe religion gets gradually less clear in the

17) Covington further stated that "It is dangerous to feel God. And Christianity without ferment, danger and mystery may not be Christianity in its true sense". D. Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachian*(Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1994), 177.

18) H. Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*(Reading, M A: Addison Wesley, 1995).

19) D. V. McCauley, *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History*(Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

20) E. Evert Hopman & L. Bond, *People of the Earth: The New Pagans Speak Out*(Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1996), 296-306.

21) R. Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey*(New York: Free Press, 1994).

contemporary American society. It means that while major orders of Christianity accommodate new religious characters, New Religions share the socio-spiritual functions of established religious orders.²²⁾ It can be also expressed as ‘sectarianization’ from a new religious perspective. Here, the ‘sectarianization of New Religions’ refers to both two cases that New Religious Protestant sects emerged in a large scale, as above mentioned, when New Religions got to weak after the middle of 1970s and the conservative orders of Protestantism rather became strong and that some of New Religions pursued sectarian tendencies.

Why then does such a sectarianization of New Religions happen? Above all, it has been indicated that there is the accessibility of doctrinal interaction between conservatism of Christianity and New Religion. For example, the extreme fundamentalists of Christianity are closely related to the apocalyptic belief of New Religions.²³⁾ Because if the world will be turned upside down by New Religion or Satanists, how can one doubt the facts that the reign of Antichrist is imminent and the end of the world is near.²⁴⁾ In other words, the conservative fundamentalists of Christianity can be often seen as New Religion since they are easy to take after the apocalyptic doctrines of New Religions. One can think about the case in Korea that some Protestant orders which were regarded as New Religions reflected the fundamentalistic inclination.²⁵⁾

By the way, what is the reason that even the New Religions derived from Eastern religion pursue sectarian inclination with the eschatological inclination of Christianity? It may be because the exchange between the

22) J. P. Jenkins, *Op. Cit.*, 46.

23) In fact, the belief of Messiah is based on the substantiality of apocalypse. The apocalypse is not real, but virtual like the cyber-space of computer. Nevertheless, it is not in the future. It is right now in present. Jean Baudrillard, “Hysteresis of the Millennium,” Baudrillard, J., *The Illusion of the End*(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 119.

24) J. P. Jenkins, *Op. Cit.*, 46.

25) For example, once mass communications treated the groups known by ‘rapture tumult’ as New Religion in the name of ‘pseudo religion’, ‘quasi religion’, or ‘a newly-arisen religion’. but it is a well-known fact that most of them were small sects of the fundamental Protestantism.

New Religions of the East and those of the West within themselves became very active by the convenience of mutual communication today. Practically, there is no more distinction between New Religions of the East and the West, if one respects the fact that the quasi-scientific elements of the Western New Religion inflow into the New Religions of the East and that the concepts of meditation and reincarnation in the Eastern New Religion went into the New Religions of the West.²⁶⁾

Also, there is no difference between New Religion and sect in terms of its function. These days, the function of New Religion in the society has been summarized into three: forms of refuge, reform and release. Firstly, it is New Religion that functions as a safe place for those who physically and intellectually suffer. 'ISKCON' and 'Children of God' belong to this kind of form. Secondly, it is said that New Religion in the form of reform offers the teachings which radically improve the existing socio-cultural structure. The Unification Church, Scientology, and Synanon well known by treatment of drug additions, belong to this form. And thirdly, it is said that New Religion in the form of release helps one to be liberated from the interrupting conditions of self-realization. The 'Transcendental Meditation', 'Rajneesh Foundation', and 'Erhard Seminars Training' and etc. belong to this form of New Religion.²⁷⁾

By the way, such functions of New Religion can be easily seen in the functions of sects. Therefore, today, as the established religions facing up to secularization deviate from the sacred and at last come into being trivial, it is said that people who genuinely follow true religious concerns move onto either some new religious groups or other conservative sects which still maintain the religious concerns comparatively. From the viewpoint of the response to secularization, New Religion and conservative sects keep the relationship of functional alternative to each other. Although they functionally keep an analogous competition relation, it might be taken for granted that New Religions would take after sects as the

26) See Hugh B. Urban, "The Cult of Ecstasy: Tantrism, New Age, and the Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism," *History of Religions*, 39/3 (2000): 268-304.

27) J. A. Beckford & M. Levasseur, *Op. Cit.*, 41-44.

legitimacy of New Religion became socially weak after the second half of 1970s.

Meanwhile, the positions of society including government authorities towards New Religion and sects are not very different today. The suggestions of Vivien Report²⁸⁾ which appeared in 1983 in France²⁹⁾ for a plain legal position of New Religions do not stipulate what is only about New Religion. In other words, the suggestions of opening the information of New Religion to the public can be also applied to sects. It has been reported that the proposition to restrict over the activity of New Religion has also been submitted to the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sports of the European Parliament in 1984. However, it is interesting that the established churches, rather than New Religions, opposed the proposition that limit religious activities of minors under 18 years old or trickery solicitation for recruitment.³⁰⁾ This was because the established churches felt threatened in their mission activities, since they were not quite clearly distinguished from New Religions.

In fact, the government authorities are not directly concerned about the alien character of New Religion that mainly comes from doctrinal orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The issue of which is a New Religion or a sect does not matter. Rather it is more importantly considered whether it makes a social crime or brings on public criticism or not. Such attitudes of government authorities tend to make the distinction between New Religion and sect more difficult. From the perspective of New Religion, it not only gets to insist on keeping less uniqueness, but also opens up towards the possibility of sectarianization.

4. The Religio-typological Reevaluation of the Concept

28) In fact, because they call New Religion 'secte' in France, there is a room of confusion with 'sect' in Anglo-American region

29) J. A. Beckford & M. Levasseur, *Op. Cit.*, 45-47.

30) *Ibid.*, 49.

of 'New Religion'

It is taken for granted that as New Religion is sectarianized, the concepts and theories applied to the study of New Religion have been reconsidered. First of all, the new frameworks of New Religion challenge the previous legal definitions of New Religion.³¹⁾ Because of the alien character in comparison with mainline sects, New Religions were legally and officially criticized as usually illegal, grotesque, harmful, sensational and aggressive. It was through mass communication that the new religious groups were mostly informed to the public. However, how often did mass communication try to report New Religions from an objective perspective with the intension to understand it rightly? Didn't it have only to have dealt with them all the times negatively?

By the way, these days, as New Religions become analogous to mainline sects, the alien character of New Religions itself has become weaker. The New Religions themselves ask, 'what is on earth illegal, grotesque, or harmful on them?' It is also asked, 'what kinds of the religious leaders' authorities or sexual expressions are illegal?' It is even questioned, "why is the proclamation of eschatology that is also described in the central doctrine of Christianity wrong?"

For example, the recent researches about Satanism founded by A. S. Lavey may imply a lot. Satanism was often surrounded with rumors that in the beginning they raped women and children and committed murder as well as terribly abused them to use blood and excreta on the purpose of its rituals. However, such stories of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) have been said to be spread by the people such as feminists, children protection defenders, and psychotherapists including the Christian fundamentalists. On the other hand, many innocent members of Satanism have been said to be criminally accused of the ritual abuse. However, such anti-Satanic myths, strictly speaking, have been strongly regarded as a contemporary 'witch-hunting'. Therefore, some scholars have said that the Satanic Ritual

31) *Ibid.* also see, J. P. Jenkins, *Op. Cit.*, 51.

Abuse of the twentieth century will be remembered as the most tragic blot in psychotherapy and the history of fundamentalistic development.³²⁾

Nevertheless, New Religions have been criticized in the way that what brings a collective death, like the cases of 'People's Temple', 'the Branch Davidians', 'Solar Temple', and the recent 'Heaven's Gate', is obviously a social issue and it cannot be accepted in any circumstance. However, New Religions response that they only gave up the trifling physical body for a spiritual life to transcend this seemingly secular life issues. And they rather asked in turn what the difference was between their actions of giving up physical life for spiritual life and the devotional practices of numerous early Christian noble martyrs who ran into the lions' den on the risk of death or shed their blood in each pioneering time of mission.

In extreme cases, there are opinions to make their decision for their own life which belongs to themselves. However, New Religions such as the Branch Davidians, ISKCON, and Oum Shinrikyo of Japan have been criticized because of the illegal and unacceptable behaviour that they heavily armed or made deadly poisoned gas to physically threat and control other people including believers, so far from saving the people in need. On the other hand, the Branch Davidians replied that for the end it is more biblical that one not only spiritually but also literally militarily arms against the vicious power of anti-Christ. The members of Oum Shinrikyo also asked in turn why it is illegal that they took care of the pitiful people for a few months in container to live their life more freely in the ruptured condition from the outside, otherwise they would go to hell, remaining polluted and stuffy in the filthy world.

The issue of death, however, is not an easy matter. Even in near future, the affairs of New Religion related to death will be required to discuss more seriously in the society. Meanwhile, most of countries recently tend to respect individually free exercise of religion unless it is an extreme action to death. It is a general trend that courts extend the

32) *Ibid.*, 46-47.

constitutional boundary of religious freedom. For example, there are cases that the patient needs transfusion during the operation from a traffic accident but refuses transfusion by religious reason. In such case had a transfusion been done by force, but increasingly there have been juridical precedents not to compulsively let the patient have a transfusion, respecting the opinion of patient unless it directly affects the life.³³⁾ In such tendencies, the religious action related to New Religions will gradually require a broader definition.

In fact, it has also been indicated that the social misunderstanding of the new religious movement so far is very serious. In other words, it has been usually thought that New Religion was absolutely abnormal and it was formed because of social anxiety or new psychological skills. However, New Religion itself should be seen as a cultural creation of normal human beings, instead of such a fixed idea.³⁴⁾ It has been said that New Religions would emerge in the forms of sectarian movement or alternative piety when oppressive conditions are over. It has been indicated that the various forms of New Religion appeared when the new religious expressions were openly allowed in the period of Reformation in Europe. This has been seen in the similar context that when the true meaning of religious freedom was declared in Japan after the World War II, New Religions emerged like mushrooms.

In other words, it is said to be wrongly understood that social anxiety simply caused religious ferment.³⁵⁾ It is because religious ferment all most continues even after the social anxiety is solved. Although the rise of New Religion in the West of the United States was often explained in terms of the social anxiety followed by the baby-boomer time, it has been said that in fact Asian religions were freely able to come in with the loosening of the limits for immigration.

It is usually said that people tend to create New Religions from what is around them. Thus, religious ferment reflects the sectarian inclination

33) R. B. Flowers, *Op. Cit.*, 156-158.

34) J. G. Melton, *Op. Cit.*, 267-268.

35) *Ibid.*, 268.

that can be called as the new transformation of the leading religious view in the culture. Therefore, it is said that many New Religions in the United States could not help resembling Protestant sects or Catholic orders. However, the strong inflow of another religion into a culture is said to offer people a chance to form a new religious culture. It means that the alien religious view is directly inflowed or that the eclectic type with the previous religious culture is formed. For example, the United States is said to have encountered the newly created frameworks of Asian religious culture since the declaration of the open immigration law in 1965. And then, such frameworks of New Religion are said to have been spread to Europe and all over the world through the transmitting system of American culture.³⁶⁾

In brief, today's new religious movements animating in the United States, Europe and various countries of the world are said to be not at all be counted just as heterogeneous or abnormal.³⁷⁾ As such heterogeneity and abnormality of New Religion are not intrinsic, the distinction from sects is getting harder. In other words, from the religio-typological standpoint, today's New Religions are thought to be not to be clearly distinguished from sects and rather be the legal, normal, and positive religious groups.

In fact, most of New Religions which caused clear social problems in 1970s in the United States and Europe disappeared from the public interest in 1980s. It can be said that they relatively have been in a peaceful terms with surroundings, even though some of them brought about conflicts in 1990s. For instance, the Washington Times possessed by the Unification Church became a recognized newspaper like Christian Science Monitor and the long-time dispute between Scientology and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of the United States has been solved. The

36) The globalization of the anti-cult movement these days should be understood in the same context. That is, since New Religions were gradually globalized from the United States, the anti-cult movement as a reaction is also understood to have originated from the United States.

37) *Ibid.*, 268-269.

New Religions derived from India including ISKCON have no longer become the sources of news in the United States and elsewhere.³⁸⁾

Such coexistent relationship of New Religions with surroundings might be also said to have been developed with a significant variable of the rapid prevalence of religious pluralism in western religious world after the second half of the twentieth century. That is, the extension of religious pluralism could be seen to have set up an environment where New Religions could easily be accepted. Especially in this situation, 'the early New Religions' which have emerged since 1960s have also experienced internal changes. In other words, as they were not completely ousted from the society but long persisted, the New Religions are said to have gradually brought about the generation changes. For examples, it might be said that the initial members' children of Scientology, Unification Church, ISKCON, and Children of God (today, 'the Family') have already grown up and taken over the important status within the groups. In this context, these New Religions changed their early offensive mission methods and then they are said to have mitigated the counter-social tension.

Such second generation leaders of New Religions also made a big change in their leadership. The founders of major New Religions such as L. R. Hubbard of Scientology, and Swami Prabhupada of ISKCON including Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church have already died. Thus, the power structure within the religious orders has been switched into the styles of less charismatic, collective and bureaucratic leadership. In such a new leadership style, it is only natural to socially avoid the contending management of religious orders. Therefore, these groups are no longer shunned but became relatively stable religious groups.³⁹⁾

38) *Ibid.*, 273. Only the case of Falun Gong in China is still paid strong attention to by mass communication because of serious social conflict relationship with the government.

39) *Ibid.*, 275. In this regard, Melton points out that there is some exaggeration in the fact that so far the socio-scientific research papers of New Religion mainly have made an emphasis on the absolute roles of the charismatic leaders in new religious groups. It is said that there were not major fluctuations on the way of the groups' being, although there were some power struggles in the transitional process to

Actually, the term, 'cult' that indicates New Religion today has been broadly adopted in popular culture. Although the term has been used for a bit strange and new cultural phenomenon these days, such usage does not particularly express in a negative context. Rather, what is fanatical to such an extent as to be even close to idol worship among young people is often called as 'cult movie' or 'cult music'. The case of 'New Age' is also very similar. It is the New Age movement that was developed on the context of the British occult groups or the metaphysical Churches in 1960s went over to the United States in 1970s and then caught the extreme popularity in 1980s. By the time, as the center of New Age movements was relocated from London to Los Angeles, many periodicals titled 'New Age' were published. And, the occult groups which were inactive for some time led a lot of people into the so called 'spiritual' new religious movement under the name of New Age.

Such New Age movement is thought to have played a role of bringing a much broader concept of New Religion than once it used to be. The people who accepted parts of New Age belief like reincarnation were not socially or religiously deviants. Rather, they were the people who remained in the mainstream churches of Christianity. The astrologists in the context of New Age idea have also inosculated their skills with psychological knowledge and counseling skills including the human potential development movement. The New Age movement which got supported by the metaphysical thoughts in the Western culture has included the various popular culture movements such as ecology, natural food, peace and alternative health practice principles into the concept of New Religion.⁴⁰⁾ Thus, the New Religions packaging with New Age invited not only many artistic expressions centering in music and movie as transmitting media, but also were gradually recognized as fair and legal views or beliefs among the people in the street. This eventually opened

pass on the leadership after the death of leaders.

40) For the overview of the development of this field, see Catherine L. Albanese, "The Aura of Wellness: Subtle-Energy Healing and New Age Religion," *Religion and American Culture* 10/1 (2000, winter): 29-55.

up the explosive commodification of New Age.⁴¹⁾

Of course, since the second half of 1980s, there have been quite a few people who continuously follow the core belief of New Age like a desire for the meaningful social change toward the new kingdom of peace and tranquillity. However, it is important aspects that the metaphysical elements of New Age belief like personal experience of transformation and contact with the transcendental world are still constantly revived in the various patterns of New Religions.⁴²⁾ Such New Religions are no longer the New Religions which are confined in the traditional typology of religious organizations. They are legitimate religious groups which are very extensively accepted without repulsion.

In considering such perspectives, it would be right to see that the viewpoint to understand New Religions itself should be changed today. The killing of New Religion, on the basis of the misunderstanding, like the scandal to stimulate curiosity of weekly magazine style or the contemporary witch-hunting which is similar to a people's court style never fails to be stopped right now. And all the distorted interpretations that are woefully supported by the application of a rash social scientific theory, without a basic common sense of religion, should be also criticized. Rather, it is serious attitudes not only to recognize the New Religions of our society as part of our normal spiritual culture, but also to actively sympathize and understand them that are requested. Furthermore, it is the demands of the times for us to try to suggest a creative wisdom to live up to the harmony between fresh concepts of religion suggested by New Religions in this era and those of existing religious tradition.

41) It is in this context that the materialistic or (post) capitalistic tendency of New Age emerged. In other words, the positions of "shopping is infinite as God is infinite" and "becoming rich is a function of (spiritual) enlightenment" appeared. See, Sandra Ray, *How to Be Chic, Fabulous and Live Forever*, Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 1986; Paul Heelas, "Cults for Capitalism: Self Religious, Magic and the Empowerment of Business," Fulton, J., ed., *Religion and Power: Decline and Growth*(London: British Sociological Association, 1991), 27ff.

42) J. G. Melton, *Op. Cit.*, 274.

Keywords: new religion, religio-typology, sect, cult, concept

원고접수일: 2014년 11월 11일

심사완료일: 2014년 12월 16일

게재확정일: 2014년 12월 24일

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The Changing Concept of 'New Religions' from a Religio-typological Context

Chongsuh Kim (professor, Seoul National University)

According to the traditional typology of religions, there is quite a sharp difference between sect and cult (new religion): Though both of sect and cult are not well supported by societies, the one intends to follow the idea of predominant church while the other tends to create or introduce new ideas alien to the society. But such a difference between sect and cult is gradually getting weaker and weaker today. In fact, many religious orders which passed for "cults" have been often turned out to be sectarian groups derived from originally church-oriented sects. By contrast, many sects tends to include various elements of cults in their own framework (especially, in North American millieu) these days. Thus, there seems to get to exist a very vague boundary between sect and cult. In this context, new religions are no longer what they used to be. They denote much wider concepts than before. The term, "cults," does not contain any pejorative meaning today but mean even something passionate like enthusiastic worships for youth. In a sense, it can be said that the term, "cults" may challenge to the stereotyped definition of religion and invite a new meaning of it for the future.

Keywords: new religion, religio-typology, sect, cult, concept