Chapter 5

Living with Your Own Chi

A task of Christian theology is to embrace the Other in order to overcome the problem of destructive interactions so that these relationships will not be debilitating, but rather welcoming and accepting. Therefore, Christian theology needs to continuously reconceive itself so that it will nurture and enhance understanding and respect for the Other. A step toward this reconception will be to embrace Chi, as Chi may empower us to be more open and sensitive to the Other. This chapter will examine the present social context of multiculturalism, racialization, dualism, and the Other. Examining these points of interest will reveal the real necessity for change. To begin, it is important to recognize that multiculturalism is part of the context that we live in. This chapter will present some of its structural problems. As a response to multiculturalism and to postcolonialism, this chapter will embrace how one needs to live with their own Chi and in turn work toward a new pneumatology of Chi.

Multiculturalism

Our present North American context reveals that we are living amid many cultures, religions, concepts, and ideas. How do we live with such complexities? It is significant that the productive capacities of this third space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. A willingness to descend into that alien territory may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity.¹ For some reason, there is an exotic understanding of multiculturalism and a false understanding that since we are multicultural, we have accomplished greatness in our society. This falls short of actual recognition of differences among the diverse groups of individuals.

G. J.-S. Kim, The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other
© Grace Ji-Sun Kim 2011
The modern demand for recognition by various marginalized individuals and victim groups is an inevitable consequence of multiculturalism. The irony is that the logic of multiculturalism becomes incoherent and what started as a means to hold us together becomes an impetus to fragmentation and divisiveness. Thus in theory multiculturalism sounds positive, but in reality it causes internal turmoil and chaos. If society refuses to affirm the equality, in principle, of all cultures, then does society not thereby threaten the recognition of cultural particularity? Is this not simply to leave minority cultures to the mercy of the dominant culture? Does not such a refusal lie at the root of cultural imperialism?2

The Dynamics of Cultural Identity

Multiculturalism is discussed varyingly as a “celebration” of ethnic diversity or as a “struggle to keep cultural identity intact” in a hybrid environment. However, even while seeking celebration, cultures are never intact.3 Bhabha claims that multiculturalism is a form of exoticism and threatens to create a kind of ethnic essentialism, where the supposed purity of cultural practices must be maintained and supported in order for that culture to be recognized as authentic.4 It is impossible to keep a culture “pure,” as there are many forces—external and internal—that cause it to adapt, modify, and metamorphosize itself. If multiculturalism is valid, then this prevents cultures from mixing and influencing one another, which is apparent in a globalizing world and perhaps is pertinent to multiculturalism’s survival. People living in diasporas are intermingling with various cultures and it may be difficult to distinguish one from the other.

Salman Rushdie observes that “‘authenticity’ is the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly unbroken and homogenous tradition. Or else.”5 The kind of essentialism that multiculturalism often demands runs in direct contrast to the economic and property demands of capitalism. Immigrants are not given an equal share of the land base or the economy. Instead, while cultural rituals and holidays may be maintained, they are entirely deterritorialized. Multiculturalism in fact is based on the notion of equal representation and so is easily adapted to the supposed “democratic” ideals.6

The Dynamics of Difference

In certain ways, multiculturalism tries to preserve difference and immigrants suffer the consequences. Multiculturalism maintains a deterritorialized