

# The Culture of the 21st Century and Reformed Faith<sup>1)</sup>

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## I. Preface

Today's advanced electronic engineering created an instant world of connection by being combined with the communication technology. This is, so to speak, the cyber world, which has become an electronic nerve system of a modern human by means of the computer. The revolution of instant connection has brought out a change in the areas of knowledge and science, human & animal and plant life, eco-environment and even religion. Information-scientific technology has been making an electronic map on all the areas of the earth village from the human body to the cosmos.<sup>2)</sup>

The secular culture of the 21st century is characterized as the following five. First, it is characterized as a cyber space by means of the information technology. Second, it is characterized as a postmodernity emerging as a stream to overcome the limits of the modernity. A deconstruction of tradition, authority and a relativization of truth and value have been accelerated by the overflowing knowledges in information society. Third, it is characterized as a concern with the life due to the development of genetic engineering. Fourth, it is characterized as a concern with the environment. It has arisen due to the crisis of eco-world. Fifth, it is characterized as a new concern with the religion due to the loss of the meaning of life in the enriched scientific technological society. If we express these streams in connection with the culture, these are called a cyber culture, a postmodern culture,

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1) This work was supported by the Soongsil University Research Fund.

2) Howard A. Snyder, *Earth Currents: The Struggle for the World's Soul*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995, 59 – 65.

a culture of life, a culture of eco, a culture of religion. We intend to analyse the five traits of the culture.

The writer intends to describe the traits of the secular culture of the 21st century, in which the cultural mandate God in the creation gave human has been realized, and to suggest from the perspective of reformed faith the direction of christian culture corresponding to it.

## II. The five traits of secular culture of the 21st century

### 1. A cyber culture

The development of the information technique has brought a revolutionary change in the society. The dynamics of this change is a global expansion of the high knowledge – concentrated production technique and the information processing communication technique. Information and knowledge have become the third power resources by playing a dynamic role of the global industrial structuralization. In the cultural activity, in the enterprise organization and in the national and international relationship a big power shift has begun, according to the stream and production of knowledge and information, as Alvin Toffler has affirmed. Here, the power is knowledge and information that are added as new resources to the physical power (military power), and possession (economic power). The power has been shifting, according to the dynamic relationship of these three resources.<sup>3)</sup>

A cyber space has the anonymity, universality, and self – escapement.<sup>4)</sup> In the cyber space the distance and conflict between the classes, the nations and provinces become meaningless. A cognotariat replaces the proletariat. The transfer of the bank bills is replaced by the symbol of the electronic code. In the cyber – cultural age, the physical power has been replaced by the information and knowledge, which are new resources of social power.

In a digital age, a new media will grow big and the paper will

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3) Alvin Toffler, *Powershift*, Bantam, Korean Translation, Hankook Kyungje Shinmoonsa 1990, 24 – 45.

4) Denis Macquail, *Mass Communication Theory*, Korean Translation, 1990, 53.

Yung Han Kim, "Cyber – culture and Reformed Faith", in: *Cyber Culture and A Strategy of Christian Culture*, Qumran Press, 1999, 9 – 10.

still survive. The form of media will be changed, as the one volume of *Encyclopedia Britannica* is put into a small CD. However, the essence is the same. The act to write a letter to the friends will be continued. Be it the paper or the Internet, the top class journalists and creative artists will keep up their true values.<sup>5)</sup> A digital culture is a world which is ruled not by the atom but by the byte. Whereas the principle of atoms produced a world of analog in which one really touches and experiences, the principle of byte creates a digital world which is coming as hyper-real. The American digital evangelist, Nicholas Negrofonte in his volume *Being Digital* affirmed: "One can not survive, unless digitalized, in the 21st century."<sup>6)</sup> He mentions "Digital Human" in terms of the encounter of the computer consisting of the byte and the human consisting of the atom.

The digitalization of the communication means has changed the cultural space in a revolutionary way. Building the light communication network has been creating a cyber economy and cyber culture like cyber commerce. Today's human has lived in a natural environment consisting of the atoms, and at the same time, in a communication-media environment which becomes gradually byterized in acceleration. These two environments demand to be united rather than being exclusive to each other, but they are forming one eco-communication environment in connection of the byte and the atom.<sup>7)</sup>

## 2. Postmodernity

The crisis of the modernity, affirming the end of the ideology to need the totality, has been giving rise to the postmodernity to affirm the diversity. The crisis of the modernity originated from the crisis of human subjectivity which have made possible the emergence of the modernity. Postmodernity took place due to the crisis of the modernity. Postmodernity is trying to pursue a new paradigm of reason and science to overcome the crisis of the modernity which gave rise to human alienation. A French thinker, Jean-François Lyotard clarified a postmodern condition of the modernity. His discussion was a post-modern work to reflect the significance of the event that had occurred in the modernity.<sup>8)</sup> Postmodernity shows in the positive aspect the

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5) "A Human is Important also in the Digital Age", Chosunilbo, April 10, 2000, 23.

6) Chosunilbo (editor), *New Millennium, New Century*, Chosunilbo Editorial Office, 2000, 10.

7) "Byte - World shall Give Happiness", Chosunilbo, April 22, 2000, 19.

traits of the multi-dimensionalization, ethical responsibility, emotion and holistic view, falls in the negative one into relativism and nihilism, by denying the objectivity of the truth and value.

### 1) Multi-dimensional thinking

Postmodernity emphasizes the multi-dimensionalization and diversity, whereas the modernity does the uniformity and unity. In terms of the woman-man relationship in the family, the occupation and the public life, a partner relationship is developing. The axis of politics, economy and culture is shifting from the center of the Euro-America to the one of the Asia-Pacific Ocean. The Europe is coming into the European Union. The UN activity being strengthened, the voice and role of the third world are becoming bigger and bigger. An eco-social market economy is developing. In the advanced society, a service and communication society is being formed. Culturally it is going on to the direction of post-ideological culture. This culture is oriented to the pluralistic wholeness. In terms of the religion, it is a post-confessional and religious dialogue era. Thus, a multi-confessional, ecumenical world community has been formed.<sup>9)</sup>

### 2) Emphasis of ethical responsibility

The modernity neglected the ethic, only emphasizing the efficiency. This led to the last two world wars, the imperialism and the massacre of Jews by the Nazism. Therefore, postmodernity purses a change of the value. This paradigm change contains a change of the fundamental value. The value change is a change from the thinking of free ethic into that of responsible ethic. It is a change from the technology ruling the humankind to the one serving him. It is a change from the industry destroying the environment to the one demanding a true concern and a need of the humankind in the consistency with the nature. It is a change from the democracy claiming the formal rights to the live democracy in which freedom and justice are reconciled.

### 3) Esteeming the emotion

Postmodernity, however, does not deny the efficiency of the modernity. Special values in the industry society, such as diligence, rationality, order, thoroughness, being punctual, awakening, ability and

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8) Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition Postmoderne, Minuit, 1979, 7-20, 30-35.*

9) Hans Küng, *Projekt Weltethos, Piper, München, Zürich, 1991, 41.*

efficiency have not merely disappeared, but they should be interpreted in a new context, The new values in the postmodernity are imagination, sensibility, emotionality, warmth, tenderness, humanity.<sup>10)</sup> Here not an abolition of the value but a movement of the balance and countermeasure is important.

#### 4) Holistic perspective

Postmodernity goes from fragmentary thinking to holistic view. Holistic thinking is a thinking coming from development thinking, leading to a new environmental consciousness. It points to a balanced thinking between the rational, emotional and sensitive tendency. It says of holistic view of the world and humankind in the diverse dimensions. It makes possible the balance between the Western – American and the Eastern Asian thinking. In the area of human life, there is with an economic, social and political dimension an emotional, ethical and religious dimension. Holistic thinking tries to perceive in balance not only the functional dimensions of the former but also the deeper emotional ones of the latter.<sup>11)</sup>

#### 5) Threat of deconstructivism

Postmodernity is going into the direction to deconstruct the tradition, authority, truth and value, overemphasizing the relativization and multi – dimensionalization. Accordingly, the social spirit has been disintegrating. Our society has been losing not only a consensus on the individual behavior but also a foundation of the reasonable discussion over the war, armament, distribution of richness, medical ethic, criminal affairs and justice.

F. Lyotard diagnosed the era of the intelligent, which is considered as a subject to realize the universal value was over. His diagnosis is a doubt of the universal value the modernity has strived for.<sup>12)</sup> Accordingly, today's postmodernity has lived in the age of Judges when everyone acted according to what he considered good. The modern belief that the knowledge is good has been collapsed. It was discovered that there is no real connection between knowledge and

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10) Hans Küng, *op. cit.*, 42.

11) Yung Han Kim, "The 21st Century, Postmodernism & Christianity", in: *The 21st Century, Postmodernism & Christianity*, Series of Christian Culture Studies Vol. IX, Soongsil University Press, 1996, 37 – 73.

12) F. Lyotard, *op. cit.*

its good use. The possibility of its misuse is controversial in the genetic engineering and the use of nucleus etc. The postmodern society has been caught not in the conviction that the technology a human developed is used for his good purpose, but rather in the fear it shall bring him into the destruction. A radical critique of the modernity, suggesting the ethical and moral relativism, has deconstructed the traditional ethic and moral.

### 3. A culture of life

The 21st century is a century of bio-culture. The biotech industry, which does a productive activity by an artificial manipulation technique of the genes and by using it has been developing. The products that use the bioengineering will be coming out in the field of agriculture and medicine. The cure that uses the genes efficiently utilizes a body immune system. The Human Genome Project is an enterprise to decode all genetic information of the living thing.<sup>13)</sup> In the DNA of a human, all history of body is accumulated.<sup>14)</sup> A genetic cure commands a fine prospect as a latest high-tech medicine by the use of the Human Genome Project.<sup>15)</sup> The development of genetic chip is on the progress, which diagnoses diverse diseases in one hour, if the genetic information is used with decoding of the genetic map.<sup>16)</sup>

Since the sheep Dolly was born by the somatic cell cloning, humans have broken through a stage of the life cloning by means of the somatic cell nuclear transfer.<sup>17)</sup> Embryo cloning using the somatic cell shall be expected to be efficiently useful for healing an incurable disease, by producing the substitute cells and organs. This has become an epoch-making turning point that the incurable diseases can be healed in the dimension of the cell or organ, without producing the substitute organ accompanying the various problems such as the lack of organs, the secret organ sale, and the bio-refusing response.<sup>18)</sup>

13) Jeremy Rifkin, *The Biotech Century*, 1998, Korean Translation, Mineumsa, 1999, 32-42.

14) "The 21st Century, Disease Half Reduced, Foods Two Times", Chosunilbo, January 1, 1998, 14.

15) Jeremy Rifkin, *The Biotech Century*, Korean Translation, 1999, 35-42.

16) John Pekkannen, "Genetics: Medicine's Amazing Leap," *Reader's Digest*, September, 1991, 23, Howard A. Sneyder, *EarthCurrents*, 144-150.

17) Se-Pil Park, "Potential of Human Cloning Technology Derived from Somatic Cells", in: *Faith and Science*, Autumn, Korea Christian Studies Institute, 11-15.

18) *Ibid.*, 17.

Today's life-engineering has been really trying to perform a human cloning. A cloning means making a genetically identical substance during the process in which human embryos<sup>19)</sup> are divided and conceived.<sup>20)</sup> This is a human hybris to apply the benefits of civilization to the divine area beyond human limits. Here arises the ethical problem.

#### 4. An eco-culture

The 21st century is called a century of eco. The human reflection on the ecological destruction caused in the last century has been increasing. Due to the hyper-development and the exploitation of natural environment in the last 20th century, the green house effect, the destruction of the ozone layer, the climate change, the pollution of water and air, the desertification of forest, the decrease of rare bio-species have arisen. Therefore, the living things that have disappeared in the last decades in a non-restorable way account for the ten thousand species.<sup>21)</sup> The UN report on the global status 2000 has shown the serious consequence of the global pollution in terms of the forest, the water system, the coastline, the lawn area and the agriculture area.<sup>22)</sup> As the countermeasure for it, a movement of the eco-preservation campaign has increased. In the whole cultural area, a green movement has been emerging.

In 1972, the Roman Club suggested an economy of the zero growth in the report of *the Limits of Growth*.<sup>23)</sup> The Roman Club insisted on the qualitative growth instead of the quantitative one. This view was severely criticized<sup>24)</sup> by progressive thinkers and scholars from the under-developed countries. Today's green revolution represented by the large-scale enterprise agriculture and the chemical fertilizer has overcome the crisis of food. However, this large-scale enterprise agriculture has brought problems such as the poverty of the third

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19) K. Dawson, "Glossary", P. Singer et., ed., *Embryo Experimentation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 248, 252.

20) *Cambridge Quarterly of Health Ethics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer 1995, p. 268.

21) Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 24.

22) *How to Save the Earth, Time*, Special Edition, Time, April-May 2000, 18-24.

23) D. Meadow, u. a., *Die Grenzen des Wachstums* (Stuttgart, 1972).

24) H. v. Nussbaum (Hrsg.), *Die Zukunft des Wachstums. Kritische Antworten zum "Bericht des Club of Rome"* (Düsseldorf, 1973); H. E. Richter (Hrsg.), *Wachstum bis Katastrophe? Pro und Contra zum Weltmodell* (Stuttgart, 1974).

world farmers, the decline of quality in the production. In 1988, American Agriculture Department announced the continuous support of small agriculture, pointing out the advantages like the bio-diversity, the environmental favor, the independence and the responsibility of community. The control over the genetically manipulated food has been introduced due to the reflection on such a capitalistic agriculture policy.

Recently, a campaign seeking a dark heaven has been in the progress in Spain. This is an environment campaign which is one degree higher, because this affords a view to look back to the human civilization from the view of animal.<sup>25)</sup> Such a campaign is a primal one to preserve the diversity of living things as well as the shape of natural eco-world.<sup>26)</sup>

## 5. A “new” religious Culture

### 1) A “new” secular religion

In the 19th century, Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud prophesied religion shall vanish with the development of human society. Harvey Cox, accepting their idea, suggested a secular theology, and van Buren declared the death of God. However, such a prophecy has been proved to be false. It is true that the Western Christianity has been on the decline, the presence rate to church worship has become very low, and the candidate to the ministry has been constantly on the decline. However, in the postindustrial society the extinction of religion has not occurred, as they prophesied. What has occurred instead, was the emergence of secular religious movements, such as various kinds of the ideology, the utopianism, the UFO religion, the drug movement, the technology deification etc.<sup>27)</sup> All kinds of astrology, the fortune telling, the superstition, the yoga, the meditation and the new age movement have replaced traditional religions.

The books on the astrology and the fortune telling have been booming worldwide. The new religious groups which had emerged from 1987 to 1989 were numbered 400. In the new religious groups,

25) “Looking for the dark Heaven. Respecting the primal Nature,” Kukmin Ilbo, 21st April, 2000, 23.

26) Yonghoon Cho, *A Practical Task of Christian Environmental Ethics*, Korea Literatue Society, 1997, 113.

27) Carl Heinz Ratschow, *Von der Religion in der Gegenwart*, Kassel: Johannes Stauda, 1972, 18-26.



there is a connection between the every day life and the transcendence. Furthermore, the new age believers, refusing the outward authority, give emphasis on converting the eye on the inward, and learning a contact with the soul. Such a spiritual experience gives a rest to the modern human in a rapid change. It was estimated that in 1987 in USA, 5 – 10% of the whole population belonged to the new age movement.<sup>28)</sup> In his recent volume of 1995, *Fire from Heaven*, Harvey Cox treated “the rise of Pentecostal spirituality and the reshaping of religion in the 21st century,” giving up his former thesis of the extinction of religion.<sup>29)</sup>

## 2) Clashes between the religious cultures

According to the American scholar, Samuel Huntington, world history has come to a stage of conflict between the civilizations, ending the opposition of the nations as well as that of ideologies. He sees the 21st century as a conflict age between the Western and non-Western civilization based on the religious culture: Asserting the Western value as universal has provoked the fundamentalists having a root in a number of Islam nations to a radical action.<sup>30)</sup>

Such Huntington’s view is insightful, so far as it has introduced in the analysis of international politics a religious culture as the important element. However, his view considers the conflict and opposition between the global religious cultures as necessary, by making universal the particular events that were occurring due to the dissolution of the cold war. His view is, therefore, considered not acceptable.<sup>31)</sup> According to Harald Müller, Huntington’s theory depicts a bad dream that Confucian and Islam civilization shall form an alliance against the West as a common enemy has come to a reality. “The clashes of civilization” are “a terrible scenario.”<sup>32)</sup> Harald Müller expresses his opinion against Huntington: Russia which is the core of Orthodox

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28) U. S. News & World Report (February 9, 1987), 69.

29) Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven. The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century*, Massachusetts: Addison – Wesley Publishing Co., 1995, Korean Translation, 129 – 182.

30) Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of World Order*, 1996, Korean Translation, Kimyoungsa, 1997, 243 – 410.

31) Hans Küng, “Mass’s Religious Concern Shall Increase, While Church decreases”, *The 21st Century in the View of the Worldclass Intelligence*(17), ChosunIlbo, January 31, 2000, 19.

32) Harald Müller, *Das Zusammenleben der Kulturen*, Frankfurt 1998, Korean Translation, Pulun Soop, 1999, 19.

civilization, China which is the core of Confucian one, and Turkey which is the core of the Islam one seem not to form an anti-Western alliance.<sup>33)</sup> Müller contends the religions should strive for being tolerant, coming into the dialogue and coexisting rather than coming into conflict and opposition.

Huntington contends a pluralism of civilization should end, a single civilized state should be established, a missionary activities beyond national boundary should be stopped. One should stop, he insists, the efforts to expand the civilized achievement such as the religious mission, the human right, the women liberation etc., The politics, which minimizes the ranges enable to cause the conflict with other civilization, by clearly drawing the boundary between the civilizations, can prevent the earth village from fatally coming into the confrontation, so he. Such a view of Huntington is a Western civilization-prior thinking, a dualistic one, which is not relevant for the postmodern society.

### III. The direction of Christian culture in the 21st century

I would like to mention the direction of Christian culture reformed Christians should form, while facing the five traits of secular culture in the 21st century. They are first, a christological cyber-ethic and an Internet mission, second, a “postmodern” cultural theology, third, a theocentric life ethic, fourth, a Trinitarian eco-ethic, fifth, an inclusive-transforming attitude toward other religions.

#### 1. A christological cyber ethics and Internet mission.

In the cyber age, human is important.<sup>34)</sup> The open forum in the cyber space is the one for the communication where the users freely encounter, where the question and the answer are freely conducted. Due to the anonymity and no face-to-face character, the Internet Sea has almost become the sea of slander.<sup>35)</sup> Cyber hooligans have been emerging<sup>36)</sup> who speak violent language in the cyber space. The

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33) *Ibid.*, 271.

34) “Humans are important also in Digital Age”, Chosunilbo, April 10, 2000, 23.

35) “Sea of Slander ...”, Chosunilbo, July 19, 2000, 27.

36) “Violence of Language ...”, Korea Univ. Press, May 8, 2000, 4.

teen ages are especially vulnerable to be influenced by the contents of instinctive information which are filled with the porno and violence. The cyber space is also vulnerable to be made a forum of the emotional opposition, personal attack and verbal violence.

A new kind of computer virus that hit the earth village has been increasing the power of destruction year by year. For instance, the Chernobyl virus in April 1999, and the Love-Bug in 2000.<sup>37)</sup> The sea of information is on one side a forum of possibility, the infinite treasure, however, at the same time a jungle where the tremendous cyber catastrophe took place and the cyber crimes are committed. The trait of the catastrophe and crime in the cyber space is that the range of their damages covers in a second the whole earth village.

In the cyber culture, the ethic is important. We need to set up a true Netiquette (Etiquette of netizens). At present, there are in U. S. A. 10,000 Netiquette sites, where the users are accessible according to their levels. A "Netiquette-columnist" has recently been opened. In Korean society, we need to be concerned not only with the Internet-technique, but also with the Netiquette-movement. The basis of Netiquette is that all the users use their real names. This is nothing different from a general ethical campaign. The Netiquette campaign is practised in the cyber world centered on the netizens in the extension of the ethic practice campaign in our every day life.

Cyber space is anyway a world a human maintains. Its problems occur due to the bad will of a human. This cyber world is not another world in faith, but still the sphere where Christ rules as the Lord. Here, we can state a christological statement: Jesus Christ is still the king as well as the transformer of the cyber culture.<sup>38)</sup> Even a cyber behavior in the cyber space can not evade the norm of general ethic. The subject who acts is still a human. The cyber characters perform speech and behavior, however, the one who introduces them is a human. A real human is necessarily behind them.

Reformed christians should carry out a critical reflection on today's media. As France media sociologist, Jean Baudrillard, already critically mentioned the media of today, what the media, in surplus, overwhelms

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37) "Attack of the Love Bug", Time, May 15, 2000, 36-42.

38) Yung Han Kim, "The Identity of Reformed Theology and Its Ecumenicity in the Twenty-first Century: Reformed Theology as Transformational Cultural Theology", in: Wallace M. Alston Jr. & Michael Welker (editors), *Reformed Theology. Identity and Ecumenicity*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, 8.

the reality is one of the self-picture images today's modern society has. Susan Sontag analyses, in her recently published volume *Regarding the Pain of Others*, how much the high information society has distorted through the media the war and violence which are the reenactment of the pain.<sup>39)</sup> She, in her volume, analyses the history of the image surrounding the pain. According to her, the reenactment of the pain including the picture had in the past a moral, instructive meaning. However, after the image revolution through the photograph occurred, the reenactment of pain was changed into the object of aesthetics. As consequence, it has been changed into an object of consumption and spectacle.<sup>40)</sup> Sontag insists we should be aware of the misery of reality, and go beyond the sympathy of pain of others, by suggesting and reflecting the way of reenacting the world. Reformed Christians should train a critical view to watch the images and information floating in today's media and in the sea of information as they really are, and should be familiar with the critique of media.

The cyber space is rather a field of mission. God has paved an information highway leading to the whole world by the use of the light fiber, as he did in the time of New Testament the way to the Rome for the mission by using military forces. Herein is a legitimacy of the Internet mission. The ocean of infinite information is from a missiological perspective a sea of mission as well as a field of mission to infinitely pave a frontier way of mission. Christian cultural activists who do work in the webspace have recently been emerging. Their activities have been diverse from the popular cultural activities to the activities of Gospel song.<sup>41)</sup>

## 2. A "postmodern" cultural theology: A "postmodern" expression of Christian truth

It is a fundamentalist, narrow view to only condemn postmodernity

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39) Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Korean Translation, 2004.

40) *Ibid.*

41) Representative Websites are as follows: 1. "jesus tv" (<http://www.jesus.or.kr>), 2. Christian Culture Cafe "Good Soil" (<http://myhome.netsgo.com/rache92/default.htm>), 3. Gospel and Culture (<http://user.chollian.net/~finehope>), 4. Drama Mission (<http://www.emptyspace.net>), 5. GospelSong (<http://www.gospel.co.kr/bigtree/index.html>), 6. Cultural Transformation (<http://www.ccp.co.kr>), 7. Christian Ethic Movement (<http://www.cemk.org>), 8. Christian Environment Solidarity (<http://www.peacenet.or.kr/~kcems>) etc. ("Sign of Christian Web Culture Change", Sånuri ShinMoon, April 2, 2000).

as a secularism. We, Christians, have to suggest an alternative, criticizing the deconstructivism which is a negative aspect of postmodernity. However, we should testify Christian truth, accepting a positive aspect of postmodernity which shows emphasis of emotion, ethical responsibility and holistic view. This is the task of a postmodern cultural theology as a transformed one.<sup>42)</sup>

#### 1) A new interpretation of the value and ethic

Deconstructivism has fallen into an anarchistic situation of the value and knowledge, by denouncing any authority and sacred books. Postmodernity is a response to the dilemma of our era and a trial to put the question to the structure of the past era to uniformize and to suppress the people. However, the battle between the two poles such as life and death, good and evil, love and hate etc. is still continuing. The search for the truth and God is the issue never to be given up.<sup>43)</sup> The self-justified authority and the artificial sacred books should be criticized and examined again. When the authority and the sacred books as a whole are denied, however, the human thought and behavior become to lose the direction and fall into nihilism. I would say a maintenance of the identity of Christian faith and theology in the 21st century begins with the rediscovery of the fact that the Scripture is the Word of God.<sup>44)</sup>

A radical critique of the modernity, suggesting the ethical and moral relativism, has deconstructed a traditional ethic and moral. Accordingly, the social spirit has been disintegrating. Our society is losing not only a consensus on individual behaviors but also a foundation of the reasonable discussion over the war, the armament, the distribution of richness, the medical ethic, the criminal affairs and justice.

We, Christians, can not accept Lyotard's postmodern idea insisting that there is no universal meaning, truth, value and ethic. Instead, we affirm that there is a universal truth, meaning, value and ethic a human should and could pursue, although the way of his thinking, culture and customs may be diverse and different. The meaning, truth, value and ethic should not be set up voluntarily according to the human

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42) Yung Han Kim, "The Identity of Reformed Theology and Its Ecumenicity...", 3-19.

43) "The Trend of World Church", *Christian Thought*, 1995, October, 277.

44) Yung Han Kim, "Reformed Theology in the Postmodern Era", *Christian Thought*, 1994, January, 134. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1984, 113-124.

thought but interpreted under the light of the divine creation order and will. A situational context of the value and ethic can be approved. This, however, does not mean falling into relativism, as situationalists insist. The value and ethic should be illumined dynamically in paradoxical relation of the infinite request of God and the human situation in which the value judgement and ethical act are demanded.

## 2) A responsible ethic

Hans Jonas, in his volume *The Principle of Responsibility*, dealing with an eschatological crisis of the technology-centered civilization of the 20th century as a urgent issue, suggests a responsible ethic, denouncing the technological monopoly. According to Jonas, a responsible ethic is not a human-centered ethic. It is an ecotopian ethic for maintaining a human and the nature on the earth.<sup>45)</sup> Such an ethic is similar to the responsibility of the parent to the children. A parental responsibility is “an archetype of all responsible ethic.” This is not the relation to offer love after getting a permission of the partners and to give and receive the grace from and to each other. The basic type of responsible ethic the parent possesses is not luckily deduced from a certain principle. It is a human love planted in mother’s womb, namely, maternity. Such an ethic is not self-assertion but self-transcendence.<sup>46)</sup>

## 3) A balanced thinking pursuing the holistic

A postmodern way we are searching for is the way that comes out of the difficulty of the modernity and overcomes it in humility and prudence. It is to open the view for the religious, deep psychological and ethical dimensions in the superficial, representational culture and technology. This way is to acquire a holistic view. This view is to let the human thinking come out of the technological and functional dimension and to make it corresponding to his emotion and sensibility, and familiar with the environment.<sup>47)</sup>

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45) Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilization*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1984. derselber, *Technik, Medizin und Ethik. Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch 1987.

46) Hwa Yul Jung, “Nature and Humankind: postmodern Horizon”, in: *Human-worthy Life and Role of Philosophy*, Han Min Jok Philosopher’s Congress, Volume 1, 2000, 130.

47) Yung Han Kim, “The 21st Century, Postmodernism & Christianity”, 37-73.

### 3. A theocentric life ethic

The bioengineering, though a necessary technique for a human, is giving rise to many problems. This technique has a possibility to manipulate in an immoral way, and to harm the genetic identity of the individual as well as a negative potential to violate the human right by an eugenical misuse. A genetic discrimination to use the genetic information against those having a potential to get a special disease are judged as inappropriate shall emerge as a social syndrome.

It has still not been scientifically proved, how the cloning of animal and plant or the gene – manipulated food influences on the human life and the quality of life. We, therefore, need to declare a kind of moratorium, until the positive and negative effects are verified in terms of genetically modified animals and plants, taking them into a consideration as much as possible.<sup>48)</sup> For it is due to that the cloning technique has caused a genetic problem.<sup>49)</sup> The cloning technique of animal and plant shall bring not only the emergence of species of animal with the new genes, but also deform the genetic diversity of the nature order. Furthermore, in the stage in which the effect of genetically modified foods on the human body has not been proved, an unexpected event such as a disease infection can occur. in case it is permitted. We can not exclude the sincere fear for the disease and the genetic disorder the organ shall bring, in case even the animal organ made for a medically non – refusing reaction is transplanted to a human.

The human individual cloning should not be permitted, for it shall cause the loss of the self – identity of the individual, and the one of the meaning of the child birth due to that it is the reproduction without sex. It, furthermore, causes an ethical problem such as the domination for a human by a human.<sup>50)</sup> Today in the advanced countries, in general, a study on the pre – embryo until 14 days is permitted.<sup>51)</sup> The progressive

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48) Sang – Dak Kim. "Ethical Problems in Cloning Animal and Human Being", in: *Faith & Scholarship*, No. 3, Vol. IV, Autumn, 1999, Korea Christian Studies Institute, p. 27.

49) I. Wilbur and D. Bruce, "Dolly Mixture", in: D. Bruce & A. Bruce, ed., *Engineering Genesis: The Ethics of Genetic Engineering in Non – Human Species* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1998), 76ff.

50) L. R. Kass, "The Wisdom of Repugnance", in: L. R. Kass & J. Q. Wilson, *The Ethics of Human Cloning* (Washington, D. C.: The AEI Press), 33, 38, 42.

51) United Kingdom, Department of Health and Social Security, "Report of the Committee of

scholars view the pre-embryo has as a stage of indetermination a potential to develop into the diverse individuals, for by the settlement in the mother's womb 14 days after being fertilized, a primitive streak emerges, then one individual is formed.<sup>52)</sup> According to them, the pre-embryo has no moral standing, so organ production through pre-embryo may be permitted, for it is ethically legitimated.

The genetic engineering has to follow a theocentric ethic.<sup>53)</sup> We need the technology to follow the will of God, because God is the creator of all life. The following guideline is needed. First, life engineering has to follow creation order. Individual cloning is a clear revolt against the creation providence of God. This is to refuse the reproduction through sex which God has given as the order of reproduction. The individual cloning is to disturb the biological system of a human. It is ruled by the human greed to extend the human life into the infinite, although limited to the production of the human organ. Furthermore, the dignity of the cloned embryo is violated without excuse. Second, life can not be manipulated according to the human will. Life engineering can be used for the convenience of a human such as for the purpose to heal the genetic disease. It should not go on for the direction to fulfill a human curiosity or selfishness or a commercial purpose. Third, life engineering, recognizing its limits, has to distinguish between artificial and natural. The genetically modified food and the natural food have to be distinguished. By that, a confusion in the order of human and natural life should be avoided. Fourth, we need to set up the clear guideline of the area of life engineering. The research of human cloning should be controlled under a strict law of government. The research areas such as the incubation of the stem cell of the embryo used for the cure of the inveterate disease through the technique of soma cell cloning should go through public discussion. Christian ethic can suggest a guideline for it.

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Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology", The Warnock Committee Report, T. L. Beauchamp & L. Walters, ed., *Contemporary Issues In Bioethics* (California: Wardsworth Publishing Company, 1989), 499.

52) M. Mori, "On the Concept of Pre-embryo. The Basis for a New 'Copernican Revolution' in the Current View about Human Reproduction", in: J. Harris and S. Holm, ed., *The Future of Human Reproduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 45.

John Harris, "In Vitro Fertilization: Ethical Issues", *Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (July 1983), 22ff.

53) Christofer Frey, *Konfliktfelder des Lebens. Theologische Studien zur Bioethik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998, 140-141.



A “principled contextualism” is to be considered. In case a bio-ethic is concentrated one-sidedly on the principles such as the dignity of humanity, and the order of creation, it could cause a dysfunction for the society. A study on the life should be permitted only for the purpose to heal the hereditary disease and cancer. In the necessary case, the permit to cloning in a pre-embryo stage is considerable.<sup>54)</sup>

#### 4. A Trinitarian eco-ethic

Reformed theology can make contribution to forming a nature-friendly culture today, for it sees the nature as a creation of God. The Genesis says a human has been created as a steward of the earth garden which God has given. A Human was created not to be separated from the nature, but to be in harmony with it. The environment-friendly campaign of the 21st century is basically on the same context as the Christian environmental one.

The environmentalists have been suggesting the ten promises with the earth:<sup>55)</sup> “We use the public traffic, eat the organic food, do not put on the leather cloth, use the water-saving facility in the toilet, the top water tap, the shower. We use the product of the first rank in the energy efficiency, do not buy the PVC toy, do not buy the disposables, separate and recycle the slashers, plant more than one tree a year, join the environmental group as a member.” We Christians need to practise these promises in our every day life.

Reformed faith suggests a basic idea of an eco-ethic beyond practising the promises with the earth. It is that the nature is not a god possessing a capacity to purge a earth pollution as the Gaia theory says, but a creation of God. Reformed faith is environment-friendly. It, however, shows the pantheistic nature-view like the Gaia theory which sees the nature as a divine being is a false deification of the creature. Reformed faith also contends that a human is not the Lord of nature against a secular nature-view which as environment idea of the 20th century brought out the environment catastrophe today. Reformed faith affirms the Lord of the nature is not a human who registered the land in his name, but God. A human is just but a steward of the nature responsible for God who entrusts the nature to

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54) Wonki Park, “A Christian Ethical Approach to the Life Cloning”, in: *The Life Culture of The 21st Century and Christianity*, Qumran Press, 2000, 78–81.

55) “10 Promises with the Earth”, Kukminilbo, April 21, 2000, 23.

him. God who is the Lord of land is the Trinitarian God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is the God who created the land. The Son is the God who redeemed through the sacrifice of cross the land, which was alienated and devastated by a human. The Holy Spirit is the God who is the Spirit of the Father the creator, and the Spirit of the Son, the redeemer, who is among all things as the power of life and spirit of God. The eco-ethic of reformed faith is based on the personal faith in the Trinitarian God who has created, redeemed and governed the nature.

## 5. Inclusive transformed Attitude toward other religions

### 1) Reformed Spirituality

A modern human has tried through the Asian mystical religions to fill the spiritual emptiness he did not fill from the Western civilization. Thus, a syncretic spirituality such as yoga movement, transcendental meditation, new age movement etc. has come to dominate the spiritual world of a modern human. Here, christianity needs to suggest toward a modern human that the way to fill a true spiritual emptiness is to find the Creator God, and Jesus Christ he had sent.

The spirituality is a way of life which comes from the faith in the living God. The starting point of Christian spirituality is not human religiosity, but the spirit of rebirth the Holy Spirit gives. The spirituality is a conformity to the image of Christ<sup>56)</sup> in the leading of Holy Spirit. A true spirituality is not the one of mysticism or secularism, but the biblical one. Biblical spirituality is not to seek for a superhumanity, but a restored humanity. A true spirituality is also not a modernistic secular spirituality. The secular spirituality seeks to submerge into the world. Here dominating is a naturalistic mysticism which celebrates the human instinctive impulse, power and will of success. Here the prayer is a penetration through the world to a transcendent being. This way had been prepared by Nietzsche and C. G. Jung and supported by A. Schweitzer and J. Robinson.<sup>57)</sup> Biblical spirituality begins from the new humanity indicating the rebirth made by the power of Word and Spirit, carries out the process of sanctification which is the piety,

56) Donald F. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity. A Call for Unity Amid Diversity*, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1983, 131.

57) Kenneth C. Russell, "Matthew Fox's Spiritual Trilogy", in: *New Catholic World*, Vol. 225, No. 1348 (July - August 1982), pp. 189 - 192.

aims at the dimension of glorification to wholly restore the image of God. Biblical spirituality seeks for an ethical act, is, however, never reduced into an ethicism. Biblical spirituality seeks a mystical fellowship with God, however, should never be reduced into a mysticism.<sup>58)</sup>

## 2) An inclusive – transforming attitude toward other religions

In Europe, the Christian era passed by, the post – Christian era has come, it opened the era of religious pluralism. Asia has been practically already in the religious pluralist reality, for the Christianity has come into the traditional religions which existed already. Today the exclusivism and the terror which the Islam fundamentalism showed against other religions could make the moment to bring forth the clashes of the religions. In Asia, especially in Indonesia already occurred the clashes between the Islam and the Christianity. In these clashes is ruling an attitude of the fanaticism and fundamentalism. The Christian church needs to nurture an inclusive attitude to respect other religions as the high ones, to learn their piety and to co – exist with them. The Christian church needs to train in terms of the social issues a co – existing attitude with other religions.

The Christian church can collaborate to set up an universal ethos of the woman – man equal relationship, the treatment of environmental problems, and the world peace promotion etc. through the common effort with other religions. All the world high religions can collaborate to form a global ethos such as the non – violence, the reverence to life, the generosity and the faithfulness, the solidarity and the just economy order and the woman – man equality etc.<sup>59)</sup> As Michael Welker has already remarked,<sup>60)</sup> I am, however, suspicious of whether or not religion could really realize such a minimal ethic in our global world, for I believe, there is a big gap between moral obligation and its practice, because a human possesses a corrupt nature of the radical evil which can not overcome the selfish greed of self – deification. It had appeared historically in the event of the Babel tower, the war of Medieval Crusade and the first and second world wars. Here, we find the limit of human ethical formation through the collaboration between

58) Donald F. Bloesch, *op. cit.*, 133.

59) Hans Küng, *Projekt Weltethos*, Piper, München u. Zürich, 1991, 51 – 57.

60) Michael Welkers Reaktion auf "Projekt Weltethos", *Evangelische Kommentare*, 9/1993, 528f. Wolfgang Huber, *Der tägliche Gewalt. Gegen den Ausverkauf der Menschenwürde*, Herder: Freiburg 1993, 171ff.

the religions.

Reformed faith offers an inclusive and transforming attitude toward other religions.<sup>61)</sup> It is an open attitude to inwardly set up an identity of faith to receive Jesus Christ alone as my savior, and to outwardly approve the fact that Christianity is one among the world high religions. The inclusive transforming attitude is to approve the relativity of Christianity in the aspect of the system and institution on the one hand, and to preach without compromise the message of Gospel concerning the eternal life and death as the Word of God on the other hand. This attitude is on the one hand to co-exist with the believers of other religions and to live harmoniously with them, on the other hand to give a personal testimony to the Gospel concerning the eternal life and resurrection which the Christian faith has in uniqueness beyond religious institution. For instance, from the aspect of the social work the Christians can do the common project with the believers of other religions, for this common project belongs to the area of common good. However, the Christians should testify the truth of Gospel they experienced in their personal religious life concerning the issues of eternal life and death.

#### IV. Closing Remarks

The 21st century is a century in which the cultural mandate God has given a human in the creation has been realized. Therefore, reformed Christians should not retreat from today's civilization, focusing only the negative aspects of today's civilization which is anti-theistic or atheistic or humancentric. They should rather become a cultural ambassador who realizes the God-given cultural mandates in the five traits of culture, a cyber-culture, a postmodern culture, a life culture, an eco-culture, a religious culture which have been dominating humans of today.

Reformed Christians should practise a cyber ethic in the cyber space, do the Internet mission, and carry out the media critique. They are requested to form a postmodern culture which approves the existence of the truth and value, the diversity, emotion, personal ethic, holistic perspective against the deconstructive trends. They need to suggest a theocentric life ethic which is in accord with the creation order. They

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61) Yung Han Kim, "The Identity of Reformed Theology and Its Ecumenicity ...," 3-19.

should suggest a Trinitarian eco-ethic which sees a human as a gardener of the earth before the Creator. They need to suggest an inclusive, transforming attitude to be open toward other religions and to testify to the Gospel.

Here, a global ethic can be a criterion for the discourse. A global ethic is pursued only as a regulative ideal. Reformed christians should neither escape from today's culture nor compromise with it. They should carry out the mission for today's culture to transform it as God wants it in accordance to the cultural mandate. Reformed theology should work out these tasks in a cultural theological reflection.

| Key Words |

Culture, the 21st Century, Reformed Faith.

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