

# “God Always Find a Way”: The Crisis of Civilization and Its Overcoming through the Worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe

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## Abstract

This article is a compilation of civilizational crises and their overcoming from the worldview of Daeseon Jinrihoe, based on the premise that religion can offer advice on the crises faced by modern civilization. It is a reinterpretation of human history from a religious perspective, focusing on mutual contentions, grievances, grudges, and their overcoming. Daeseon Jinrihoe explains that modern civilizational crises were first recognized by divine beings in the 18th and 19th centuries, and then later recognized by humans in the 20th and 21st centuries. Unable to resolve the civilization crises, the divine beings asked the Supreme God to intervene in human history, and the Supreme God was born in a human body to reveal the root causes and development of various civilizational crises and to propose solutions to overcome them. These solutions encompass setting the world aright and ushering in a new era through the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth (天地公事), attaining enduring peace by practicing grievance resolution for mutual beneficence (解冤相生), and reconstructing the relationship between divine beings and humans in harmonious coexistence. Devotees hold that Daeseon Jinrihoe is a religion that originated as a solution to a problem faced by God rather than humankind. As such, it considers the crises of civilization and their overcoming as the reason for existence. According to the religion's worldview, the Supreme God has already provided the solution to these civilizational crises. With a tip of the hat to the film *Interstellar* (2014), it could be said, "God Found a Way. He Always Has." Now, Daeseon Jinrihoe posits that it is up to humans to implement the way that God found.

**Keywords:** Daeseon Jinrihoe; civilizational crises; the Supreme God; Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth; *Cheonji Gongsu*; Grievance Resolution for Mutual Beneficence; *Haewon Sangsaeng*

## Introduction

By limiting the scope of observation to what is known, the only civilization currently known to exist in the cosmos resides on ‘the Pale Blue Dot.’ The civilization of Earth, which Homo sapiens have built, boasts a long prehistory and a history spanning approximately 10,000 years. Humanity experienced a rapid elevation of civilization during the Industrial Revolution, which began in the late 18th century. Despite enduring numerous wars and conflicts, this civilization appears to hold the promise of utopia for humanity, thanks to its ongoing advancements in science and technology.

However, there are traps that lie ahead for the civilization of Earth that are not easily surmounted. This includes earthquakes that measure a nine or higher on the Richter Scale, supermassive volcanic eruptions like Tamu Massif, Siberian Traps, Yellowstone, and Deccan Traps, as well as unforeseen potential collision threats from Potentially Hazardous Asteroids (PHAs).<sup>1</sup> In addition, prominent examples of natural disasters include massive events like Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) produced by large-scale solar explosions. Various risks are created by humanity itself, including Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), Strong Artificial Intelligence (Strong AI), the destruction of nature, and resource exhaustion. Scientist and historian, Jared Diamond, argued that the lack of society’s response to four factors, climate change, hostile neighbors, the collapse of essential trading partners, and environmental problems, all risk the collapse of civilization. He warned that in order to prevent the decline and downfall of present and future societies, attention should be focused on issues such as anthropogenic climate change, the buildup of toxins in the environment, energy shortages, and other problems (Diamond 2005, 10–15, 486–496).

Amid growing concern about the impending Holocene extinction, in recent times, scientists have meticulously quantified the dangers that threaten the Earth. On May 31, 2023, this task was conducted by 51 scholars, with Johan Rockström heading the effort by integrating natural and social sciences. The new environmental standard, ‘the safe and just Earth System Boundaries (ESBs),’ was published in the journal *Nature*. ESBs are the concept wherein existing environmental assessment and improvement goals such as Planetary Boundaries (PBs), doughnut economics, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been developed. As articulated by the authors of the study, ESB comprises the climatic impacts resulting from global warming, the biosphere of natural ecosystem areas, the biosphere of functional integrity, surface water flows, groundwater levels, phosphorus saturation in agricultural fields, nitrogen levels, and aerosol pollution, including dust. Except for aerosols, the remaining seven categories are reported to have measurement data that has exceeded the danger threshold.

Of course, aerosol pollution is not to be taken lightly. According to the research team, as of now, 85% of the global population is exposed to air pollution, specifically PM2.5 (fine particulate matter), exceeding recommended levels. This exposure is

estimated to result in an annual mortality rate of approximately 4.2 million people (Rockström, Gupta, et al. 2023, 103–109). Consequently, it can be argued that the integrated environmental assessment framework, incorporating both natural and social sciences, has lit a red warning light.

Following the publication of this research, just two months later, the Earth witnessed a series of the hottest days on record. At last, on July 27, 2023, António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, declared the end of the era of global warming and the commencement of the ‘era of global boiling’ (UN News, July 27, 2023). Although the Earth has encountered warm periods in the past, the present rapid temperature increase poses a significant challenge, as there is insufficient time for ecosystems, including humanity, to adapt.

It took humanity approximately 10,000 years to create civilizations. However, before and after the Industrial Revolution, the development of civilizations underwent significant transformations within approximately 300 years. Now, we are coming to the realization that it may only take a few decades to potentially collapse our civilizations.

Can religion offer meaningful advice to humanity in the face of this crisis of civilization? Recognizing that religion has the potential to reshape human values and behavioral patterns and can bring peace of mind to individuals facing death, the answer to this question is ‘yes.’ Religion may be able to provide its own wisdom for overcoming various crises of civilization by applying its doctrines. Yet, in the worst-case scenario, it may offer a final sanctuary to those with faith who are soon to face annihilation.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that hope cannot be acquired from religion. Over the past 300 years, during which human civilization has developed rapidly, religion has lost much of its former societal influence and has failed to harmonize with the speedily advancing field of science. As a result, it can be criticized for not having a credible role in the future of modern civilization, which is based on the Enlightenment and scientific rationalism. Traditional religious texts do not specifically contain narratives about modern civilizational crises and the means for overcoming them, and there is a lack of historical precedent for predicting and offering influential advice for the current crisis of civilization armed with science and technology.

In that case, what focus is redirected from well-established traditional religions to faith groups that have emerged more recently? If those religions arose during the rapid development of modern civilization that transpired during the past 300 years, they might possess greater awareness of issues related to the negative aspects of modern civilization. Indeed, such religions do exist. One of them is Daeseon Jinrihoe, which originated in Korea. This religion goes as far as to assert that its existence and purpose are linked to addressing such crises and their solutions. Therefore, as humanity acknowledges the warning lights across all environmental assessment indicators, there may be a need to explore at least once what Daeseon Jinrihoe has to say about the true nature and causes of the civilization crisis, as well as how to overcome it.

## Beginning and Development of the Civilization Crisis

In East Asian traditional wisdom, all things follow a cyclical pattern: they are born in spring, grow, and flourish in summer, reach harvest in autumn, and rest in winter.<sup>2</sup> These cycles of change create diverse and intricate relationships between elements, encompassing one-to-one, one-to-many, unilateral, and bilateral interactions. These relationships are categorized into two types: Mutual Beneficence (相生), where elements support each other, and Mutual Contention (相克), where elements overcome each other. When these relationships, whether based on mutual beneficence or mutual contention, are harmonized effectively, the cyclical process of all things proceeds smoothly.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, when harmony is absent, the process becomes discordant.

The issues that Daesoon Jinrihoe focuses on begin with the observation that these relationships are not in harmony. In other words, Daesoon Jinrihoe sees that among all things, the predominant order in relationships tends to be characterized by mutual contention. Consequently, grievances and grudges arise among all elements, accumulating over time and filling the world. This, in turn, leads to a situation where all things cannot sustain their lives. This insight forms the fundamental worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe (*Reordering Works* 1:3).

Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that human grievances and grudges, stemming from individuals exercising their free will, not only disrupt social order but also violate the laws of nature (*Dharma* 1:31). Humans have formed multitudinous relationships while building societal groups, and these relationships are more characterized by conflict than by cooperation. As a result, individuals harbor grievances and grudges. These sentiments sometimes find resolution, but at other times, are left to generate new grievances. Over time, the cumulative volume of grievances and grudges increased and surpassed a critical threshold. This has resulted in the breakdown of natural laws and even the threat of global annihilation. From the religious perspective of Daesoon Jinrihoe, this crisis is attributed to certain events that occurred long ago, one from some 4,200 years and the other some 400 years ago (Cha 2021, 22).

### The Grievance (冤) of Danzhu 4,200 Years Ago

There was an event held by tradition to have occurred 4,200 years ago. It still captivates great attention in East Asia. It is said that at that time, King Yao's empire held sway over the midstream region of the Yellow River. The oldest and most prestigious historical record of this empire is *Sbangsbu* (尚書). This book was recognized as a model of good governance that should be followed by later East Asian rulers. However, those who read this book carefully often realize that the rule of King Yao was quite glorified. To put it a little radically, this book is consistent with the view that small groups must obey the orders of large groups unconditionally, or they must be

destroyed. The reason for this criticism is that the Yao Dynasty intentionally concealed or reduced the number of cases wherein the cultures of weaker tribes were attacked or forces occupied weak tribes for unjustifiable reasons. These incidents were even distorted so that acts of aggression were portrayed as ‘virtuous rulership’. The scholar who pointed this out is Cha Seon-keun (Cha 2015). Based on his work, the history of that time can be examined to understand the grievance harbored by Danzhu.

According to Cha, the empire had established itself as a formidable force both militarily and culturally. King Yao dedicated himself to rapidly enhancing the lives of neighboring tribes by disseminating the civilization of his empire which he deemed superior to that of neighboring civilizations. Despite each tribe’s unique traditions, he believed that adopting the civilized lifestyle promoted by his empire would uplift humanity. King Yao pursued his goals through a combination of tactics both conciliatory and oppressive. The majority of nearby tribes, recognizing their inferiority, willingly chose to join Yao’s dominion. However, a few tribes staunchly resisted this assimilation, as it required them to relinquish their independence and much of their ancestral culture. Over time, they were also forced to submit politically to Yao’s empire and endure subjugation. An outlier tribe ultimately found itself overpowered by Yao’s well-trained elite troops in a swift and conclusive victory.

Danzhu, the son of King Yao, paid close attention to this issue and tried to protect the interests of the weaker neighboring tribes. Danzhu believed that when it came to incorporating the weaker neighboring tribes into the empire or allowing them to remain as neighbors, neither forceful subjugation nor discrimination should be employed.

However, King Yao considered Danzhu’s vision overly idealistic and impractical in the context of spreading advanced civilization through the expansion of the empire. The clash between imperial expansion and regionalism was inevitable. To minimize sacrifices, a swift process of civilization emphasizing speed was deemed necessary. Given this vision, Danzhu’s idea would have only hindered such progress. With this political stance in mind, King Yao sought an alternative successor to Danzhu. The chosen individual was Shun, renowned for his filial duty. During his 28-year tenure under Yao’s regency, Shun continued to implement a policy of rewarding tribes that embraced the empire’s civilization while using force to subdue tribes emphasizing regionalism.

Danzhu strove to become a king and protect the rights of weaker tribes, yet, King Yao did not recognize his plan. The difference between the two regarding the establishment of relationship with the strong groups who conformed to the empire’s advanced civilization and the weak tribes who rejected it resulted in Danzhu bearing his grievance. Accordingly, Danzhu’s grievance is not attributed to his not having become a king but to his inability to use his kingship to care for the weak (Cha 2015, 92–120).

In a situation where Danzhu’s vision of harmonizing the empire with weaker tribes

became a mere pipedream, the resistance of tribes opposing imperial rule continued nevertheless. During the later days of Emperor Shun, a rebellion erupted in Cangwu County (蒼梧). He personally embarked on an inspection, seeking to understand the situation. However, he fell ill and died on the way, leaving his two wives grief-stricken. In their despair, both leaped into the Xiaoxiang River (瀟湘江) to end their lives. At the very spot where the two perished, bamboo shoots with speckled markings sprouted. These bamboo shoots, known as Xiaoxiang bamboo (瀟湘斑竹), became widely known as a symbol of the tears and bloodshed endured by the two wives.

This series of events sowed the seeds of grievance in the world. As time passed, the grievance grew, the world became increasingly chaotic, and humanity faced the threat of destruction. This is one of the fundamental premises through which Daesoon Jinrihoe views the world.<sup>4</sup> This unique perspective, which attributes the major cause of humanity's impending crisis to the grievance that emerged during the transmission of civilization from Yao to Shun, can be described as Daesoon Jinrihoe's reinterpretation of history from a religious standpoint.

### **The Migration of Gods Presiding over Civilization and the Enlightenment of the Dao 400 Years Ago**

Another event from 400 years ago provides a more specific explanation of a civilizational crisis. Summarizing the description by Daesoon Jinrihoe, it can be stated as follows: the crisis, which had been gradually growing since the time of Danzhu, crossed a threshold after the arrival of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), a Jesuit missionary from Macerata, Italy, in the year 1610. Matteo Ricci came to China to propagate Catholicism but was hindered by unsavory Confucian customs and could not fully realize his intentions before his death. After his passing, tradition holds that he led gods of civilization for Eastern civilization to return with him to the West where he played a major role in creating a civilization modeled after heaven. However, that civilization became excessively materialistic. Humans immersed in materialism grew arrogant, neglected the realm of divine beings, sought to dominate nature, exploited the weak, and took lives without hesitation. The authority of divine beings and their teachings eroded, while those with power and influence, driven by a desire to destroy both weaker humans and nature, did as they pleased and could not be brought back under control. As a result, the world fell into imminent threat of complete annihilation (*Progress of the Order* 1:9).

Daesoon Jinrihoe further asserts the existence of another influential figure in the development of the West: Venerable Jin-Muk (震默, 1562–1633), a Buddhist monk who lived during the mid-Joseon period. He left behind a trail of enigmatic legends and miracles and earned profound reverence among the people of Joseon (Korea). He was an extraordinary individual, sometimes even believed to be an incarnation of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni. He had planned to bring the marvelous law of the

heavenly realm to the human world and greatly advance culture. However, he was assassinated by a jealous Confucian scholar, Kim Bonggok (金鳳谷, 1573–1661). In response, Jin-Muk carried the grievance. He then guided the gods who preside over the Enlightenment to the Dao to the West, contributing significantly to the development of culture (*Reordering Works* 3:4. *Authority and Foreknowledge* 2:37). In the worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe, religion is considered to be the foundation of culture (*Progress of the Order* 1:65), and the gods who preside over each religion are spoken of as the gods of the Enlightenment to the Dao. Thus, these gods, guided by Jin-Muk, are believed to have played a pivotal role in advancing Western culture.

This explanation, similar to the case of Danzhu, is a result of Daesoon Jinrihoe interpreting history and religion in conjunction. If this perspective is accepted, then the advancement of the West should only have been possible after the death of Matteo Ricci in 1610 and the assassination of Jin-Muk in 1633. It is indeed the case that Western civilization experienced rapid growth from the 17th century onwards. Until the 16th century, Western knowledge was primarily based on Scholasticism, which reflected the Christian faith, and it was not conceptually grounded in what would currently be considered modern science. Therefore, the progress of civilization was also limited during that era.

Indeed, it is recognized that the social atmosphere created by the Renaissance movement in the 14th to 15th centuries and the development of printing technology, along with the contributions of Copernicus (1473–1543) and Galileo (1564–1642) in the 16th century, played important roles in overcoming Scholasticism. However, the genuine era of the Scientific Revolution emerged after the 17th century (Cho 2015, 103–116).

During this period, prominent figures who made significant contributions included: Isaac Newton (1643–1727), regarded as expounding the pinnacle of classical physics; Robert Boyle (1627–1691), who opened new horizons in modern chemistry; Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695), the advocate of the undulatory theory of light and a key figure in establishing the theoretical foundations for electromagnetic communication; Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723), known for his pioneering work in microbiology and the foundation of bacteriology through the discovery of bacteria; Robert Hooke (1635–1703), who laid the groundwork for mechanical engineering and solid state physics; and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), who made significant contributions to the establishment of binary notation, crucial for the fundamental development of computers, and differential and integral calculus. These individuals were the leading figures of their time.

Institutions such as the ‘Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge,’ founded in 1660; the ‘Academy of Sciences (Académie des sciences)’ established in Paris in 1666; and the ‘Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences (Königlich-Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften)’ founded in Berlin in 1700, also played an active role in supporting the Scientific Revolution. These communities of scientists,



breaking away from Scholasticism, accumulated new knowledge and technology, leading to a remarkable advancement in the level of civilization.

Particularly, attention should be paid to the Industrial Revolution that took place in Europe from the mid-18th century for about a hundred years. For a long time, humanity remained in a nomadic lifestyle of hunting and gathering, lasting almost 2.5 to 3 million years. Approximately 10,000 years ago, there was a groundbreaking advancement in civilization when humans settled in one region, began farming, and raised livestock, marking the Agricultural Revolution. In comparison, or even more significantly, the second major transformation of civilization, the Industrial Revolution, emerged. The Industrial Revolution enabled the development of industry, mass production and consumption of goods, and the advancement of capitalist economies, marking an era of unprecedented progress in civilization.

While the leap of Western material civilization, emphasizing human reason, demonstrated positive aspects to some extent such as the development of material productivity, overcoming poverty, population growth, the establishment of capitalism, and the improvement of human rights for white men in the West, it also accelerated invasion and exploitation in non-Western regions, led to conflicts with socialist and communist systems, environmental pollution, the destruction of ecosystems, resource exhaustion, extreme polarization, and the decline of humanity. Among these, it is a recognized fact that the massive carbon emissions since the Industrial Revolution have been hastening various ecological crises faced by human civilization.

As mentioned earlier, Daesoon Jinrihoe explains that the activities of Matteo Ricci with gods of civilization in the East and Jin-Muk's activities with gods of the Enlightenment to the Dao facilitated the dramatic development of Western civilization. It also stresses that Western material civilization imitates model that exist in heaven, and the excessive focus on materialism intensifies human arrogance, ultimately leading the world towards destruction. In brief, it can be acknowledged that Western civilization since the 17th century has progressed while grappling with various problems. In particular, the idea that human responsibility, rooted in the otherization of nature, has been a major cause of civilization crises remains relevant even today.

In the current context, discussing the problems of Western material civilization and addressing human arrogance and environmental destruction may not seem unusual. However, it is essential to note that this explanation emerged in Korea during the early 1900s. A century ago, Western material civilization was seen as a model for non-Western societies, and Korea, in its flowering stage of modernization, shared this perspective. During that period, just before falling under colonization, Korea was significantly influenced by social evolutionism and civilization enlightenment theories that justified imperialistic invasion through the concepts of survival through competition and victory or defeat. Consequently, Korea hastily adopted Western modern culture. Activities such as understanding the history, advantages, and disadvantages of human civilization, or addressing issues within Western civilization, were virtually impossible for the country

to accurately perceive at that time (G. Kim 2003, 308). Therefore, it is quite remarkable that Daesoon Jinrihoe was able to offer such timely warnings about the harm, problems, and crises of Western civilization by reinterpreting history from a religious perspective.

## Overcoming Civilizational Crises

In its own unique way, Daesoon Jinrihoe explains civilizational crises through a logic of polarization, grievances, the harms of material civilization, and human arrogance. Furthermore, it presents a characteristic perspective on how to overcome this crisis. The backdrop is not only the human realm but also the realm of the divine.

### In the Realm of God

In the worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the Supreme God presided over the overall laws governing the operation of the entire universe, without involving Himself in the specific execution of those laws. The actual ruling and execution were handled by the divine beings assigned to each domain and region, according to their respective roles (Cha 2013, 135). These divine beings or small ‘g’ gods, during the 17th-century Scientific Revolution and the 18th-century Industrial Revolution, predicted that despite civilization making significant advances, the end result would nevertheless destroy nature and bring about the destruction of humanity. Therefore, the beings who first foresaw and contemplated the various crises of civilization were not the humans of the 20th and 21st centuries, but rather various gods such as divine sages (神聖), buddhas (佛), and bodhisattvas from the 18th and 19th centuries.

All along, the gods have influenced the history of the entire Earth to promote the survival of both nature and humanity. However, humans, captivated by the rapid advancement of science and the development of economics and capitalism, did not acknowledge the existence of the gods or their functions and roles. The authority of the gods declined, and the smooth operation of various global programs that they had managed fell into failure. In such a situation, the gods could not offer a suitable solution to the crises of civilization. Furthermore, since the scale of those crises was global, as gods who could not exert control beyond their specific regions, they were naturally limited in their ability to respond. Facing an unprecedented level and range of catastrophe, the gods promptly gathered to discuss a plan. The conclusion they reached was to rely on the Supreme God. Ultimately, the gods approached the Supreme God who resided in the Ninth Heaven, to implore the Supreme God to intervene in the state of the world’s turmoil. Thus, they appealed for the salvation of the world and its inhabitants. The Supreme God accepted their petition, examined the whole world, and set out to rectify it (*Progress of the Order* 1:9).

In the worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the gods’ petition depicts several key facts about their role. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, it is noteworthy that the entities who first

addressed the crisis of civilization were not humans but the gods themselves. Secondly, the gods' appeal was a crucial event that transformed the role of the Supreme God. Prior to the gods' appeal, the Supreme God was a 'deus otiosus,' a 'hidden god,' who had not intervened in human history. However, after the gods' appeal, the Supreme God transformed into a 'revealed god' who actively intervened in history (Cha 2013, 136–139). Thirdly, this event brought the religion known as Daesoon Jinrihoe into existence. Without the gods' appeal, the Supreme God might not have taken an active role in altering human history or even appeared on Earth. Furthermore, the religious movement called Daesoon Jinrihoe may not have come into existence at all. Therefore, it is fair to say that the gods' appeal was, in essence, the starting point for the emergence of the religious tradition, Daesoon Jinrihoe.<sup>5</sup>

After the gods' petition, the Supreme God descended to the Tower of Heavenly Revelation in the Kingdom of the Great Law in the West,<sup>6</sup> itinerating the world carefully and beginning to examine civilization and the catastrophes that humankind would encounter. While itinerating throughout the world, the Supreme God, upon seeing the small country of Korea in the East, decided to stay and help its people who were suffering, trapped between powerful nations, in order to resolve their grievances (*Authority and Foreknowledge* 1:11). The golden icon of Maitreya at Golden Mountain Temple, the Buddhist temple at the heart of Korean Buddhism's Maitreya faith and a representative site in Jeolla Province, became the place where the Supreme God chose to stay.

### **In the Realm of Humanity**

While the Supreme God resided within the icon of Maitreya Buddha at Golden Mountain Temple in Korea, a man named Choe Je-u (崔濟愚, 1824–1864) was earnestly praying at Dragon Pond Pavilion (龍潭亭), located beneath Gumi Mountain in Gyeongju, seeking a way to redeem the chaotic world. On April 5, 1860, the Supreme God communicated with Choe Je-u, imparting teachings on how to save the world. This event is recorded as the first-ever instance in Korean religious history when a human directly encountered the Supreme God.

Starting in June of 1861, Choe Je-u began to disseminate the teachings he had received from the Supreme God. When rumors spread that heavenly spirits (天靈) had descended upon him, many people started to follow him. The Confucian scholars, who comprised Korea's ruling class at the time, accused Choe Je-u of being a subversive figure who challenged the hierarchical society of the era and believed in the arrival of a new age. They also criticized him for using spiritual talismans (靈符) and incantations as methods of spiritual cultivation. Choe Je-u struggled to overcome the prevailing social atmosphere heavily influenced by Confucian ideology. Furthermore, in the context of Daesoon Jinrihoe, his teachings did not fully accurately reflect the will of the Supreme God.

In the end, the Supreme God withdrew the heavenly mandate (天命) and divine teachings (神教) that had been bestowed on Choe Je-u. Shortly thereafter, Choe Je-u was arrested by the constable's office and, in March of 1864, he was executed on charges of causing turmoil in the world (*Progress of the Order* 1:9). Since human efforts alone proved insufficient to resolve the world's crises, the Supreme God chose to intervene directly. Consequently, on September 19, 1871, in a village in Jeolla Province, the Supreme God incarnated in the body of a human named Kang Jeungsan (姜甌山, 1871–1909).

Starting in 1897, Jeungsan traveled throughout the Korean Peninsula for three years, observing the sentiments of the public (民心) and the political affairs of that time period. In 1900, he reorganizing the divine system on Mount Streamer-on-Cauldron (Siru-san) in his hometown (*Acts* 2:10). In July of 1901, he passed judgment on the gods at Great Court Temple on Mount Mother (Moak-san) in Jeonju, (*Progress of the Order* 2:21), and then he proclaimed a new solution to the world's calamities, the Great Dao of Heaven and Earth (天地大道) (*Progress of the Order* 2:12).

He undertook various tasks to resolve all the world's grievances and construct a world where coexistence ruled without conflict. This endeavor is referred to as the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth (天地公事) and is believed to rectify and reform Heaven and Earth such that a new era will emerge (*Reordering Works* 1:1·3, *Prophetic Elucidations* 10). According to the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth, the future era, known as the Later World (後天), will be a time of coexistence and peace, whereas the preceding era, known as the Former World (先天), was characterized by mutual contention and conflict.

To redeem the world in that mid-crisis state by re-creating the structure and order of Heaven and Earth such that the Former World transitions into the Later World, is unique and unprecedented vision unparalleled idea in the history of world religions. In those days, many Koreans did not believe it was possible and criticized Jeungsan for his seemingly irrational behavior (*Acts* 3:34). Nevertheless, he persevered in carrying out the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth despite the challenging circumstances he encountered. In the end, his works were completed in 1909.

Before Jeungsan passed away, he claimed that, following the program he had devised, a successor would emerge to establish the true dharma and propagate it (*Progress of the Order* 1:41–42). He also prophesied that humans would attain wisdom, reach a perfected state of unification with the Dao (道通), and commensurate with their abilities, they would be enabled to achieve their aspirations (*Progress of the Order* 1:34). Furthermore, he asserted that Korea would rise as a superior nation (上等國), lead the world in matters of culture (*Prophetic Elucidations* 29), and all cultures, civilizations, and languages would unify. He added that a paradisiacal new era, free from Mutual Contention, would be established on Earth, where humanity would thrive (*Reordering Works* 1:2, *Dharma* 3:23,40, *Prophetic Elucidations* 12).

During Jeungsan's active period, Korea was on the brink of collapse and faced

colonization by the Japanese Empire. His assertion that Korea would emerge as a culturally superior nation and lead the world was deemed too illogical and shocking to be accepted at the time. However, there were descendants who practiced Jeungsan's teachings, placing their faith in the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth. Among these, the most notable is Daesoon Jinrihoe (Cha 2023a, 82), which believes that the Reordering Works were passed down respectively to the successors: Jo Jeongsan (趙鼎山, 1895–1958), known as Doju, the Lord of the Dao, and Park Wudang (朴牛堂, 1917–1996), known as Dojeon, the Leader of the Dao. Additionally, Daesoon Jinrihoe asserts that Degree Numbers (*dosu*), the historical program previously set in place, is gradually being realized in the human world over time. K-pop and the global popularity of the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*) are seen as aspects of that program created by the Supreme God. Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that, according to the Supreme God's plan, all beings in the world have found a way to live, and they think that even the crises of civilization can be overcome (Cha 2021, 23–24).

To sum up, in the worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the entities that foresaw the crises of civilization and provided solutions to overcome them by diagnosing the causes of the crises were not humans but gods. The anticipation and diagnosis of crises and the formulation of solutions to those crises all occurred within the divine realm, and from an in-group perspective, Daesoon Jinrihoe characterize their movement as not being a human religion containing human concerns but instead as divine-centered religion embodying the concerns of the gods.

## The Task Entrusted to Humanity

Given that tradition holds that the will and plan of the Supreme God arranged for the overcoming of the crises facing human civilization, should humans just wait by with confidence? Rather than that conclusion, Daesoon Jinrihoe asserts that humans have been assigned with significant responsibilities that they must fulfill.

## Development of an Era of Grievance Resolution

In the Daesoon Jinrihoe worldview, the Supreme God has assessed that the causes of turmoil in the world can be attributed to Mutual Contention and grievances. The relationships among all things are swept up in a momentum that propels them toward Mutual Contention, which in turn creates grievances. These grievances have disrupted the world order and resulted in various calamities. Therefore, it is essential to resolve these grievances and establish relationships among all things based instead upon Mutual Beneficence. To achieve this, the Supreme God undertook a series of works, which are referred to as the Reordering Works, as was mentioned earlier.

The Supreme God perceived that it takes time to resolve the grievances that have accumulated throughout the world. The entities that need to resolve these grievances

include not only living humans but also abstract groups, such as numerous human beings who died while bearing grievances, peoples and nations, and all the divine beings that dwell throughout Heaven and Earth; this even includes animals or natural formations such as the ground (Cha 2023a, 322–330). Therefore, the Supreme God declared the opening of an era for resolving the grievances of all entities, including gods and human beings, according to their own free will, as their own wishes. This era is referred to as ‘the era of grievance-resolution (解冤時代)’ (*Reordering Works* 1:32, *Progress of the Order* 1:20 · 32, *Dharma* 1:9 · 67, *Dharma* 2:14 · 20).

In the context of the Daesoon Jinrihoe’s worldview, the era of grievance-resolution corresponds to a transitional period between the Former World and the Later World. As mentioned earlier, the Former World is characterized by Mutual Contention and conflict, while the Later World is defined by Mutual Beneficence and peace. Between these two eras lies a transitional period, known as the interim era. This interim era is further divided into three phases: the era of grievance-resolution, the era of diseases, and the era of the Great Opening, as illustrated in Figure 1. The era of grievance-resolution represents a time when all beings resolve grievances according to their own free will. The era of diseases signifies a period marked by an unprecedented, massive epidemic that humanity has never experienced. Finally, the Great Opening era symbolizes the ultimate judgment of gods and humans, during which everything in the Heavens, on Earth, in the mountains, in the seas, and beyond, reestablishes itself anew. Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that these eras unfold as scheduled according to the Supreme God’s program of the Reordering Works (Cha 2023a, 163–168).

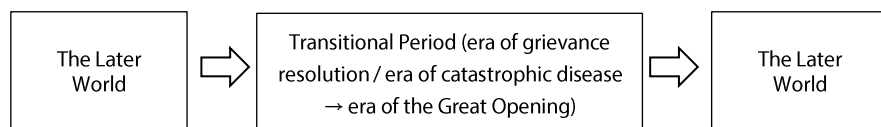


Figure 1. Periodization as understood in Daesoon Jinrihoe

The approach to resolving grievances during the era of grievance-resolution can vary widely. Individuals may seek to satisfy their desires for honor, popularity, wealth, and power as part of their personal grievance-resolution. Grievance resolution in the context of Mutual Contention might involve actions like seeking vengeance or focusing ill will upon others. Alternatively, one can choose to resolve grievances through acts of mercy, virtue, or by cultivating oneself in Mutual Beneficence. Regardless of the method chosen for resolving grievances, individuals should accept responsibility for the consequences of their choices. In the time of the Great Opening, Daesoon Jinrihoe believes a great judgment will be determined to assess the outcomes of grievance-resolution (Cha 2013, 176–177).

If the prevalence of negative methods for resolving grievances surpasses that of positive ones during the era of grievance-resolution, the world is likely to descend into

extreme chaos. Even after the Supreme God's Reordering Works, the persistence of war and calamities can be attributed to this imbalance. The Supreme God acknowledges that the choice of negative or positive application of grievance-resolution ultimately depends on individual free will. However, instead of self-centered or Mutual Contention-based approaches to resolution, the Supreme God urged individuals to straighten their hearts and embrace resolution based on Mutual Beneficence (*Dharma* 3:24). This is because, as the saying goes, "A propitious flower brings propitious fruition; An unpropitious flower brings unpropitious fruition." (*Acts* 5:38). This represents the realization of Mutual Beneficence and, simultaneously, the task assigned to humanity in the face of civilization's challenges.

### **Harmonious Union between Divine Beings and Human Beings and the Realization of Human Nobility**

In Daesoon Thought, it is said that the Supreme God has determined that the primary cause driving the crises of civilization is rooted in humanity's arrogance due to its inclination toward materialism and greed. This type of arrogance neglects the divine realm and the teachings of the gods. Therefore, the Supreme God found it necessary to restore divine authority in order to formulate policies for the world's redemption. To achieve this, the method chosen by the Supreme God is considered as an adjustment of the relationship between humanity and divine beings. This adjustment is meant to foster cooperation through Mutual Beneficence rather than having one side be subordinate to the other.

This perception is grounded in traditional East Asian thought, which emphasizes the necessity for two entirely contrasting entities to work in harmony to achieve a goal, as stated in the saying, 'After yin and yang combine, the Dao of change comes into existence.' (*Saving Lives* 43).<sup>7</sup> Kang Jeungsan's successor, Jo Jeongsan, specifically explained this: "As gods come to be and humans come next, the former is yin and the latter yang... Gods and humans make creation happen through yin and yang. Gods without humans behind them have no one to supplicate them and rely on them. Humans without gods before them, have no one to guide them and no one to rely on. When gods and humans are in concord, every affair is accomplished; When gods and humans are in unity, all kinds of enterprises are fulfilled. Gods are waiting for humans; Humans are waiting for gods. If yin and yang are in unity with each other and gods and humans are unified with each other, the Dao of Heaven is accomplished and so is the Dao of Earth. Therefore, when the affairs of gods are accomplished, the affairs of humans are accomplished; when the affairs of humans are accomplished, the affairs of gods are accomplished." (*Progress of the Order* 2:42).<sup>8</sup>

Based on the principle in which yin and yang, namely gods and humanity, unite to achieve a common goal, the Supreme God planned for gods and humans to cooperate with each other in order to overcome the world's crises and progress towards paradise

by implementing the scheduled program of the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth. This is referred to as the ‘harmonious union between gods and human beings (神人調化),’ which includes ‘the cooperation between gods and humanity to achieve a goal [造化]’ (J. Kim 1996, 342–349). It further entails the two empathizing [感通] with one another through [通化] the harmonization of gods and humanity [調和] (Zhan 2013, 217). According to the principle of harmonious union between gods and human beings, when the two are unified, the status of humanity is naturally elevated.

The Supreme God manifested this principle as human nobility (*Dharma* 2:56), which is literally interpreted as human dignity. However, in the religious context of Daesoon Jinrihoe, this term should be considered in light of the recognition of the value of gods and the understanding that goals can be achieved through the harmonization of gods and humanity. Consequently, the truth is that not only humanity is dignified, but also gods and human beings enhance their dignity together (Cha 2023a, 257–260).

In the worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe, human nobility, achieved through the harmonious union between gods and human beings, signifies the perfected unification with the Dao (道通). This concept refers to living within the bounds of knowledge and practice with omniscience (無所不知) and unlimited capabilities (無所不能). Furthermore, it is stated that at its zenith it enables one to ‘live permanently without aging (不老不死).’

To achieve this, one must, through cultivation, establish harmony (調化) with the gods that align with the given person’s capacity. This is the task bestowed upon humanity by the Supreme God as a solution to the crises of civilization. In other words, humans are not called upon to manifest their inherent divinity (神性) by ascending to the level of gods through cultivation. Instead, the goal is to recover their innate pure disposition and heaven-endowed nature (天稟性). Subsequently, individuals should receive the guardianship of the gods that correspond to their capacity. Through this, they can exercise the abilities and authority of those gods. This is the essence of attaining the perfected state of unification with the Dao through the harmonious union between gods and human beings. This is how true human nobility is realized (Cha 2023a, 250–265).

### **The Content of the Task Given by the Supreme God to Humanity**

In other words, based on the above, first, in the worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the Supreme God accepted the gods’ petitions and intervened to overcome the crises of civilization by offering solutions such as the Great Opening and the emergence of the Later World. Before that era approaches, the grievances accumulated through Mutual Contention must be resolved. If these grievances persist, they will become seeds for chaos in the Later World. Therefore, the Supreme God initiated an era in which each individual is responsible for resolving their own grievances. According to this, everyone



has the freedom to solve their grievances. It is evident that the Supreme God entrusted humanity with this task. It is implied that instead of pursuing selfish grievance resolution through revenge or the pursuit of personal interests, individuals should strive to resolve grievances through mutual benevolence. This practice aims to resolve grievances for the mutual benefit of all parties involved. The era for resolving grievances is relatively short in the context of all of human history. When this period ends, all entities, including humanity and the gods, will be judged based on the results of their grievance resolutions.

The Supreme God, recognizing the erosion of divine authority in the present reality, orchestrated a relationship between gods and humanity founded on Mutual Beneficence. Their intended collaboration aims to surmount crises and build a new world. Gods and humans should rely on one another, and through the practice of cultivation, humans gain divine protection, granting them access to gods' authority and capabilities, often referred to as 'the perfected unification with the Dao' and 'human nobility.' Consequently, it becomes imperative for humans to acknowledge the value of gods and strive to harmonize with the gods. This serves the need for cultivation and consists of the core of task entrusted to humanity by the Supreme God.

It is essential to practice grievance-resolution for mutual beneficence, to build all relationships on the basis of Mutual Beneficence, to harmonize with divine beings, as those are the duties of devotees.<sup>9</sup> These practices propel them towards the Later World—a better world beyond the ultimate judgment of the Great Opening. This promising future, is said to be a world where only Mutual Beneficence exists. Therefore, tradition holds that the diagnosis and resolution of the various crises of civilization have already occurred in the divine realm. Entering into that realm; however, requires individual efforts, the specifications of which have been explained by Daesoon Jinrihoe.

## Conclusion

The main character of the highly-successful film, 'Interstellar' (2014) says, "We will find a way. We always have." This line carries a powerful belief that even in the face of the imminent annihilation of civilization, humanity has the faith to overcome the crisis. Hence, there is "No need to worry!"

This optimism regarding the future is founded on solutionism, the idea that there is always a solution to every issue. It is based on the belief that issues like the climate crisis, created by science and technology, can eventually be resolved through further advancements in science and technology. However, solutionism tends to focus on alleviating symptoms without tackling the underlying causes of crises. Humanity needs to reflect on its role in civilizational crises. If it is not recognized that anthropocentrism, the ruthless exploitation and destruction of nature, the misconception that resource utilization and economic growth must be infinite on a finite Earth,<sup>10</sup> excessive greed for materials, and the competitive and exploitative attitude towards others and nature

are the fundamental causes of present crises, then greater advancements in science and technology may only lead to more serious crises.

In this context, religion can clearly offer opportunities, given that its influence can lead to changes in human values and provide shelter for those exhausted by crises. If the question is asked whether religion can make significant claims to humans facing times of scientific and civilizational crises, Daesoon Jinrihoe, would respond as follows: The Supreme God has accepted the plea of the divine beings to save the world and, by eliminating all root causes of calamities, has preordained an earthly paradise of Mutual Beneficence, free from Mutual Contention and grievances. To quote the protagonist of the film, *Interstellar*, “God found a way. He always does.” Therefore, following Daesoon Jinrihoe’s soteriology, humans must work to qualify themselves to enter the soon-to-come world of coexistence. The way is to make one’s relationships with individuals, communities, and other beings mutually beneficial rather than contentious; not to harbor or create grievances; and, when grievances do arise, to resolve them through the pursuit of mutual benefit. In this faith system, humans must abandon pride, humbly recognize the value of the divine, and work together in harmony, empathy, and unity.

Daesoon Jinrihoe, which emerged in the Far East of Asia, conveys a unique message regarding the various crises facing modern civilization created by the advancements in science and technology. This message assures that the Supreme God has profoundly ‘intervened’ in all forthcoming crises. This religious vision of Daesoon Jinrihoe wherein the Supreme God acted to solve the crises face by humankind via the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth offers a sense of hope to devotees who might otherwise feel anxious about their survival in times of crisis. The manner in which Daesoon Jinrihoe flourishes in Korea suggests that this vision of hope is of profound benefit to the considerable number of adherents who cherish it.

## Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Potentially Hazardous Asteroids (PHAs) are space bodies with a diameter of 140 meters or more, posing a risk of collision with Earth. Asteroids with a diameter of around 100 meters have the potential to devastate an entire city, while those with a diameter of approximately 1 kilometer can damage the Earth’s ecosystem beyond repair, making recovery impossible.

<sup>2</sup> This is often expressed as origination (元), proliferation (亨), accomplishment (利) of *The Book of Changes*, and completion (貞), or birth (生), growth (長), harvest (斂), and storage (藏) of *Six Secret Strategic Teachings* and *Three Strategies of Huang Shigong*; “乾, 元亨利貞. … 元者善之長也, 亨者嘉之會也, 利者義之和也, 貞者事之幹也.” 『周易』「乾卦第一」; “天生四時, 地生萬物, 天下有民, 聖人牧之, 故春道生, 萬物榮, 夏道長, 萬物成, 秋道斂, 萬物盈, 冬道藏, 萬物靜, 盈則藏, 藏則復起, 莫如所終, 莫如所始, 聖人配之, 以爲天地經紀, 故天下治, 仁聖藏, 天下亂, 仁聖昌, 至道其然也.”

- <sup>3</sup> Appropriate Mutual Contention is necessary for the growth and development of all things. Mutual Contention, in and of itself, does not constitute a moral problem. This is because it exists as a pair with Mutual Beneficence in the operational laws of the universe and supports growth and development (Cha 2019, 270-271)
- <sup>4</sup> “This is like leading the head to make the body follow. Yao deemed Danzhu unworthy and gave his two daughters to Shun and abdicated the throne to him. This caused Danzhu to form a grievance, which, in turn, caused Shun to die at a river near Cangwu County, and his two wives drowned themselves in Xiaoxiang River. This was the root grievance that entangled the world continually, generation after generation and caused Heaven and Earth to overflow with grievances and reach the brink of near disaster. Consequently, as I endeavor to rescue humanity from this state of destruction, I must undergo this Reordering Work of Grievance Resolution.” (*Reordering Works* 3:4).
- <sup>5</sup> In the book, *Essentials of Daesoon Jinrihoe*, the petition of the gods is also described in the first part of Chapter 4, ‘History,’ of Daesoon Jinrihoe (*Essentials of Daesoon Jinrihoe* 2020, 17).
- <sup>6</sup> The Tower of Heavenly Revelation in the Kingdom of the Great Law in the West is considered to be the Vatican, where the Pope resides, or the Notre-Dame Cathedral in France. However, it is more commonly regarded as a structure situated in the divine realm beneath the heavens, where the Supreme God resides. At Daesoon-seongjeon in Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex of Daesoon Jinrihoe, where sacred paintings are enshrined, there is a picture of this tower that appears to exist in the divine realm rather than in the human world (Cha 2007, 10-12).
- <sup>7</sup> 人為陽，神為陰，陰陽相合然後，有變化之道也。
- <sup>8</sup> 有神有人，神陰人陽。… 神人以陰陽，成造化。神無人，後無托而所依，人無神，前無導而所依。神人和，而萬事成，神人合，而百工成。神明俟人，人俟神明。陰陽相合，神人相通然後，天道成而地道成。神事成而人事成，人事成而神事成。
- <sup>9</sup> The Scripture of the Black Tortoise page 2 contains the following: “Water, Fire, Metal, and Wood, having waited for the proper time, come into maturity. Water arises from fire. Therefore, there is no principle of mutual contention in the world.” (Progress of the Order 1:66) See the following for a detailed explanation of this Cha (2023b).
- <sup>10</sup> To meet the current levels of resource consumption for humanity, it would require 1.75 Earths. If everyone consumed resources like Americans, it would immediately require 5.1 Earths, and if like Koreans, it would require 4.0 Earths.

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