

Essay for the exhibition, *Su Kwak- Light Journey: An Odyssey in Paint*

<<Incarnation of the Light>>

Light Journey: An Odyssey in Paint is a mid-career retrospective exhibition of the art of Su Kwak, who was born in Korea in 1949 and immigrated to the United States in 1973. The exhibition presents a selection of Su Kwak's paintings from 1996 up to the present and begins with *Divided Light #38* (1996) and ends with *Endless Light* (2012). 1996 was the year that the artist retrieved her Korean maiden name and changed from calling herself Su Gross to Su Kwak. She did so for her solo exhibition in Korea. Moreover, Su Kwak returned to Korea in 2000, after 27 years in the U.S., and spent two years there until 2002. The 17 years covered in this exhibition are the very ones in which Su Kwak considered what she inherited from Korea and discovered in the U.S., what she belongs to and where she goes, and what is important to her and what is not. This essay looks into this Korean-American woman painter's family, cultural and religious relationships to define her in personal, corporeal and spiritual terms. Inevitably, to do so, it must review her earlier life and career.¹

Through the Valley of the Shadow of the Death

Su Kwak was born in Pusan, a port city on the Southeastern tip of the Korean peninsula. Pusan became the largest refugee center in Korea during the Korean War (1950-1953). Su Kwak was born to a wealthy family whose economic situation declined as her father, actively involved in the opposition party during the political turmoil of the 1960s, failed to win several elections. Despite her artistic talents, poverty led Su Kwak, the youngest daughter, to enter a nursing school run by a nunnery. She received a merit-based scholarship but under the condition that she take an oath to be a nun after graduation. When she was much younger, in fact, a miraculous healing had already begun to deepen her belief in Catholicism. While in the nursing school, Su Kwak wrote the poem *Birth* in which she confessed her faith, her love of God, and her dedication to love others:

Love is a breaking heart
For the greater love

If my love touches each of Heart's broken pieces
The universe will run in my small heart

It will be burnt by the thunder of the universe,
It will give birth like a bud growing by pushing away the earth

If I am beside of my love kissing even in the earth,
Without doubting the breaking of myself

¹ Su Kwak's life story in this essay is based on her memoir *Maŭm ũi pit, kŭrigo sarang kwa yesul [Light in the Heart: A Story of Art and Love]* that she wrote in Korean and published in Korea in 2002, and on the interviews with her in 2012.

In a weary position in the edgy sky
I will open my heart to each life

And stand on the blood-licking Golgotha
For the birth of love.²

However, young and passionate Su Kwak could not bear the conventional training and strict regulations of the nunnery that she entered after graduating nursing school. Su Kwak left the nunnery to work in a hospital. During the 1960s and 1970s, Korea was a developing nation, which had just experienced a devastating war. Under a governmental agreement, around 20,000 young Korean men and women volunteered to go to Germany as miners and nurses to support their families and to earn foreign currency for their country. Su Kwak decided to go to the U.S. instead. Expecting a better opportunity to study art and following her “American dream,” Su Kwak came here in 1973 by herself with only one suitcase. In the midst of a difficult settlement in Texas, Su Kwak joined an interdenominational evangelical church. There, she formed a close friendship with Nancy Nedbalek, the wife of a former minister. Nedbalek became her lifelong spiritual mentor. While working hard in rehabilitation centers and hospitals, Su Kwak entered the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas, where she majored in art. In 1977, Su Kwak entered the M.F.A. program at the University of Chicago, where she also met her Jewish American husband, Donald Gross.

Su Kwak had been trained in both Western-style oil painting and traditional ink painting in Korea. Now she learned the then new trends in art in the U.S. Some of these were already familiar to her. When Su Kwak began her basic art training in Korea during the 1960s, *Art Informel*, inspired by the styles of Euro-American Abstract Expressionism which itself had been influenced by Asian painting, was already widely practiced by Korean artists seeking to reflect the trauma of the Korean War and its aftermath.³ Even the tendency of painting to go beyond the two-dimensional and so cross-genres into sculpture had appeared in Korea. Neo Dada, Pop Art, Junk Art, Hyperrealism, Kinetic Art, Op Art, Minimalism, and Conceptual Art were introduced to and adopted by avant-garde artists in Pusan.⁴

At Midway Studios in the University of Chicago, Su Kwak developed a semi-abstract landscape style, which if influenced by what she learned there, was also distinguished by what she already knew from Korea. Su Kwak presented her graduation exhibition in 1979 with her M.F.A. thesis titled *Synthesis of Opposites in Painting*. In her writing as in her paintings, Su Kwak argued that many elements in the universe cannot be divided in clear dichotomies but rather mingled ambiguously and complexly in their relationships. That this was the case was clear to Su Kwak

² Su Kwak, *Ma'im ūi pit, kŭrigo sarang kwa yesul [Light in the Heart: A Story of Art and Love]*, (Seoul: Tana kihoek, 2002), 54-55.

³ Alexandra Munroe, “The Third Mind: Introduction,” *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1980*, (NY: Guggenheim, 2008), 21-33.

⁴ Yi Tongu, “Pusan chiyŏk hwadan esŏ sŏyanghwa toip kwa chŏn'gae e kwanhan yŏn'gu: 1920-1960 nyŏndae rŭl chungsim ūro [A Study on the Introduction and Development of Western Paintings in Painting Circles of Pusan: Centering around the period between 1920s and 1960s],” (M.A. Thesis, Kyŏngsŏng University, 2002).

not only from her studies but also from her relationship to Donald Gross. She states: “In my paintings, I set the format of the outside rectangle to represent unchanging truth, the middle rectangle to represent nature, and the very inside of the rectangles to represent man and woman. The relational problems of these rectangles represented the very relationship of man and woman in the universe.[...] I realized the ambiguity of the boundaries between these rectangles.”⁵

While explaining the concept of the harmonious fusion of the seemingly opposite forces of yin and yang in her paintings, Su Kwak noted that she had been inspired by the Taoist theory of art of Shi Tao (1630-1707). His “one-stroke” method of painting represented “the oneness of truth and the fundamental reality” and allowed his paintings to abstract into themselves the whole universe.⁶ Su Kwak’s adaptation of Shi Tao’s idea was in the line and shape of her paintings, which suggested that a spiritual awakening to God is possible through an experience of simple nature or, for that matter, of any object. That is, Su Kwak’s paintings become a vehicle by which to reach the invisible, intangible entity. Su Kwak also noted how Matisse used harmonious colors to create a unity of space. Su Kwak stated that she tries to express the true perception of space, not through “analytic knowledge” exemplified in one-point perspective, but through “spiritual enlightenment” as in Shi Tao and Matisse.⁷

The next 17 years (1979-1995) of Su Kwak’s life were full of joy as well as sorrow. She was happy in her marriage and in raising their daughter while overcoming ethnic, cultural, and religious differences with her husband and his family. However, she also went through very difficult years with several miscarriages. During these years, she continued to paint and her work grew ever more abstract. In the early 1990s, Su Kwak’s landscape gradually focused on the form of the Cross and on the bright colors of light in order to express her spiritual pursuit “to find the meaning of her agony.”⁸ To overcome her agony, she painted instead of going to Mass in a Catholic church, which she could not do after her marriage to her Jewish husband. During this time, a Bible passage that Su Kwak always kept with her and meditated on was *Psalm 23*, which could be commonly shared with her Catholic mother, her Jewish husband and her Protestant friend Nedbalek.⁹

The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name’s sake.

⁵ Kwak (2002), 130; Su Kwak, “Synthesis of Opposites in Painting,” (M.F.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1979), 1-2.

⁶ Kwak (1979), 2.

⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁸ Kwak (2002), 171, 177-178.

⁹ Ibid., 162, 177.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I fear no evil, for You are with me;
 Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
 You have anointed my head with oil;
 My cup overflows.
 Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life,
 And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalm 23:1-6)

When Su Kwak meditated on these verses, she says that she “saw the light in her heart, compared it to the shepherd’s leading staff, and began to include a representation of the Lord as a straight vertical line for the first time in her painting.”¹⁰ During the mid-1990s, Su Kwak began to use certain colors in consideration of their symbolic biblical meanings: for instance, sky blue for heaven, black for darkness, red for fire, yellow for the end of life at the harvesting season, and white for light and hope.¹¹ Furthermore, Su Kwak attached Bible pages to her paintings for the first time in 1995 in *Divided Light #14*. There, she attached a page of the *Book of Isaiah* from her husband’s old Bible. Su Kwak intended to show some parts of the page through the roughly applied black paint to represent a penetration of the darkness.¹² Around this time, Su Kwak started to express Christian messages more directly in her paintings.

In the next 17 years (1996-2012), Su Kwak’s abstractions would mature as this exhibition shows, and, to paraphrase Psalm 119:15, the light that would guide Su Kwak’s path would be God’s word.¹³

The Word Became Flesh

Sandy Kita said of Su Kwak’s *Light and Time Series* in 2009 that her art transformed the most spiritual elements into the most material things.¹⁴ His assessment is quite accurate and this process evokes enlightenment in Christianity as explained in a passage from the New Testament.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.[...] There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.[...] And the Word became flesh,

¹⁰ Ibid., 178.

¹¹ Ibid., 214-215.

¹² Ibid., 214.

¹³ “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

¹⁴ Sandy Kita, “Making Faith Real: Su Kwak’s Light and Time Series,” *Su Kwak*, (NY: June Kelly Gallery, 2009).

and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-14)

Following the logic of this paragraph, simple equations are formed between Word, God, life, Light, and finally flesh, Jesus. This is the process of the Incarnation of inaudible, invisible and intangible God. Through Su Kwak's understanding of the Gospel, she adds another process of Incarnation in her paintings- one that happens simultaneously on multiple levels. Continuing her earlier abstract landscapes, Su Kwak often takes her appreciation of the natural world as her painting motif. Su Kwak first sees through the lens, retina, and optic nerves of her eyes, God's creation in natural things such as water, earth, and light. Then this material information is filtered through her very immaterial spirituality to stimulate her past memory, present existence, and hope for the future. Finally, she artistically embodies these immaterial awakening using various materials, such as acrylic paint, plaster, canvas, panel, Tyvek paper, linen, gauze, and even fishing gut. Also as a viewer of her painting, we receive this visual material through our eyes and transform it through a bodily and spiritual process to give it our own personal interpretation and appreciation.¹⁵ As such, the materiality of the world is not totally separate from the immateriality of her or our response; so that, the materiality of our body is then also not totally separate from the immateriality of the spirit. They closely mingle together and discover each other.¹⁶

The multiple and mutual process of Incarnation is represented well in Su Kwak's *Beyond Light Series* (1997-1998). After experiencing the beauty of nature at Chincoteague Island in Virginia, Su Kwak started to create the 14 pieces of a series of paintings corresponding to the 14 Stations of the Cross, the Catholic devotional commemoration of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. In this work, ironically, the true meaning of Incarnation is found not in the birth of Jesus but in His death, the end of Incarnation. Each image expresses the agony of the living God in symbolic forms and colors. However, this series was not completed until Su Kwak included another piece at the end. The additional piece is the first painting of her 1999 *Song of Light Series* that symbolizes the Resurrection of Jesus, the hope beyond light.

The motif of 15 Stations appears again in the painting *Healing Light #22* (2006), an assemblage of 9 smaller canvases in which abstracted symbols such as cross bars and semi/full circles are repeated in various ways. As the pain on the Cross in the *Beyond Light Series* was expressed through the rough brush strokes that revealed the hopeful light underneath, Su Kwak cuts and peels the canvas in *Healing Light #22* to show the actual wounds on the body of Jesus.

Su Kwak's painting style has often been compared to that of Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman (1905-1970) and her *Beyond Light Series*, to his *Stations of the Cross*. Lucio Fontana (1899-1968) is another artist to whom Su Kwak has been compared, mainly because of the similar slits in her canvas. However, if Su Kwak's work relates to that of these artists, it is also

¹⁵ Elizabeth Sussman, "Healing Light," *Su Kwak*, (Seoul: Sun Gallery, 2006), 6-7: Sussman characterized Su Kwak's painting as healing light, which was the title of Su Kwak's painting series in 2004-2006. Sussman notes the vitality in Su Kwak's paintings, which bear the power to heal their viewers.

¹⁶ Un Sunn Lee, *Han'guk Yōsōng chojik sinhak t'amgu [Study of Korean Feminist Systematic Theology]*, (Seoul: Taehan kidokkyo sōhoe, 2004), 113: Lee argues that the dichotomy of body and spirit in the discourse of the body in the mythology and metaphysics should be reconsidered in terms of the new discourse of body in the theology of Christ, which is truly based on the body and which embraces both body and the spirit.

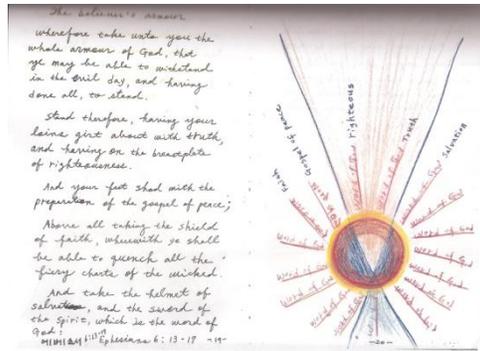
different from their intellectually male-oriented extension of modernism. They value the rational sublime and austere colors and they eliminate literary contexts or personal narratives. Su Kwak does not. Rather, Su Kwak tries to reveal her spiritual and personal experiences in her painting. Her expression is also dynamically sculptural and she respects the accidental. She lets us see the changes that result from painting on the soft surface of her work and even exposes its most inside layers. The earliest work in the exhibition, *Divided Light #38* (1996), shows these unmeasured rough cuts and even sewing with fishing gut.

Although seemingly very peaceful and tranquil from a distance, Su Kwak's paintings are the opposite when observed close up. And yet, that is so only until we catch their point—the finding of a powerful hope and peace. Her paintings are never static; she does not intend them to be and they are not in either how she paints them or displays them. Materials are overlapped, layered, ripped, and recovered. Su Kwak's paintings are fields of fierce battle where she can experience in her own body painful deaths and ecstatic renewals that evoke comparison to the blood of Christ, the tearing of the curtain in the temple, the stabbing of the body, the darkness of the stone tomb, and the light that pierces the darkness to awaken. In exposing the hardships of her life in her work, Su Kwak is comparable to Frida Khalo (1907-1954), who also gave us the tragic story of her suffering in her surrealist paintings. However, if similar in this way, Su Kwak's paintings are also quite distant from those of Khalo in that the latter's works were an aggressive outburst against her brutal life and were full of nihilistic criticism. If not without a certain violence, Su Kwak's paintings are rather introverted and meditative abstractions and optimistic in evoking a journey to a goal of light. Su Kwak ends her memoir with this phrase: "In the mountain path on the day either of cloudy, rainy, snowy weather or under dark moon, I will seek after the light shining place by following the staff of the shepherd, which is the invisible inner light."¹⁷

The meditative quality is also apparent in the process by which Su Kwak incarnates words in images in her illustrated book, *Healing Words* (11/17/2002-6/19/2011), displayed in this exhibition digitalized. The book was written while Su Kwak was taking care of a seriously ill member of her family in 2002. She continued this personal journal until 2011 while considering more generally our need for God's healing. In it, Su Kwak transcribed texts about healing and empowerment from the Old and New Testaments that her friend Nedbalek had selected for her. Su Kwak also illustrated each passage with color-pencil drawings. The illustrations under each biblical quote convey Su Kwak's interpretation of the verses and her personal prayers. Many verses in the book relate to the light in the darkness and God's healing power, but the final quotation, which is from the *Book of Malachi*, particularly epitomizes the specific connection between spiritual light and healing so important to Su Kwak (p.121).¹⁸ Furthermore, in how multiple writings of the phrase "Word of God" radiate in all directions like light beams from a central source in her illustration of Ephesians 6:13-17, we can see clearly her acknowledgement of the word as light (p.20).

¹⁷ Kwak (2002), 285.

¹⁸ "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." (Malachi 4:2)



Healing Words (pp.19-20)

The drawings in the book show certain motifs such as the cross, circle, heart, wave, and water drops. Obviously, the drawings are the initial steps that led to her paintings. In them, words transform into light and light becomes the materials of the painting; so that, color creates a visual and tangible image. This is Su Kwak's process of Incarnation, of the word becoming body, the whole finally epitomized in *Descending Light* (2011) painted the same year that she finished her book.

In all ages and cultures, there has been a play of word and image in art. We can see this play in Medieval illuminated manuscripts, in the paintings of the Reformation, and in the East Asian aesthetic principle of the "Three Excellence- poetry, calligraphy, and painting." Similarly, it is there in modern collages by the Cubists, in contemporary Conceptual Art, and even in Media Art. In Su Kwak's case, a page from an English or Korean Bible is collaged into her paintings. Su Kwak disregards the text's content, using it as an accidental or mystical manifestation of the word. Examples are her paintings *Healing Light #20* and *Healing Light #21* (2006). However, some of Su Kwak's recent works, such as *Sun Within* (2010), *Winter Light* (2010), *Skyline* (2011) and *Youth* (2011), show an intentional selection of certain verses, the artist typing and printing them out and their content reflecting the motif and message of the painting. Su Kwak also seems to be using Bible pages more frequently in recent years, the entire edge of her very large *Light Center* (2012) and *Endless Light* (2012) being composed of them. This frame of Bible texts, sometimes covered but sometimes still visible, signify the continued hold that words have on Su Kwak.

My Cup Overflows

In the pluralistic religious culture of the postmodern era, Su Kwak's Korean approach to the Christian faith overcomes the limit of rational and dichotomized interpretation of religion in patriarchal societies. Despite her conversion to Judaism, Su Kwak's religious practice is apparently based on Catholicism, but her spirituality touches other religions as well: not only Protestantism but also the seemingly incompatible Shamanism, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.¹⁹

¹⁹ Eleanor Heartney, "Beyond Light and into Spirit," *Su Kwak*, (NY: Ellen Kim Murphy Gallery, 2001): Heartney also notices that her diverse religious background allowed her to have a universal understanding of light.

Su Kwak noted in April 2010: “Overall, my paintings embody my whole being and the society I live in. I lived my first twenty three years and two years when I was in my fifties [in Korea] and I have been living in America for thirty five years. However, my unconscious connection to Korea is powerful and my mature adulthood in America deepened my philosophy of art and life.” Although Su Kwak never lost her Korean culture, her residence in Korea between 2000 and 2002 stimulated and reinforced a reconnection with it. When she returned to Korea with her old mother, Su Kwak was able to meet with her sisters and brothers who include believers in Catholicism, in Protestantism, and in a syncretic mix of Buddhism, Taoism, and Shamanism.²⁰ Su Kwak also revisited famous Buddhist temples and historic places in Korea. Since then, Su Kwak’s paintings show a more confident and clearer syncretism. Su Kwak’s exposure to other religious perspectives has broadened her understanding of Universal God in whom she has a personal belief and with whom she has an intimate relationship. As Su Kwak experienced the universality of God, her faith was not diluted but rather deepened and her paintings connected more specifically to the Bible.

The above was possible also because Su Kwak came to know God not through some intellectual or liturgical process but through her life as a woman who was born and raised in the soil of the indigenous religious culture of Korea.²¹ Since the introduction of Christianity to Korea, there have been ongoing debates about the role in it of women who had been practitioners of the traditional folk religions. Sung-Deuk Oak, a scholar of early Korean Christianity at UCLA, explains how female shamans in traditional Korea were comparable to evangelical “Bible women” in early Korean Christianity, which rejected such syncretism at the same time that it took advantage of the existing culture.²² Oak’s recent publications of pictorial sourcebooks on Korean nurses in the early 20th century also suggest a plausible lineage for the role of females as mediators for physical and spiritual healing in Korea.²³ We can find a similar analogy in the case of Su Kwak, who was once a professional nurse and is now an artist, a wife, and a mother. Following the work of Un Sunn Lee, a scholar of Korean women’s Christianity, we might also note that Su Kwak’s cultural inheritance from Korea included in addition to the Shamanist legacy: the Buddhist ideas of punitive justice, morality, temple-offering and an expanded concept of time with previous and after lives; the Taoist notions of individuality and the spiritual experience of transcending reality through meditation; and such Neo-Confucian concepts as self-control, literacy, a sense of time, and the process of sanctification as in preparing the rites, serving the family and learning fidelity.²⁴ Out of all these elements might have formed Su

²⁰ Kwak (2002), 217-222.

²¹ Lee (2004), 144: Lee explains that the “Ecofeminist Spirituality” emphasizes the direct religious experience of an individual instead of the exclusiveness, passiveness, theoretical research, intellectual analysis, or authoritarianism in patriarchal Christianity. It is this process of growth and maturity that inevitably produces practice and action in real life.

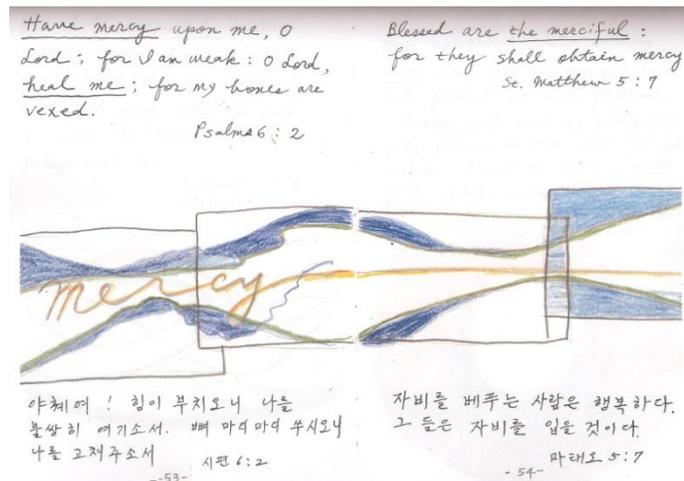
²² Sung-Deuk Oak, “Healing and Exorcism: Christian Encounters with Shamanism in Early Modern Korea,” *Asian Ethnology* (July 2010): 99-135. For the initial discussion of syncretism in Korean Christianity, see David Chung, *Syncretism: The Religious Context of Christian Beginnings in Korea*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).

²³ Sung-Deuk Oak, *Sources of Nursing History in Korea, Vol. I. 1886-1911*. (Seoul: Korean Nurses Association, 2011); *A Pictorial History of Modern Nursing in Korea, 1885-1945*. (Seoul: Korean Nurses Association, 2011).

²⁴ Lee (2004), 195-228.

Kwak's Christian belief that stresses daily morning prayer for the family, individual meditation on the Bible, spiritual diligence and excellence in such everyday aspects of life as housekeeping and child-rearing.²⁵

Su Kwak is not just a female, but also a feminist artist. Su Kwak embraces life because she knows by nature and through experience the meaning of bearing life, caring for a baby and sharing one's life with one's children. Su Kwak recalls that she always tried hard to pursue her artistic career actively and energetically because she did not want to fall behind just because she was married and had a child. Instead, she considered her paintings like more children. Su Kwak's paintings were children, however, whom she hoped would give hope and peace to the suffering world. For example, an illustration in *Healing Words* (pp.53-54) is a concept of mercy asked and experienced. In the end, mercy to heal others became the quintessential quality of her art. In fact, the etymological meaning of the Hebrew term (רַחֲמִים, *rachamim*) used in the Bible to describe God's mercy is a "mother's womb." For Su Kwak, God's mercy is filtered through her body and reproduced in her art and so is like the experience of carrying and delivering a child. Scripture urges "offer your bodies to Him as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing" (Romans 12:1) and Su Kwak's art is a sacrifice of her whole body for a love that will yield comforting, healing, and reviving energy (*qi*, 氣). Henri Nouwen has stated that: "In our own woundedness, we can become a source of life for others."²⁶ Su Kwak's art is an act of obedience to the Word of God that will imprint the stigmata of Jesus in her life so that the living hope and peace will shine through to others.



Healing Words (pp.53-54)

We can feel the vitality and the fluidity of *qi* in Su Kwak's two most recent paintings: *Light Center* (2012) and *Endless Light* (2012). Both pieces are painted on canvas, have Bible pages pasted towards the borders, and are intended to be directly attached to the wall without any frame.

²⁵ Ibid., 227-228: According to Lee, Korean Christianity has been stimulated and supplemented through this religiosity of integration, openness, and continuity in the traditional religions of Korean women. In this spirituality the division of sacred and secular becomes integrated, the others are recognized and respected, and the continuity in everyday life bears spiritual fruits.

²⁶ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, (NY: Doubleday, 1972), cover page.

They present three overlapping circles, either vertically or horizontally arranged. Each circle is surrounded by concentric, repeated rings in different colors. It is obvious that her earlier insight into the inseparability of yin and yang now extends to a comprehension of the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Su Kwak presents the dynamic state in which the three are one in her *Endless Light* where three huge circles swirl vigorously over the cosmos, which is represented at the bottom corner. There are no cutouts, nor are there any gaps between frames. The work is made of many layers of multicolor paints, which overlap one another so that the expansion and overflow of the Trinity covers all the Bible pages at the borders. In the process of separating and blending her paints to express the eternal light, Su Kwak manifests her living belief in the Creator(s) -- the one who existed before the beginning of the universe, is still living, and will be forever.

Su Kwak's paintings are at once painful but healing; very spiritual but material; personal but evangelical; and evangelical but universal. Mysterious is how the small body of the artist embraces the great universe beyond time and space. In deconstructive chaos and depressing uncertainty, Su Kwak's art gives us the hope and courage to tolerate the conflicts in the world and to embrace the universe. Transcendence in her art is not unreal, distant, and invisible, but visible, audible, tangible for all that it may not happen at once here and now. This is the true meaning of Su Kwak's Incarnation.