

**Journal of Korean American
Ministries & Theology**

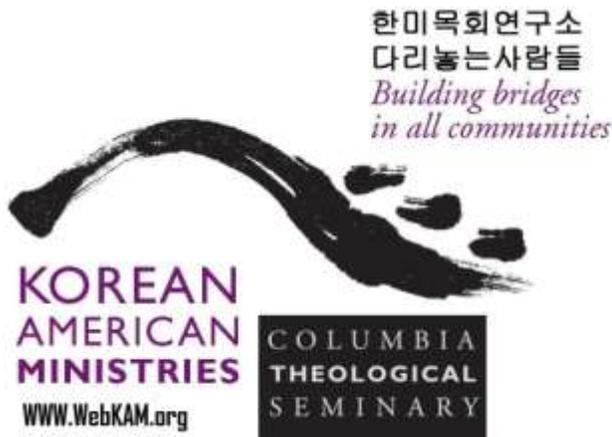
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traditions not in contempt but in respect and, as a result, cross-religious dialogue may be possible.

Second, there needs to be an awareness that the Bible is a witness of God's people, the social biography of the people of God. It gives readers of the Bible the identity that they are not passive receivers of the Bible but active writers of biblical history. The Bible itself is a story of people who participated in God's salvation history like Exodus. As the New Testament was written in light of God's salvation history in the Old Testament and their experience of the risen Lord, Jesus, readers of the Bible need to know that their lives are also a biblical history, if they respond to the voice of God speaking through the Old and New Testament in light of their experience of meeting Jesus as the risen Lord.

Moon, Cyris H. S. "A Korean Minjung Perspective: The Hebrews and the Exodus." Sugirtharajah, R. S., ed. *Voices From the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995.

In this article, Moon shows that the Old Testament is a story of liberation of *minjung*. To illustrate this, Moon investigates the identity of *habiru* and Yahweh in the Exodus story. *Habiru*, the equivalent of Hebrew, is a word referring to outcasts and the oppressed living outside the dominant social system. "The *habiru*, therefore, were part of the *minjung* of their time, driven by *han* to act against what they felt to be injustices imposed on them by those in power." They are partners of liberation stories of God who hears the cry of "my people." Furthermore, the name of God, "I am" shows that God is a personal *Being* actively present in oppression and trouble to bring justice. The life of *minjung* in Korean history has striking resemblances with that of *habiru*. To illustrate this point, Moon introduces a brief history of Korea according to kingdoms and dynasties, starting from three kingdom period (57BC - AD 668), Koguryo, Silla and Paekche, to Koryo (AD 918 - 1392) and Yi Dynasty (AD 1392 - 1910). During Koryo Dynasty Buddhism became a dominant religion in Korea, and Buddhist priests often manipulated their wealth and power for their own benefit and, as a result, oppressed the *minjung*. Though Neo-Confucianism replaced the place of Buddhism in Yi Dynasty, *minjung*, *xiang rom* (the slaves, the landless peasants, the lower-class people) and women were still oppressed by

the superiors, *yang ban*. At the close of Yi Dynasty, Christianity was introduced to Korea in 1884 and penetrated to the lives of *minjung* through the translation of the Bible from Chinese to Korean, *Hangul*.

In 1895, the *Tonghak* Rebellion, a religious and political movement, broke out due to the injustice under the feudal system. They believed that ‘humanity is heaven’ and that they are subjects, not objects, of history. Furthermore, the rise of *Hwalbindang*, bands of armed peasants, and the dissemination of the story of *Hong Kil Dong* showed the *minjung*’s desire to distribute wealth of the rich to the poor. Christianity also paid attention to the oppression of *minjung* as many Christians took leadership in the March First Independence Movement against Japanese imperialism in 1919. However, after this movement, Christianity paid more attention to salvation of soul in the fear of Japanese imperialism. As a result, Christians came to lose historical consciousness, have fundamental dogma, strive for ecclesiastical authority, and even participate in Japanese shrine worship. As Moon puts it, “this was the period of the ‘Egyptian Captivity’ of the The Korean Church’s history.” In short, the Exodus model parallels the experience of the *minjung* of Korea. *Habirus* in the Exodus story and oppressed Koreans were the ‘han – ridden *minjung*’ crying out to God for their liberation.

Reflection: “Who are we?” “Who is God?” These are two questions that Christians need to ask to find and to remember their identity and calling as God’s people. But, in answering these questions, Christians often spiritualize the question: “We are sinners, and we are in need of God’s saving grace.” However, *minjung* theology gives a different perspective: God is not only the savior of the soul but also the liberator of the oppressed in society. If God works to save God’s people from oppression and injustice as in Exodus, we, Christians, also need to work for the salvation of the oppressed from injustice.

There are two points of importance in Moon’s article. First, the Bible cannot be used to justify injustice of society like slavery, labor exploitation, etc. As history proves, the Bible has been misused to support the authority of the governing body, even if it is unjust: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God” (Romans

13:1). Even slavery had been justified by the scripture in American society, while slaves found hope of liberation also from the scripture. Then, a question arises. What is the norm for such judgment? That is the justice of God protecting human dignity and observing the law of God: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

Second, reading of the Bible cannot be limited to understanding but should be extended to acting out like our fathers in the March First Independence Movement. The problem of contemporary Christians lies in their spiritualization of the message of the Bible. When they read the story of Exodus and see God fighting for “my people”, they simply think that it is God’s fight with Satan to save them from the bondage of sin. However, as the Israelites remembered the event of Exodus as a historical reality and constantly reiterated it throughout the Bible, Christians need to accept the event of Exodus as a historical reality which God intervened in human life to bring justice. Since our forefathers knew this, they participated in March First Independence Movement risking their lives. They knew it is costly but did it anyway, because that is what the God of justice desires. In this sense, spiritualization of the biblical messages can be making an excuse to avoid paying the cost. Biblical interpreters, therefore, are responsible to bring the message of the Bible alive so that its readers may act upon it in their real life by bringing justice despite its cost. Otherwise, now is time for Korean Christians living in Egyptian Captivity that the word of God loses its liberating power.

Kim, Uriah Yong-Hwan. “The Realpolitik of Liminality in Josiah’s Kingdom and Asian America.” Mary F. Foskett, ed. *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2006.

In this article, Kim’s premise is that interpreting Josiah’s reform in 2 Kings 22-23 from nationalistic perspective is West’s anachronistic approach imposing European nationalism, which appeared in modernity, to Ancient Near East context. “Josiah’s kingdom was a typical state in agrarian society maintained through religion and dynasty.” The fidelity of the people was toward Yahweh and the Davidic kingship and not toward the modern notion of *nation*. But, Western biblical scholars have understood David’s