

**Journal of Korean American
Ministries & Theology**

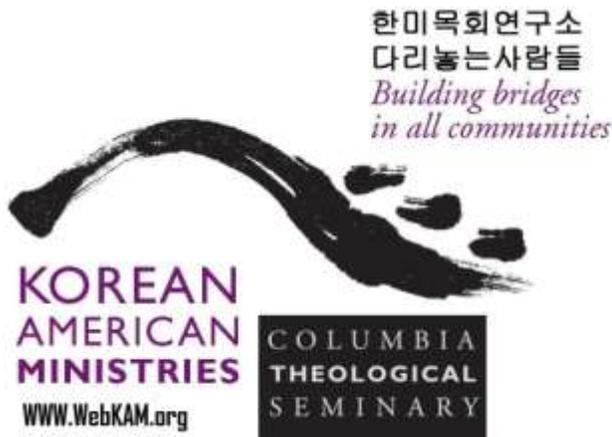
No. 5

2012

BIBLE

Columbia Theological Seminary

www.webkam.org/journal



*Journal of Korean American
Ministries & Theology*

Number 5
2012

BIBLE

Editor and Publisher

Paul Junggap Huh, Ph. D.
Columbia Theological Seminary
Decatur, Georgia

Co-Editor

Daniel Adams, Ph.D.
St. Johns, Florida

Assistant Editor

Hyun Ho Park
Atlanta Bethany U. M. Church
Buford, Georgia

For any questions, subscription, and articles please contact:

Tel. 404-687-4538

E-mail: huhp@ctsnet.edu

Copyright©2012

All rights reserved. No part of this journal may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher, Korean American Ministries at Columbia Theological Seminary.

COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Korean American Ministries
701 S. Columbia Dr.
P.O. Box 520
Decatur, Georgia 30031
www.webkam.org

without critical approach, since it is God's word, and as a result biased views of the Bible, such as nationalistic view toward Josiah's reform, can be used to seek self interest of certain groups, as Jews justify their oppression of Palestinians.

There are two points worth pointing out in Kim's essay. First, Biblical interpretation has great impact in people's view on the world, culture, and other ethnic groups. The fact that the Bible is accepted as a religious writing means that it will determine the reader's world view. The word of the Bible will dictate their value system. Its interpretation is a critical enterprise. That is why interpreters of the Bible have to find contexts of biblical stories so that they may deliver the original message that the author tried to convey. Therefore, interpreters of the Bible should have greater responsibility to interpret the Bible as scripture through which God is revealed Himself and know that there lies greater condemnation when they misinterpret it for their own benefit.

Second, we Koreans should also have a sense of liminality acknowledging that we do not need to do what dominant ethnic groups do to join in their group, which we think is the mainstream of American society. The mainstream of American society, which we think real, is not even real, because that place is also a place of liminality where different ethnic groups, cultures, and voices are mixed. Therefore, the calling for Korean-Americans in American society is first to be who we are and allow God to do God's work in history in our time in our society through us. When this takes place, Korean Americans will be no more objects of history or *Other* but subjects of God's history in America.

Kim, Jean Kyoung. "Empowerment or Enslavement?: Reading John 4 Intertextually with Ezra-Nehemiah." Mary F. Foskett, ed. *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2006.

What triggered Jean K. Kim's reading of Samaritan woman's story is her experience attending a Korean American church having many military brides in it. Though she was welcomed by them at first, because she was married to an American, she was alienated by them, because her husband is not a soldier and her social status is higher than those women. They are victims of colonization of Korea in the 20th century under Japanese imperialism and later American imperialism, as the Samaritan woman in John 4 is a

victim of the colonial history of Samaria. Kim argues that the Samaritan woman's previous 5 husbands can represent 5 foreign nations that colonized Samaria after Assyria, and the present husband is Roman Empire that colonized Samaria in her time. In this colonizing context, the woman could choose "voluntary rape" by Roman soldiers to simply survive and be deserted by them. In other words, the Samaritan woman's 5 marriages are not the issue of morality but the issue of survival: "her marital status reflects that she was the product of a patriarchal power game between a masculine colonizer and a feminized colonized." To illustrate this point, Kim brings Ezra-Nehemiah's prohibition of intermarriage. She argues that while Moses did not prohibit marriage with all foreigners, later Jews did it to maintain their national identity in the second temple period. They called themselves "Israel" and others "people of the land" and forced Israelites to divorce intermarried spouses, women, and if they did not divorce their spouse, their property was taken away by "the idea of defilement as their political weapon." But, even in these politics, there was no voice of women coming out in those texts. Though Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman and through her the townsmen came to know that Jesus is the savior of the world, John makes clear that it's not her testimony any more but the word of Jesus which made them believe. In other words, women were constantly eliminated in the discussion of males in this story as it has been in history, just as men tried to eliminate the existence of comfort women and sexual slaves during wars. However, recently military brides began to create their own groups so that they may be encouraged and empowered by each other rather than enslaved by a social stigma. It is a sign showing that they are no more outsiders of Korean or American society, but they are distinct selves as subjects of history. Kim argues that those gatherings and fellowship, "Third place", should be encouraged for military brides to share their stories as subjects in history, and that this decolonizing way of reading the Bible should be also encouraged to share stories of marginalized and victimized people in history.

Reflection: How do we need to read the Bible? Do we have to accept stories of the Bible in its face value, because it is a holy scripture? Or can we challenge what those stories entail? These are the questions that Kim tries to create in the minds of readers of the

Bible through her essay. By connecting the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4 with Ezra-Nehemiah's prohibition of intermarriage, Kim finds a problem with those texts: women are often disregarded and victimized by colonizers. The discrimination of woman is against the justice of God, and, therefore, injustice that those stories entail cannot be accepted as a norm for the readers of the Bible. Rather, the voice of God still speaking of God's care for the oppressed and victimized should be heard as Jesus cares for the Samaritan woman by acknowledging that she is not an immoral woman but a victim of 6 colonizers.

There are two main points in Kim's essay. First, we need to be aware that the Bible is also a product of colonization or masculine, patriarchal society. In those societies, women and children are often disregarded despite their contribution to the society and victimized in the course of history such as child labor during industrialization and comfort women during Japanese imperialism. In the same token, biblical stories are written from a masculine point of view, as women do not appear in the genealogy of 1 Chronicles 1-9. Therefore, the biblical texts need to go through decolonization process to find the voice of God still speaking underneath the colonized texts.

Second, the issue that interpreters of the Bible need to deal with is not how to solve the problem of authenticity of biblical witnesses but how the truth claim of Jesus Christ which is still revelatory in those colonized stories can liberate the readers from colonized presuppositions and prejudices in the Bible. In other words, the readers/interpreters of the Bible need to be aware of the fact that the Bible is an object of investigation through historical and critical approach, but at the same time the Bible still contains revelations of God. Decolonization of the biblical witnesses is a necessary process, because it will generate decolonization of their interpretations and ultimately will reveal the liberating work of God among the people of God.

Ahn, John. "A Light to the Nations." Mary F. Foskett, ed. *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2006.

What is the Korean American approach of the Bible? This is the question that prompted Ahn's present article. Rather than reading into the text, *eisgesis*, he tries reading out of