

**Journal of Korean American
Ministries & Theology**

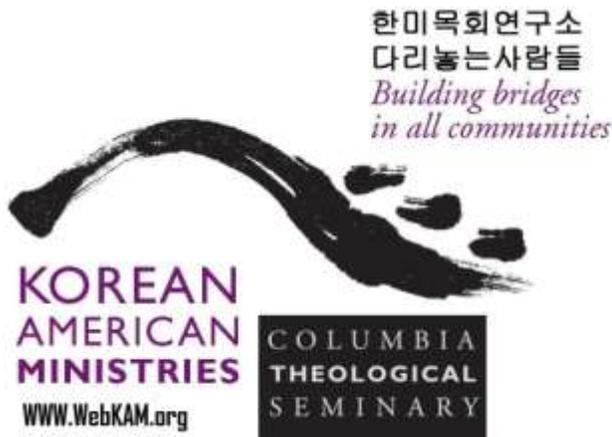
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Editor and Publisher

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

Co-Editor

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For any questions, subscription, and articles please contact:

Tel. 404-687-4538

E-mail: huhp@ctsnet.edu

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COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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

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

the text, *exegesis* by resolving critical problems of the text, Isaiah 42:6-7: “to focus on the sociological settings of first- and second-generation Korean Americans to help resolve critical problems of literature and theology of the forced migrations period of the six century B.C.E. (otherwise known to biblical scholars as “the exile”).” By bringing a social structure similar to that of ancient Israel, which is first- and second-generation Korean Americans’ social setting, Ahn tries to bring readers closer to the world of the biblical writers. Regarding problematic verse, Isaiah 42:6b, “a light to the nations”, Ahn quotes Kenton Sparks and other scholars arguing that Isaiah refers to Israel, Judah, and even foreigners in this verse, as an example showing second Isaiah’s inclusive view of God’s salvation: “I preserve you and present you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations.” However, Ahn argues that this interpretation came from a mistranslation of the verse, because there is no definite article in Masoretic Text and, when second Isaiah says “nations” without definite article, not “the nations”, it refers to specifically Israel and Judah: “I will preserve you, I will make you into covenant-people, into light-nations.” This translation makes clear the message of second Isaiah to the people of Israel and Judah in forced migration in Babylon. They are the ones who need their eyes to be opened from blindness and to be released from the shackles of the prison in darkness (Isaiah 42:7) as recipients light and covenant of Abraham for the blessing of the nations. They are one people. This message is critical especially for Korean Americans who are divided into two countries, north and south, and even divided among their groups according to the provinces where they are born. Ahn concludes that though North Koreans and South Koreans are considered to be different and chasm exists even in their own groups in contemporary first-generation Korean American culture, they are one people.

Reflection: A danger of cultural hermeneutics is that the readers’ *sitz im leben* can dictate the meaning of the text rather than allowing the text to dictate its meaning in its own original context in which it was written. In this sense, John Ahn’s essay is an example showing how the context of the reader and the text can be in a constructive relationship solving critical problems of interpretation of the text and bringing forth applications for solving the problems of readers in their social context.

There are two significant points in Ahn's article. First, readers of the Bible and biblical interpreters should be aware of the danger of *eisgesis*. Without understanding the text in its original context, readers can easily misunderstand meaning of the text and often justify their false interpretation for their selfish desires. For example, Solomon's dedication of the temple in 2 Chronicles 6-7 is often used for pastors to persuade their congregation to build church buildings, and Malachi's plea for tithing is often used for preachers to show the necessity of tithing for their church members. Though those stories have elements supporting their appeal, what needs to be considered is what those preachers and pastors want to do. If they justify their greed of expanding their church through those texts, it is *eisgesis* and their interpretation cannot be justified. In other words, interpreters of the Bible knowing that they are located in their context should strive to be still faithful to the text by doing *exegesis* to hear the voice of God speaking through the text.

Second, conflicts in Korean churches and Korean communities caused by differences should be resolved for the greater calling of God. The calling of Judah and Israel in the forced migration was to be light-nations. Though their countries were different, they were the same descendants of Abraham having a covenant with God. Likewise, Korean-Americans living in the United States, whether they are North Koreans or South Koreans, need to realize that they also have a calling to be light nations, because they have a new covenant with God, the gospel of Jesus Christ. When they embrace this calling in its full extent, they will come together by overcoming differences for the greater calling of God and become light-nations bringing the blessing of God, and the salvation of human beings, in the United States.