Grace Ji-Sun Kim


This book is a theological reflection of how we live in a globalized and greedier world. The title captures the main thesis well: through the process of colonialism, we are creating han in our fellow human beings and in the earth, and only by the transformative power of the Spirit we can tackle the problem. It is a well-organized book, and its argument flows smoothly through the four main chapters.

The first two chapters discuss colonialism and one of its related (and problematic) issues of our time, consumerism. Colonialism, as Kim understands it, is intrinsically connected to industrialism and technology development, a phenomenon that often causes us to treat the other, both human beings and earthly resources, as commodities for our own consumption. As consumerism grows, the exploited lands, resources, and peoples of the world suffer more because they do not figure prominently in the capitalist equation of profit making.

In these two chapters, Kim also offers her solution to colonialism and consumerism. To cope with colonialism, Kim urges us to address our indifference toward the wellbeing of the earth and its inhabitants. In other words, we should not see others as commodities. Kim thinks we can overcome the colonial mindset by learning to accept diversity and celebrate differences. To cope with consumerism, Kim suggests Christians rediscover the practice of stewardship. Stewardship means to take only enough “food, clothing, shelter, education ...” so others can also have what they need (38).

The third chapter discusses han as the result of colonialism and consumerism. Han is an East Asian concept to capture the feeling of being treated wrongly by others. As the greedy wants more, the exploited suffers more. Sin happens when we accumulate the resources we do not need, while others need them to survive. Kim charges consumerism as extorting, and as a result, causing anger and pain in others. In her analysis, han is extended to include not only human beings but also the earth. Han causes global warming and the depletion of the earth’s ozone layer. To be fair, Kim does not think an average consumer is malicious. To her, it is ignorance more than malice that causes han. To eliminate han, Kim suggests, we must “begin with a life of eco-sufficiency based on fairness rather than a bandit economy” (50).

In chapter four, the author explains what she means by eco-sufficiency and what Christian theology can do about it. Eco-sufficiency emphasizes a moderate attitude in our consumption. It is an attitude toward both the earth and other people. An eco-theology thus is needed to sustain our living together,
on this earth and with this earth. In her postcolonial, feminist perspective, Kim proposes two understandings of God as Spirit as helpful to the construction of an eco-theology.

First is the notion of Eros. Kim notes that male dominant societies often link the notion of Eros with sexual and sinful lust. In a feminist perspective, however, Eros “encompasses the life force and is an energy which comes from the desire for existence with meaning” (75). Therefore, the feminist Eros is more than a sexual concept. It is an all-encompassing passion for creation and transformation. Erotic power gives us desire for justice and love, and moves us to take action against injustice. Kim argues for a reconceptualization of the Spirit as Eros in order to bring out the transformative and empowering aspects of the Spirit—a proposal that a feminist Pentecostal theology may well entertain.

Second is the concept of Sophia (or Wisdom) as the feminine aspect of the Spirit. Kim begins with the Hebrew wisdom scriptures that show Sophia as God and continues with the notion of Jesus the Christ as Sophia. The main thrust is to bring the feminine quality of Sophia to our understanding of God as the Spirit. Sophia represents God’s immanence in the created world, up to the point that the world is God’s body. To acknowledge God’s immanence then is to care more for the earth. In light of that, and because all the problems that the book discusses (i.e., globalization, consumption, and colonialism) are this-worldly, Sophia becomes a helpful concept emphasizing immediacy, indwelling, and embodiment.

Kim concludes the book with a call for action: to rebuild the earth. She acknowledges the existence of linear eschatology (and its value) that separates the past from the future. She thinks, however, that a focus on pneumatology offers better insights; that the Spirit moves beyond borders of space and time, and that the earth can be healed by the power of the Spirit. In a prophetic manner, Kim challenges us to “take only our share, clean up after ourselves, and keep the house in good repair for future occupants” (80).

One could critique this book for providing a weak Christology, as often happens with books that focus on pneumatology. This charge, I would propose, can be alleviated if one accepts the premise that Kim’s discussion on Sophia is also adequate for discussions on Christology: the book offers a Sophia Christology as an alternative to Logos Christology. Since Kim regards “to be ‘in Christ’ and ‘in the Spirit’ are the same” (73), future theological constructions can focus on the connections between the Spirit as Eros and the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus. Nevertheless, Kim does not seem to anticipate how Eros, as a pneumatological category, can be co-opted to support colonialism in the context of globalization.