

The Challenge of Interculturalism: Migration, Church, and Gender
Empowering Theo-Ethical Visions of South Korean Churches
for Married Immigrant Women

A thesis submitted to the Theological School of
Drew University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree,
Master of Arts

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Madison, New Jersey
November 2016

ABSTRACT

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M.A. Thesis by

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November 2016

This thesis explores the challenges that married immigrant women encounter in South Korea and the causes of the socio-religious oppression that they are forced to deal with in South Korean society. I first examine the women's motivations for their marriages and critically evaluate the effects of the traditional constructs of Korean patriarchy and hierarchy that generate gendered oppression and socio-political exclusions. Second, I criticize the theological ideas of the South Korean Christian churches as they relate to the neo-colonial mission-approach, conservative theology, and patriarchal Christianity, and point out how these theological constructions have been based upon the understanding of a sovereign and masculine God. Third, I probe how Christian ethics suggests theo-ethical visions for South Korean churches in an intercultural society, and discuss the theo-ethical visions involved in the interdependence for living-together and the new understandings of God and women for communal liberation.

This thesis also attempts to distinguish between the terms, multiculturalism and interculturalism. Instead of describing a quantitative approach to diversity in multiculturalism, interculturalism urges people to have a sense of co-existence in interrelationships and intercultural actions. The debate on the lack of intercultural responses in many churches reflects considerably on their

migrant-ministries. While these churches have advocated for the support of diverse programs for these women, the ministries often disrupt their liberation from religious assimilation, racial discrimination, and gender inequality. The care of these women in the Christian churches is an urgent concern today and demands the attention of all engaged in South Korean Christianity.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

My aunt on my mother's side who is married to a Japanese man moved to Japan twenty years ago. Today she feels at home to live in Japanese culture and society. She speaks Japanese very well and has Japanese citizenship. Sometimes she emphasizes Japanese values over Korean ones. At other times, she singularly claims only her Korean cultural heritage rather than both identities, South Korean and Japanese. My uncle on my father's side married a Chinese woman. My Chinese aunt moved to Korea more than seven years ago. Even though she has Korean citizenship through her marriage, she still struggles with some sense of discrimination in Korean society because she is Chinese. She has implicitly felt some pressure to become a Korean. For both of these Christian immigrant wives, I wonder how their churches can play a supportive role in their immigrant lives. Too often, my aunts have found the churches to be unwelcoming and do not listen to their voices because they are considered as strangers. What are the social and religious factors that contribute to their situation? What are the dominant assumptions that perpetuate in their immigrant lives? How can change occur?

I had a great opportunity in my Feminist Society Movement class to interview two Korean social movement organizations that support married immigrant women in South Korea. These organizations are built on a Christian foundation and are connected with sister churches to support them. When interviewing them, I found that the representatives in these organizations had strong confessions and devotion to their ministry for married immigrant women in South Korea. These social movement

organizations have many programs and support services such as Korean language classes, Korean food classes, computer classes, job education, shelters for women, daily care, medical/law support, and so on. These organizations provide diverse language worship services including Korean, English, Filipino, and Mongolian services to follow up on married immigrant women's needs. Like these organizations, South Korean churches offer many outreach programs for married immigrant women.

However, this observation leads directly to particular questions. First of all, what are the gender assumptions that guide these programs? How might those gender assumptions perpetuate a paternalistic attitude toward the women? Second, the theology of mission that is a catalyst for these outreach programs must also be examined. Is the emphasis on Christian conversion and Christian monotheism in this mission-theology becoming problematic for embracing the diverse cultural identities of the women? This thesis explores the role of South Korean racism in the context of these gender and theological assumptions. How might South Korean racism help to erode immigrant women's subjectivity? How can religious patriarchy in Korean churches remedy the oppression against gender equality? With these questions in mind, I shall begin this research discussion by pointing out the purpose of the investigation, and then discuss the general approach and outline of the investigation.

Purpose

My purpose is to investigate how Christian ethics might contribute to the South Korean Church's theo-ethical reflection relevant to married immigrant women in South Korea. I intend to provide an understanding of the sociopolitical context for married

immigrant women in South Korea. I have chosen to begin this understanding by asking general questions about who married immigrant women in South Korea are, what conditions they experience in migration and, generally speaking, what programs and services the Korean churches offer for female married migrants. Perhaps not primarily by establishing a rough outline of Korean churches' ministry, but rather I will point out how different views on migration, Church, and gender generate the theo-ethical problems that should be considered by Korean churches in an intercultural society.

This research thesis focuses on the interaction between married immigrant women and the practices of South Korean churches in terms of theology, race, and gender. Specifically, I will consider this interaction in terms of Christian monotheism, Christian racism, and Christian patriarchy within a gendered theology in South Korean churches. I also examine how the lives of married immigrant women are conditioned by church communities. This question is obviously connected with the way in which Korean churches need to reflect, ethically and theologically, on their ministries for married immigrant women in South Korea. Thus, my main purpose is to explore how South Korean Christian theological ideas can marginalize married immigrant women and how the theo-ethical ideas can constructively contribute alternatives to coexist with and support married immigrant women in an intercultural society.

In order to achieve my purposes, I relate Christian ethical contributions to the contemporary philosophical and theological discussion on the subject. This shows necessarily that Christian ethics is connected with philosophical theory and theological praxis. In this thesis, I use the work of Namsoon Kang who has constructed models and

developed a plausible account of “Interculturalism” in Korean churches. Kang’s cosmopolitan theology represents profiled Christian ethical critiques of the particular ways of understanding morality which often are associated with co-existence instead of subject-object relationships often called “mission” in Korean churches. This theo-ethical assessment is subsequently used in the argumentation toward my own criticism and alternatives for Korean churches to support married immigrant women in South Korea.

Instead of describing the phenomenological analysis, this study needs to define a Christian ethical approach. There are, certainly, many ways of delineating the reflections on public moral practices that deserve a qualified Christian response. My Christian ethical proposals are defined by responding to questions and by understanding the suffering sometimes generated in intercultural relationships. It does not just involve one among teleological ethics, deontological ethics, and the ethics of responsibility. Rather, ethical behaviors bring out collaborative responses within themselves. Then, ethical decisions lead us to ultimately confront questions about how to make a decision and how to act in terms of the current problems: who we ought to be and what we ought to do. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that Christian ethics is defined by reflections on morality which make use of Christian theology. Through the interpretative framework of Christian theology, Christian ethics is constituted by the articulated views applied to our interpretations of reality: that is, in what ways are the world and human beings interrelated and also how should human beings and the world. These interpretative works may articulate an attempt in which we should engage a good life against immorality. In this ethical conception, the Christian church is challenged to be an ethical agency. Hence,

the church is a place where Christian ethics can be plausible and may spring from Christian ethical contexts.

Method

The objective of this study is to provide both a systematic critique and a constructive argument about religion, race, and gender. I bring stories into the discussion on the female oppression, injustice, and discrimination experienced by in the South Korean intercultural society and churches. In discussing this situation, I explore some explanations, though not a fully comprehensive account, of their motives for marrying and of the environment of globalization, in which their vulnerability is gendered and racialized in their Korean families, and their realities are marginalized by socio-political exclusion (chapter 1). In this analysis, I criticize socio-cultural-political mechanisms that can make women's powerlessness and voicelessness a standard feature of Korean families and society. By using diverse contemporary resources and articles, the analysis should avoid over generalization.

My understanding of oppressions in married immigrant women's lives presupposes similarities in both South Korean society and churches. After I offer an answer to why both are similar, then I want to speak about particular problematic mechanisms such as neo-colonialism and patriarchy. According to these understandings, I shall also criticize the South Korean churches' attitudes toward married immigrant women using feminist post-colonial approaches and intercultural theology. The proposal to develop feminist approaches and theology is concerned with making explicit the relationship that exists between the real conditions in which people live, their cultural

functions, social exclusion, and the role of religious discourses. In the process of this research, I offer my ideas, resulting from the kinds of criticism I have read and the arguments I have encountered from related books and articles. Since I am addressing the South Korean context, many resources reflecting the reality rely on the South Korean scholars and their materials.

My method for criticism and arguments related to the South Korean churches is that of theo-ethical analysis which understands religious, racialized, and gendered 'otherness' (chapter 2). The analysis will be a task of clarifying and assessing arguments for the sake of communication. First of all, theo-ethical analysis can illustrate how beliefs in South Korean churches that rely on mono-theology and negative missional approaches can justify discrimination toward strangers and migrants. Second, these analyses point out how Korean churches' racism and discrimination have been formed by neo-colonialism. Even though Korean churches provide various forms of support for married immigrant women, it might be also hard to avoid negative evaluations formed by emphasizing cultural subordination and lack of social integration. Lastly, I still think that the religious patriarchy and gendered theology present in Korean churches possibly work against married immigrant women in South Korea. Consequently, Korean churches disrupt female's liberation from religious oppression, racial discrimination, and gender inequality.

My moral inquiry is focused on the intertwined dynamics of religion, race, and gender in reflection of South Korean churches. My doubts are nourished by the difficulties of interculturalism in South Korean churches. At this point, I distinguish

between the terms interculturalism and multiculturalism. My premise is that multiculturalism is a quantitative approach to diversity. It can be defined as certain circumstance where diverse cultures and people co-exist, but it can be satisfied without any interrelationship. In this condition, each person can stand independently in the name of diversity, but there is a lack of interdependent relationship with respect. In contrast, Interculturalism goes beyond multiculturalism and seeks more interdependent actions in diversity. It is not enough for South Korean churches to have openness to the different religions and cultures of the migrants in intercultural society. Its study also criticizes that Korean Christian racism causes married immigrant women to be objectified. As they have been considered as receivers, the educated, and the subordinated, it is difficult to bring forward the interdependent actions for such women's liberation. The intercultural dynamics in South Korean churches need to be changed. Just how deep should the churches change I am unable to say, but my conviction is that, thus far, they have not changed deeply enough to engage with interculturalism and living-together.

My point is that South Korean churches need to reflect on what they have done for married immigrant women and seek alternative theo-ethical approaches to interculturalism. In doing so these processes will help to realize values which are included in the respect of difference from Letty M. Russell's *Just Hospitality*, the interdependence and co-existence from Namsoon Kang's cosmopolitanism, and the liberating interdependence from Musa W. Dube. These values are coherent and constructive responses to theo-ethical visions related to religion, race, and gender (chapter 3). My notion of values is deeply rooted in feminist theological perspectives that

draw distinct understandings of God and gender in an intercultural society.

Chapter 2

Married Immigrant Women in the Multicultural Society of South Korea

South Korean society is increasingly becoming multicultural. South Koreans need to respect the different races, languages, cultures, and traditions in the multicultural society. The reality of married immigrant women in South Korea cannot be explained by only one view, but it needs to be considered by employing multiple and multilateral views. This chapter pays critical attention to global and local approaches which understand the motivation for migration and problems in their new land. I will present how global and local influences shape married immigrant women in South Korea and how the South Korean multicultural society treats married immigrant women in South Korea. In particular, my first task is to show how the gender assumptions perpetuate the feminized motivation of migration and gendered assimilation toward married immigrant women in South Korea. The second task is to explore their gendered and racialized identity in the process of international marriage. The final task is to study various difficulties caused by social exclusion.

1. Multicultural Conflicts within Globalization and Assimilation

This section identifies major global tensions that contribute to the marginalized status of married immigrant women. This entails a search for the relationship between globalization and motivations of migration and between South Korean society and married immigrant women in South Korea. I speak about how gender assumptions are forming motivation of migration and forcing the assimilation of married immigrant

women in South Korea. In the UN's International Migration Report in 2015, the number of international migrants has continued to rise to 244 million in 2015.¹ Two thirds of all international migrants live in Europe (76 million) or Asia (75 million), and female migrants were estimated at 48 percent in 2015. As these data show, the number of female migrants is considerable number, and many are in Asia. Also, female migrants expose much more global dynamic and migrant motivations.

Global dynamics are formed in the process of increased national investment, trade, political cooperation, and socio-cultural exchanges, resulting in a growing awareness of interdependence among all peoples. In understanding this globalization, the development of communication networks, high technology, and transportation methods, results in huge global capital. The national economic activity has been expanded globally and borderless-ly. The flow of capital in globalization influences the direction of international migration. According to feminist economic-sociologist, Saskia Sassen, the dynamic between global and local generates both labor migration and marriage migration.² While she describes migration in globalization, she argues that it is both increasing rapidly and that it shows gendered results.³

In particular, the global cities function as centers of global economy and capitalism. The global cities are influenced by the massive economic change and also maintained by two polarized markets: one the affluent, upper circuits of global capital

¹ UN International Migration Report 2015, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015_Highlights.pdf (Accessed by March, 23, 2016).

² Saskia Sassen, "Global Cities and Survival Circuits," in *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, Edited by Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, (NY: Metropolitan Book, 2002), 256.

³ *Ibid.*, 257.

and the other the serving class. In this way the educated women in global cities flow into upper-class positions and frequently produce a positional blank where the traditional women are inserted. This positional blank in global cities is often filled with migrant women from the third world. Its traditional works involve domestic work, nanny work, sex work, and reproduction work, which are most often unwaged or low-waged jobs.⁴

A feminist lens in conceptualizing migration begins by noticing the increase in the number of female migrants and in identifying their traditionally gendered roles. In this approach, female migration is different from that of males and is more easily exposed to the gendered and racialized labor system.⁵ Korean feminist scholar, Hye-Sun Kim, mentions that female migration patterns are related to sexuality with marriage, sex work, and domestic labor.⁶ She emphasizes that this pattern has worked with other social mechanisms, that is not only with globalization, but also with patriarchy. The female migrants' social economic position is structured by economic and gender relationships. For example, even though some elite Singaporean women had high-status and highly-skilled jobs in their home country, their international marriages cause them to move to China where their newly defined social position puts them back to the traditional female

⁴ Rachel Salazar-Parrenas, "Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work," in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (third ed.), Carole R. MacCann and Seung-Kyung Kim (ed.), (NY: Routledge, 2013), 203. Salazar-Parrenas describes Filipina domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles with the somewhat provocative phrase, 'global servants.' Migrant domestic workers come as the new lowest class in the global world caused by the structure of global capitalism. Her research criticizes Filipino government policies that have aggravated female labor export for earning foreign currency. In order words, she insists that the gendered migrant policy of the Filipino government drives Filipina migrant women out to become 'servants of globalization.' While Sassen's research considers the political-economic mechanism to pull migrant women into the global cities, Salazar-Parrenas' research reflects the opposite mechanism to push migrant women overseas.

⁵ Graeme Hugo, "The New International Migration in Asia," *Asian Population Studies*, 1(1), (2005):93-120.

⁶ Hye-Sun Kim, *Global Migration and Family Band*, (Seoul: Idambooks, 2014), 50.

role for family care and survival due to patriarchy.⁷ Similarly, here at Drew Theological School I have seen many highly educated Korean women and wives fall into traditional gender roles and jobs due to their immigrant status. Their migration affected by the global impact cannot protect their successful careers and should be focused on traditional gendered works. This phenomenon shows how the global migration impacts the gender relationship of female migrants and how global migration reinforces the traditional gender roles. That is, the social position of migrant women is more unstable and oppressed than that of male migrants.

The feminization of migration in globalization is shaped by not only gender relationships, but also by a political-economic approach. According to Hyunjoo Jung, female migration has diverse socio-cultural contexts that are not understood by macroscopic approaches (political-economic).⁸ In the socio-cultural approach, female migrants are considered as individual agents or decision-makers who make their own choice of migration. The microscopic (socio-cultural) approach focuses more on the decision-process of migrant women than the global economy. The studies emphasizing a migrant agency urge that it is unacceptable to regard migrant women as just victims of global capitalism or as rational business-beings in global change.⁹

⁷ B. Yeoh and K. Willis, "Singaporeans in Chain: Transnational Women Elites and the Negotiation of Gendered Identities," *Geoforum* 36, (2005): 211-222.

⁸ Hyunjoo Jung, "Migration, Gender, and Scale: New Trends and Issues in the Feminist Migration Studies," *Korean Geographic Sociology* 43 Vol. 6, (2008):895.

⁹ P. G. Barber, "Agency in Philippine Women's Labor Migration and Provisional Diaspora," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23(4), (2000):399-411.; C. Burgess, "(Re)constructing Identities: International Marriage Migrants as Potential agents of Social Change in a Globalizing Japan," *Asian Studies Review*, 28(3), (2004): 223-242.; Heungsoon Park, *Local Church, Embracing the Multiculturalism*, (Seoul:Kkumkkuneunteo Press, 2013), 26-35.; Kunk Yom Han, "Migrant Women and Inter-marriage in Korea: Looking at Human Rights with Help from the Book of Ruth" in *Korean Feminist in Conversation*

According to feminist social activist, Kuk Yom Han, Korean society and churches make the distorted images of married immigrant women in typical political-economic understandings.¹⁰ Not only do they portray women in images of obedience while becoming members of patriarchal families but opportunist-images are produced by sending gendered remittance through Korean families and Korean societies. She claims that migrant women should be understood as subjective beings who can make their decisions in social positions and contexts. In other words, married immigrant women tend to be evaluated from an economic perspective since their motivation for migration is often related to their survival and to their desire to create a better life than they had in their poor countries. However, only using an economic view does not adequately explain all aspects of the female migrants' experiences. The global migration of migrant women involves a complex amalgam of personal and social motivations and processes.

Regardless of the diverse influences of migration, female migrants' rights for living and human rights should be protected. Among the biggest problem, female migrants are hard to have their voices heard in a diverse society, since that it is a question of struggling with discrimination against strangers and prejudice against different races, cultures, languages, and traditions. In particular, South Korea faces a new phenomenon of the feminization of migration caused by increasing marriage migration. A considerable number of married immigrant women have become socially vulnerable and marginalized in the whirlpool of the rich-poor gap and neoliberal capitalist forces. Furthermore, the Korean government and local governing-bodies tend to devalue female married migrants

with the Bible, Church, and Society (ed.) by Kyung Sook Lee and Kyung Mi Park, (Milton Keynes: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 93.

¹⁰ Han, 95.

as objects who should be assimilated into Korean society. Even though Koreans continue to talk about a multicultural society, the main concern in Korean society is to consider married immigrant women as socially integrated objects. Such attitudes represent the lack of understanding of interdependent relationships for interculturalism.¹¹

The feminist postcolonial theologian, Kwok Pui-lan, asserts that an intercultural approach emphasizes intertwined circumstances.¹² She explains that interculturalism moves beyond a multicultural approach rooted in just multiple cultures or communities. In her voices, the intercultural approach appears interactive, phenomenologically entangled with memories, understanding, and prejudice from colonial and hegemonic cultures. Thus, it produces tension, resistance, and sometimes violence when two or more cultures encounter one another. Kwok indicates that this dynamic decisively confronts the discourse to rethink their identities, experiences, agencies, and justice in the intercultural relationship.¹³ She reminds us that we are dependent on one another. The dynamic of power between the colonizer and the colonized (between the dominant and the marginalized) is complicated, and it hinders interdependent actions among them. From Kwok's view, one can learn that the intercultural relationship makes people feel the necessity of interdependent experiences instead of assimilated experiences.

South Korean society currently encounters these complicated dynamics, moving

¹¹ Heungsoon Park, *Local Church, Embracing the Multiculturalism*, (Seoul:Kkumkkuneunteo Press, 2013), 27.

¹² Kwok Pui-lan, "Feminist Theology as Intercultural Discourse," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Farank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 24-25.

¹³ Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 21.

into a multicultural society. In Korean society one can easily meet foreign women and multicultural families. According to statistics from the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, more than 147,380 marriage migrants in 2015 were living in South Korea.¹⁴ Among these marriage migrants, 84.6 percent were women. The rate of marriages with foreigners was 7.6 percent among the total numbers of Korean marriages, which includes 15,152 couples between Korean men and foreign women and 7,164 couples between Korean women and foreign men. The national percentages of female marriage migrants are Korean-Chinese (32percent), Chinese (26percent), Vietnamese (19.2percent), Filipinos (5.6percent), Japanese (4.3percent), Cambodian (2.1percent), and Mongolian (1.0percent). This country distribution demonstrates that Korean international marriages have a trend to spread out to all Asian countries.

In this way, Korean society is radically being transformed into a multicultural society. In accordance with this social change, Korean society, including the government, broadcasting, academia, and religious communities, has produced a diversity of responses to intercultural society. As Kwok Pui-lan points out, it is a time to ask how to make intercultural society and relationships beyond just accepting multicultural circumstances. However, answers from Korean society are insufficient for responding with long-term views. The intercultural dialogue is not an abstract diversity in multicultural circumstances, but a concrete relationship which resists political assimilation, but rather accepts living-together in a pluralist humanity.¹⁵ Korean society's systematic approach is

¹⁴ Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Statistics of Multicultural Family in July, 2015. <http://www.mogef.go.kr/korea/view/policyGuide/policyGuide06_09_02.jsp?func=view&idx=691581> (Accessed on March 29, 2016).

¹⁵ Kwok, 69.

strongly related to making married immigrant women be adopted speedily into Korean society.¹⁶ In this implicit response to them, Korean society has ignored the different cultures and languages coming from married immigrant women. Their cultures, language, race, gender, and religion has been devalued in Korean society.

As mentioned above, the larger proportion of marriages between Korean men and foreign women reflects the patriarchal culture in Korean society. The tendency of the multicultural family is to give value based on a male-centered family. The relationship between a foreign woman and her Korean spouse, as well as between a foreign daughter-in-law and family-in-laws, is beyond the level of simple family conflict in the common Korean family. It has become a social problem including domestic violence, violation of human rights, suicide, murder, and so on. According to the National Human Right Commission in South Korea, domestic violence does not occur only in multicultural families, but married immigrant women are frequently exposed to domestic violence.¹⁷ Since married immigrant women after migration have fragile social relationships in the context of their Korean family, they are especially vulnerable, indeed, in terms of social isolation, travel limits, status regulation, domestic abuse and violence, and cultural deprivation. It is an undeniable fact that male-centered Korean families demand unilateral adaptation and assimilation.¹⁸ This patriarchal family circumstance becomes the problematic mechanism by which married immigrant women are exposed to more violent

¹⁶ Nam Hyuck Jang, "A Study on Utilizing the Bicultural Atmosphere Formed by International Migration: Focusing on the Multicultural Families Formed between Koreans and Filipinos," *Mission and Theology* 29, (2012): 98.

¹⁷ Hyunmi Kim, et al. The Survey for Violation of Human Right in the International Marriage, *National Human Right Commission Report*, 2007, 25.

¹⁸ Hyunsun Oh, *Christian Multicultural Education: Difference, Diversity, and Tolerance*, (Seoul:Kkumkkuneunteo, 2014), 38.

relationships, than relationship of reciprocal understanding and interaction.

Thus, the simply understanding of multicultural circumstances in South Korean society aggravates the problems caused by the dominance of the Korean family and the marginalization of immigrant women. South Korean society considers married immigrant women as objects who need to be assimilated into Korean-centered society and into Korean male-centered families. It is a lack of understanding of the intercultural family which contains two distinct cultures. Rather than an approach to interdependent relationships in interculturalism, the current situation ignores the women's cultural identities and makes them seem irrelevant to their family life in South Korea. Married immigrant women encounter multicultural conflicts under the social and family structures of gendered oppression such as the complex motivation of global migration, patriarchal families, and the demands for assimilation into Korean society.

2. Gendered and Racialized Vulnerability in International Marriage

The purpose of this section is to investigate the gendered and racialized identity of married immigrant women in the context of international marriage. I consider specific problems related to gender inequality because of the commercial businesses of international marriage matchmaking and racism in Korean international marriage families.¹⁹ While I understand that married immigrant women are oppressed through systematic restriction, I will follow the feminist approach to rethink married immigrant

¹⁹ This research focuses on the problems in the case of commercial-international marriage in South Korea. All cases of married immigrant women in South Korea are not involved in commercial business, but many populations of them have chosen their international marriage through commercial business. These individuals have usually exposed gender inequality in their marriage-process, racial discrimination, and domestic violence in their Korean family.

women as moral agents who are entitled to make their own decisions about migration and marriage. The increasing phenomenon of international marriages between Korean men and foreign women has been occurring since the late 1980s. This trend has coincided with the Korean government's policy that supports a solution to the so-called "rural bachelor's marriage problem."²⁰ Its prevalence has increased dramatically in the 2000s with the deregulation of commercial businesses for international marriage matchmaking. The rate of international marriages has been decreasing because of strong regulations on the commercial international marriage businesses, but its trend has nevertheless continued.²¹

According to the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, international marriage is defined as a structural phenomenon occurring alongside global poverty, the disturbance of the local marriage market, and a commercialized international marriage business.²² The international marriage has four types including the help of someone, individual meetings, religious communities, and the commercial marriage business.²³ Among these types, the commercial marriage business is by far the most important for intercultural marriages and connects with other types, especially the help of someone or through a religious community. In order to seek commercial profit, international marriage brokers make intercultural marriage more popular. Furthermore, the Korean government supports this trend by deregulating the migrant approval policy. These mingled-structural strategies for commercialized international marriage produce cognitive change such that

²⁰ Hyunok Lee, "Political Economy of Cross-Border Marriage: Economic Development and social Reproduction in Korea," *Feminist Economics* 18(2), (April 2012): 177.

²¹ Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Statistics of Multicultural Family in July, 2015 (Accessed on March 29, 2016).

²² Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, Survey for the Marriage Broker Business in 2006 (Accessed on March, 29, 2016).

²³ Hyunsun Oh, *Christian Multicultural Education: Difference, Diversity, and Tolerance*, 22.

anyone can choose their marriage through this commercialized business.²⁴

The process of the commercial marriage business arranges short marriage tours for Korean men to other Asian countries, usually lasting about one or two weeks.²⁵ The process may differ slightly depending on the broker business and countries' circumstance, but it is a short process in general. A Korean marriage broker marketing gathers Korean grooms and move them to foreign brides' lands even if it might cost a great deal of money, approximately \$12,000 dollars for one trip (U.S.). The foreign marriage brokers with business branches with Korean commercial marriage businesses try to gather foreign brides as well. Their arrangement promotes a group meeting between Korean men and many foreign women. Similar to a shopping process, the Korean groom can choose his prospective marriage partner(s).²⁶ Each Korean man can meet at least thirty women in a group meeting before he chooses his wife. It is impossible for marriage partners to have enough time to know one another and share any plans and visions for their family life. Then, their wedding process starts. After making his final choice, he can choose to have her stay with him as if they are married, even if it's only the first day they have met.

²⁴ Hyuk-Rae Kim and Ingyu Oh, "Migration and Multicultural Contention in East Asia." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(10), (2011): 1563-1581. Hyuk-Rae Kim and Ingyu Oh point out the reason to increase rapidly intercultural marriage in Korean society, which is socio-demographic factors including fertility degradation, sex ratio imbalance at birth, and rural-urban interregional inequality, and value change caused by women's higher education and increasing participation in socio-economic activities. They report that the total fertility rate of Korean woman was 1.23 babies in 2010 (cf. 1.23 in 2010-2015, the fourth lowest country in the world, source from Korean Statistic, 2016). The urbanization caused by radical economic growth generates the labor concentrating on urban, and younger female tendencies to move to cities. It produces the gender imbalance and higher unmarried rate in rural areas. In addition, Korean female's cognition about their marriage has been changed by higher education and increased job-availability. While their attitudes to their marriage cause their delayed marriage, rural bachelors are pressed to find a spouse in rural areas. However, Kim and Oh do not agree that the low birthrate and gender imbalance in rural area are not direct reasons for international marriages in Korean society. Even though these reasons might be related to important background to publish Korean international marriage policy, Kim and Oh indicate that the commercialized international marriage businesses play a crucial role.

²⁵ Hye-Sun Kim, *Global Migration and Family Band*, (Seoul:Idambooks, 2014), 97.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

The marriage broker business plays a crucial part, and tends to produce gender inequality. Even though foreign brides claim their voluntary decision for their international marriage, their choices in the process of the commercial business are ignored. The commercialized international marriage emphasizes the Korean grooms' choices, because they are their customers who can pay all of the wedding expenses.²⁷ In other words, the demand of the Korean man is undoubtedly accepted, but the voices of foreign women are easily ignored. More problematic are the stereotyped images of foreign brides. Korean grooms seek the traditional female images which reveal subordinate, obedient, and submissive qualities, familiar to the portrayal of women in a patriarchal gender structure.²⁸ Foreign brides are exposed to sexual vulnerability at the starting point of the intercultural marriage and masculine family context. Thus, the marriage broker business system aggravates female passivity and gender inequality.

Recently, the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family changed the law on the marriage broker business, which now prohibits a group meeting with prospective marriage partners.²⁹ While much discussion and rebuilding of the law on commercially-arranged international marriages has focused on the violence against women that is inherent in the business process, the international marriage in Asia, including South Korea, reveals the uneven sociocultural power relations and gendered political-economic

²⁷ Ibid., 94.

²⁸ Sung-mi Lee, *Multicultural Policy*, (Seoul: Pakyoung Press, 2012), 42.

²⁹ Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, *Statistics of Multicultural Family in August, 2012* (Accessed on March 29, 2016). This revised bill of law on the marriage broker business indicates that a group match meeting is human trafficking. If marriage brokers introduce more than two prospective foreign brides at the same time to a Korean groom, the marriage broker business is fined less than 20,000,000 won (\$ 180000,000), and brokers are sentenced to less than 3 years in prison. In addition, marriage broker business cannot introduce minors under 18 and should offer marriage partners' individual information before marriage match meetings.

implications. In the international marriage broker system, female autonomy is often restricted. Its systemic constriction is hindering these women in terms of managing their new future. Their objectified experiences are caused by the mechanism of masculine domination, since the necessity of the international marriage is for fulfilling the patriarchal family's reproduction goal. Their objectified bodies are regarded as the deal-able commodities, because a male partner in their marriage process covers the all the expenses of their wedding. This gendered commodity-chain describes the new international divisions of reproductive labor under the unpaid work for care. Their sexuality is valued only in terms of pregnancy, fertility, and a motherly image.

This gendered political-economic implication is linked to a racialized vulnerability that exists in international marriages. The Korean man and family have tended to regard their foreign spouse and daughter-in law, as their possession for family's reproduction, not as a human being. The patriarchal and hierarchal dynamic in this relationship produces the problematic racial view whereby immigrant women are coming from the poor countries and bring reproductive labor for Korean families. This explains how the high divorce rates today among intercultural marriage are related with high degree of racism in Korean families.³⁰ According to the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, over thirty percent of married immigrant women have experienced racial discrimination in their Korean families because of their ethnic background.³¹

In keeping with the Orientalized myths, the women are often required to

³⁰ Sung-mi Lee, *Multicultural Policy*, (Seoul:Pakyoung Press, 2012), 48.

³¹ Mary Lee, "Mixed Race Peoples in the Korean National Imaginary and Family," *Korean Studies* Vol. 32., (2009):70.

conform to traditional patriarchal stereotypes. These types include docile femininity, sensuality, and domestic subservience. Their wombs are considered as instrumental tools only for the babies of the Korean patriarchal family. In Mary Lee's study, one woman from Cambodia addressed her situation: she was not allowed to visit her homeland, until she gave birth to a son.³² Another young woman from the Philippine testified that her husband was adamant that she could not speak to her son in Tagalog. She had to take Korean lessons and talk with her son in Korean only. Basically, Korean social culture has the traditional myth of a single-race-nation and strongly excludes heterogeneous cultures.³³ In a short time, the intercultural Korean society has turned into a general life style. The short time-preparation is not a good circumstance for married immigrant women. They still suffer from gendered political-economic positions, racism in terms of skin color, and racialized recognition within their marriage and families.

Likewise, married immigrant women in South Korea have been victimized circumstances due to national poverty, commercialized marriage processes, and patriarchal structures. However, Jung-mi Hwang, in her feminist study, indicates various approaches to this evaluation. She criticizes the view that sees them only as victims which can lead to violence against them.³⁴ Why don't we have to consider them as victims? They are truly victims suffering from racial discrimination, gender inequality, and domestic violence. Hwang explains that this approach to see them as victims tends to ignore a female's own possibility to stand as an agent. Kuk Yom Han also points out that

³² Ibid., 77.

³³ Sun-yang Kim, *Aliens in Korean Multicultural Society: Social Exclusion and Political Response*, (Seoul:Jipmundang, 2013), 100.

³⁴ Jung-mi Hwang, "Theoretical Study for Feminization of Migration and Marriage Migration in South Korea," *Feminist Study* 9(2) (2009): 13.

it is unacceptable to regard migrant women as just victims of a global care-chain or commercial business.³⁵ She criticizes the way gendered political-economic relationships and racialized understandings produce distorted images of female marriage migrants in Korean society and churches.

Even though there may be an initial self-determination in the process of their marriage, this victim approach tends to fail to regard them as agents who can make decisions for their own marriage and have the ability to build up their family. It might be a way to further marginalize them. I think that both approaches, victims and agents, need to be accepted at the same time. Their victimized situations have continued, and the women need to be evaluated as agents. Their victimized situations have been exposed in the world, and their voices should be speaking out regarding their situation. Therefore, these investigations give the advantage to see that married immigrant women are obviously treated as sexual objects, exploited domestic labor, and abused victims from the human rights perspective. This problematic treatment shows that their bodies and identities are gendered and racialized in South Korean family and society. In this complex maze, feminist criticism deems the victim approach not to be sufficient to respond to married immigrant women's needs. Beyond women's victimized and distorted images, feminist criticism seeks changing the approach these women as agents.

3. Multiple Difficulties Causing Social Exclusion

The point of this section is to show how married immigrant women are excluded in South Korean society. It explains that the main problems are the language barrier and

³⁵ Han, 96.

the socio-culture of exclusivity in South Korea. I consider that these problems are huge obstacles that hinder married immigrant women from standing independently in the South Korean intercultural society. Social exclusion is related to the view that in married immigrant women are treated as sexual possessions, imported domestic workers, or reproductive tools. These socio-exclusive views highlight multiple difficulties for married immigrant women: cultural differences, language barriers, child support issues, and exclusive labor markets.

After their migration to South Korea, married immigrant women experience different socio-cultural circumstances from their home countries. Although some countries like China, Vietnam, and Japan are likely to share the Confucian traditions, the socio-cultural characteristics among these countries are not the same as Korean culture. Thus, most married immigrant women in the first few years of immigration have difficulties to adapt themselves to their Korean context because of their lower language skills, lack of information, and knowledge about their new environment. The Korean socio-cultural environment also has problematic aspects which have revealed an exclusive tendency to treat foreign people poorly under a strong myth of a homogeneous nation and a collective authoritarian tradition.³⁶ Consequently, these problematic socio-cultural aspects are a significant factor that devalues married immigrant women who come from undeveloped countries.

The exclusive and authoritarian socio-cultural aspects show a low acceptance of foreigners. According to a survey by the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

³⁶ Sun-yang Kim, *Aliens in Korean Multicultural Society: Social Exclusion and Political Response*, (Seoul:Jipmundang, 2013), 101.

in 2015, the Korean acceptance of interculturalism is up only slightly from a score of 51.2 in 2011 to 54.0 in 2015, while the job distribution of married immigrant women is classified mostly into simple labor and housewife.³⁷ The acceptance of married immigrant women in South Korea continues to be low. In particular, South Korean rural areas are strongly homogeneous. The small villages consist mainly of close relatives and neighbors. Married immigrant women have difficulties to adapt to the South Korea rural-communal culture because foreigners are not common and foreigner family members are more noticeable and readily identified as strangers in the rural areas.³⁸ In addition, Korean authoritarian socio-culture has a double-edge view in which Koreans treat European and white people with admiration but treat people of color with disregard.³⁹ It cannot be generalized, but the Korean socio-cultural double-edged sight causes people to have authoritarian attitudes toward most married immigrant women from poor countries. This racialized double-edged view is also a fundament approach to oppress these women as they are adapting to their new environment.

Not only the exclusive and double-edged socio-cultural aspects, but also the lack of their language skills can cause social exclusion. Their language barrier is related to all areas of their lives such as family life, social accommodation, employment, children education and so on. Typically, in a patriarchal family setting, a foreign wife takes charge of the house chores, family-care, child-rearing, and education of children after her husband goes to work. In particular, the language barrier also creates a psychological

³⁷ Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Survey of Multicultural Acceptance in 2015 (Accessed on March 14, 2016).

³⁸ Sun-yang Kim, 106.

³⁹ Heungsoon Park, *Local Church, Embracing the Multiculturalism*, (Seoul: KKumKKuneunteo Press, 2013), 120.

burden to communication in social settings including hospitals, educational institutions, public offices, and so on. In South Korean culture, the education of children is also considered to be the charge of the mother, so it means that married immigrant women feel a significant burden due to the language barrier for their children's education.⁴⁰ Their language problem also limits their options for interaction with neighbors.

According to the interview survey of marriage immigrant women in 2010, their greatest difficulty in Korean life is the language problem (22.5 percent), followed by financial problems (22.1 percent).⁴¹ Other surveys also show that their biggest difficulty is the language barrier, compared with other problems such as financial issues, cultural differences, loneliness, neighborhood issues, etc. Often the difficulties they face in their neighborhood are because of the language barrier. In the survey of intercultural families, it is also reported that the most difficult aspects of job performance are related to communication difficulties.

Depending on the residence period, the level of language barrier is different, but most married immigrant women are struggling with communication difficulties.⁴² Their Korean language skills are gradually improving over time, but the lack of language skill is certainly a major barrier in the early period of their migration. In the case of low-level language skills, they have difficulty not only understanding Korean socio-culture, tradition, and public lives, but also forming communal relationships in their family and social network in Korean society. Furthermore, their undeveloped language skills also

⁴⁰ Hyunsun Oh, 25.

⁴¹ Sun-yang Kim, 128.

⁴² Ibid., 129.

make it difficult for these women to obtain job-information, to build relationships with colleagues, and to complete and advance their work after getting a job.⁴³ This language problem causes difficult for married immigrant women to reach mutual understandings at home, and in the worst case, domestic violence or divorce can result. It impacts their whole family and social life in South Korea.

After longer periods of residency, language skills are less likely to create problems. Interestingly, most married immigrant women's migration is motivated by financial reasons, because they want to escape from their poverty and thus, choose financially better lives.⁴⁴ Many intercultural families have remitted a certain amount to the married immigrant women's home families.⁴⁵ The female satisfaction level of marriage is related to economic satisfaction.⁴⁶ However, in reality, most married immigrant women close to or below the poverty level. Most Korean men who choose international marriages tend to live in rural areas and/or suburb areas. Their monthly income average is low. In the Korean Statistics report in 2012, approximately 41.9 percent of multicultural families have lower than the average monthly household income in South Korea. Over thirty percent of them are living in poverty and not receiving

⁴³ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁴ Hye-Sun Kim, 83.

⁴⁵ Hye-Sun Kim, 259. Kim describes that the remittance behavior needs to be regarded as an economic dimension and emotional bond dimension. The remittance is not related to just a gendered-sacrificial level or self-profit, but the communal belief-structure. It means that married immigrant women send some money as a duty or belief of support of daughters for their family. Through the remittance, they do not identify their instrumental relationship, but emotional unity with their homeland's family. However, the feminist study criticizes that this remittance behavior has a negative aspect, showing gender-blind and hierarchical gender relationship in terms that married immigrant women's forced migration in their poverty and required pattern of the remittance.

⁴⁶ Miai Sung, Meejung Chin, Jaerim Lee, and Soyoung Lee, "Ethnic Variations in Factors Contributing to the Life Satisfaction of Migrant Wives in South Korea." *Family Relations* 62 (2013): 236.

appropriate assistance from public services.⁴⁷

In addition, according to the Korean National Survey in 2012, fifty percent of married immigrant women raising children are struggling with economic adversity and were seriously concerned with children's tuition and school fees.⁴⁸ The economic marginalization of marriage immigrant women in South Korea causes the low economic status of their families. The Korean National Survey in 2012 also reports that over fifty-three percent of married immigrant women show minimal participation in the Korean job market.⁴⁹ This survey presents that over eighty percent of them have less than a high school degree. Along with the impact on these human capital factors (individuals' capability and skills), their unemployment and poverty risks increase their economic marginalization.

The worse thing is that most female married migrants have no property rights in Korean patriarchal family relationships.⁵⁰ Only their husbands have ownership of most family property. Their family members are also unwilling to allow the new wives to manage their family property because female married migrants are neither familiar nor proficient with Korean economic life. Their lack of understanding of Korean society and their language limitations are difficult barriers for exerting their economic authority in their family. Even though they want to find their own job, their job has a bias towards simple labor or low-skilled jobs in an exclusive labor market. The job classification for

⁴⁷ Han Sung Kim, Sun Young Lee, and In Hee Choi, "Employment and Poverty Status of Female Marriage Immigrants in South Korea," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 23 No. 2, (2014): 129-152.

⁴⁸ Ki-Taek Jeon, et al., *A Study on the National Survey of Multicultural Families 2012*, (Seoul: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2013), 87.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 92

⁵⁰ Sun-yang Kim, 117.

female married migrants illustrate that 12.4 percent are professional workers (such as translators), 32.5 percent are service workers, and 22.0 percent are simple labor workers.⁵¹ Thus the general employment rate of married immigrant women is low, and the level of income is also low. Most of their job positions are temporary or part-time. Their job status is also not stable.

As we have seen, even though married immigrant women are trying to become independent subjects in South Korean society, the multiple socio-cultural exclusions make them vulnerable to exploitation and control. Not only their language barrier, but the exclusive structure of the labor markets influences the economic hardships for these women.⁵² The new host land's labor market devalues the married female immigrant's job skills and abilities. Their educational background or job skills in their homeland cannot sufficiently be improved for their economic development in the new land. They are regarded as unskilled, and consequently they are only able to acquire low-skilled jobs in an exclusive labor market which leave them both vulnerable and marginalized in South Korea.

⁵¹ Ibid., 119.

⁵² Kim et al., 2013, 135.

Chapter 3

Programs and Problems for Married Immigrant Women in South Korean Churches

South Korean churches have had to make certain adaptations in response to international marriages and families. Under the impact of social demands, the South Korean Church has also had to develop a new understanding of interculturalism in the sense of community. As the intercultural circumstance is constructed, the church ministry setting of migrant congregations confronts discourses that consider intercultural marriage family solely as a missional object. In the early migrant ministry of the South Korean churches and Christian migrant support organizations, the focus was on migrant workers. Even though their ministry gradually extended to married immigrant women, this was inadequate for addressing interculturalism. This chapter explores how South Korean churches deal with married immigrant women and what the problems of their ministry for the women are. In doing so, I criticize South Korean churches' programs and problems through theo-ethical analysis in terms of religious, racialized, gendered church structures. First, I investigate where married immigrant women are in South Korean churches. Second, I critique mono-theology, negative missional approach, and patriarchal Christianity in South Korean churches that justify discrimination towards married immigrant women as strangers. Lastly, I also criticize South Korean Christian racism as contributing to neo-colonial circumstances and oppressed identities.

1. The Multicultural Ministry Types and Missional Programs

South Korean church ministry has extended to married immigrant women and

intercultural families, since the international marriages began to increase during the late 1990s.⁵³ The Korean government established the Multicultural Family Act in 2006 and has built the Multicultural Family Support Centers in rural areas.⁵⁴ This social development has moved the Korean churches to rethink the ministry field for intercultural families and married immigrant women who are coming into Korean churches by following up with their husbands and parents-in law. Their children are also attending Korean churches' Sunday school. The foreign population in some rural areas is over fifty percent, and it is increasingly a common situation to meet married immigrant women and intercultural families in public places. The intercultural ministry cannot be considered as a specialized ministry, but it is a present reality for all Korean churches.

According to Yeongsang No, the intercultural ministry in Korean churches can be divided into four types.⁵⁵ These types are related to how each type interacts with the South Korean church. First, the separated type is a model of separating the intercultural ministry from the Korean church's denomination. Each ethnicity, in this type has its own worship place and builds up its own denomination. In this model, it is not necessary to face the ethnic or racial conflicts, but there is little opportunity for religious relationship with different ethnicities or races. Second, the Melting-Pot type is a model that allows migrants assimilate into the dominant culture. It suggests that the Korean church aspires to the multicultural ministry, but really shows a strong intention to absorb migrants into the Korean culture by providing language and culture education.

⁵³ <http://www.migrant.or.kr/amc/m01> (Ansan Migrant Center), (Accessed on Dec 1, 2015).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Yeongsang No, "Church's Approach to the Integration of Multicultural Society," in *Multicultural Society & Migrant Mission: Intermarriage Children Education and Mission* (ed.) Chansik Park and Nohwa Jeong, (Seoul:Christian-Industrial-Social Institution, 2009), 21.

The third type is the Salad Bowl model. It does not demand that migrants are assimilated, but rather accepts the cultural difference and improves the rights for the migrant group. Even though it looks like a good model for respecting the cultural diversity, Yeongsang No criticizes that, in the case of the Korean churches, the foreign ethnicity is not independent and is still regarded as in need of protection. Lastly, the intercultural type is a model that emphasizes the interaction and discourse in the dynamic of different ethnicities and races. It respects both the value of a certain ethnicity and the importance of social integration. Instead of the separated worship places, the Korean church ministries are trying to organize foreign language worship services and activities in the same worship place. As Yeongsang No points out, leaders of the intercultural ministries in the Korean churches need to ask themselves about how much they respect the value of interculturalism and how much they seek co-existence in the socio-religious integration.

South Korean churches and migrant centers offering intercultural ministry are evaluated not in terms of the general meaning and form of church, but in terms of a missional form.⁵⁶ Depending on the denominational tendency or ministers' interests, the

⁵⁶ Heungsoon Park, 140. Park, as Yeongsang No mentions, explores the five types of the intercultural ministry based on the rural areas where the population of marriage immigrant women is high. The first type is the worship community. It is centered on the church, and its main ministry is worship (including foreign language worship) and bible study. Its ministry also provides diverse support such as language education, counseling, Korean culture classes, medical assistance, legal assistance, and cultural activities. The second type is the organizations attached to the Korean churches. Thus, types open classes for migrants who do not attend the church. It provides social services (including cultural programs, pregnant women, baby shelters, children's school programs, and weekend school), share diverse information and education, and support migrants' welfare and human rights. The third type is the independent ministry known as the migrant center, a non-profit private organization. The church organizes this center, but it is passive about showing the different religiosity. It also provides diverse support programs and activities like the other types. The fourth type is the consigned ministry by the Korean government and local governments. Its organization does not show the religious approaches, but it focuses on the social adaptation of migrants. It has also produced diverse programs and supports. The last type is the married immigrant women's

missionized ministry provides counseling, language education, and social activities for human rights concerns and welfare. In particular, the main programs for married immigrant women in the intercultural ministry are focused on language education, cultural adoption education, and employment education. The married immigrant women's ability to speak the Korean language varies among the individuals. In the early stages of their migration, their lacks of language ability is a significant barrier. Even though some female married migrants have stayed longer, they want to learn Korean at an advanced level.⁵⁷ Beyond the language program, the intercultural ministry in the Korean churches provides financial support since the married immigrant women, especially in the case of those who are divorced, find it hard to be financially independent. Along with its support systems, medical treatment, employment education, and legal services are provided.

In addition, the scope of the support programs is extended to cultural experiences, peer-meetings, religious counseling, and childhood education for the intercultural families.⁵⁸ As married immigrant women have been regarded as a vulnerable social class, the Korean churches and church-based migrant centers provide cultural experience and tours in order to introduce aspects of Korean culture. It is not a one-time event, but a continuous program. Korean churches and church-based migrant centers also create the peer-meetings for married immigrant women. These women in the peer-meetings meet others who face similar situations and find some ways to solve problems in their families

communities. These communities are built by married immigrant women who live in South Korea. It is not a religious organization, but its supporting leadership is connected with church ministers. The scope of community's ministry might be smaller than the other types, but it manifests a sisterhood among them and allowing them to share diverse information.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 193.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 194-196.

and society. The other reason to attend Korean churches is for support of Christian beliefs and for religious counseling. Married immigrant women who have Christian beliefs are trying to overcome their financial difficulties or family problems by leaning on the power of their belief. An appropriate understanding of different race and gender equality is required. Lastly, the programs of support for the education of the women's children are provided. It is significant for them because a specific need of married immigrant women is to connect with their children's education.

Even though the Korean churches produce diverse programs and support for intercultural families and married immigrant women, my question focuses on the possibility of accepting and addressing interculturalism, instead of multiculturalism. From this view, the Korean church ministries are still criticized because of the missional approaches. According to Hong-Ryeol Hwang's criticism, South Korean churches' missional ministry to female married immigrants is a one-sided approach that demonstrates a lack of respect for a different culture.⁵⁹ He criticizes how the Korean churches' multicultural ministries regard foreign married women as targets of church mission. Its criticisms point out that the professional education and programs in South Korean churches' ministries frequently drive married immigrant women toward socio-cultural-religious assimilation, rather than allowing them to choose their preferred ways of living

Han Kuk Yum also criticized that Korean Christianity in multicultural ministry

⁵⁹ Hong-Ryeol Hwang, "Current Situation of Immigrants and Tasks for Immigrants Mission in Busan and Kyungsangnam-do Area: Focused on Marriage-related Immigrant Women/Multicultural Family," *Mission Theology* Vol. III (2009): 232.

has a lack of understanding of migrant's culture and religion.⁶⁰ In particular, the exclusive forms of religiosity and aggressive mission goals are often represented for their authentic expressions of faith. These are not appropriate ways to respond to an intercultural society. This mission-centered approach tends to pay more attention to convert migrants to Christianity. Going back to my question about the possibility of discussion for interculturalism, it is problematic. There is lack of space to open and respect different cultural values and religions. The possibility of respectful intercultural discussion means more than simply allowing diversity; it must go beyond conservative religious boundaries and enable positive interactions within diversity.

According to Shin Kim, who has the outside view of South Korean Christianity, South Korean Churches' migrant mission is represented by two axes: the specialized ministry and the mega church ministry.⁶¹ The specialized ministry for married immigrant women includes the church-centered types and non-profit Christian organizations. These also produce many programs and activities for married migrant women and intercultural families. In the case of the mega church ministry, their works are similar with the specialized ministry. One difference is that the mega church ministry can handle more diverse programs and forms of support due to their stronger financial position. In doing so, migrants including intercultural family and married immigrant women have become a new missionary field for which South Korean

⁶⁰ Han, Kuk Yum. "Intercultural Age: Immigrant Rights and Korean Christian Task." Lecture on 38th *Korean Christianity Society's Forum* on Dec 1, 2009. (Accessed on Dec 10, 2015).

⁶¹ Kim Shin, "The Study of the Correlation between the Appearance of the Multicultural Society and the Religions," *The Academy of Korean Studies* 6 (2012):8.

Christianity is searching frantically.⁶² Under the slogan, “From Outside Mission to Inside Mission,”⁶³ some Korean churches provide tremendous support to migrants in South Korea. As a result, the Korean churches’ migrant mission achieve many successful outcomes.

However, along with the criticism of Kim and Han, I would evaluate negatively the missional intention of the South Korean churches. Their missional approach is conservative, and their missional dynamic is aggressive. The conservative mission cannot be representative for all Korean Christianity, but a considerable number of Korean ministers and congregations prefer to share and introduce their faith via the aggressive missional approach. The base of conservative Christianity mission indicates that other religions are missionary targets that should be saved.⁶⁴ The evangelical belief is transformed into missional calling. Even though progressive theologians or ministers criticize conservative paradigms of multicultural mission work in Korean Christianity, the conservative mission approach in Korean churches shows a strong stance in their faith. The enthusiasm of mission for multicultural ministry has grown, but the missional reflection for intercultural ministry is still hard to be implemented.

A worse problem in the multicultural ministry of South Korean Christianity is the distorted understanding of mission. Many missional leaders have believed carelessly that mission is an absolute way to increase church members. As Wesley Ariarajah explains, today’s churches need to rethink the basic interpretation of mission as ‘*missio dei*’ that

⁶² Ibid., 9.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

supposedly reveals God's justice in the earth.⁶⁵ What is a way to reveal God's justice on earth? It definitely needs to remember that God stands with the oppressed and marginalized people. From this perspective, the South Korean churches' mission would be to actualize diverse aspects of justice such as gender justice, racial justice, economic justice, eco-justice and so on. Unfortunately, the paradigm of multicultural mission emphasizes to be closer to unilateral absorption into Christianity and its hegemonic ideology, instead of being open to others and giving up their religious privilege for intercultural conversations. Such a paradigm differs markedly from the '*missio dei*' for God's justice.

2. The Theological Justification for Discrimination under Monotheism and Patriarchal Christianity

My study about the intercultural sense of the missional approach points out the conservative structures for married immigrant women. Even though the missional circumstance for migrants has been built, the churches' missional interest continues to emphasize the religious exclusiveness and assimilation into Korean church-centered structures. In this section, I will investigate the theological resources that make the mission exclusive. Unfortunately, the answer finds that the theological resources for racial and gendered discrimination come from the exclusive understanding of God. This exclusive understanding of God also produces the patriarchal form of Christianity in South Korea. In this subsection, my task is to critique the theological resources generating the exclusive God in South Korean Christianity and will show how the

⁶⁵ Wesley Ariarajah's Lecture presented at the *Tipple-Vosburgh Lectures, Drew Theological School*: "Mission Impossible? Reimagining a Credible Mission for Today," Oct. 14, 2015.

theological paradigm connects with racial and gendered discrimination to married immigrant women and how harmful it is when revealed to them.

According to Bong-doh Choi's survey⁶⁶ about the degree of intercultural interest in South Korean churches, over seventy-eight percent of South Korean Christians show interest in supporting migrants and immigrant groups.⁶⁷ It is quite a high percentage of interest in interculturalism. However, more interesting is that seventy-six percent of South Korean Christians have interest in migrants needing to keep faith-lives but only in South Korean churches. It seems to show that South Korean Christians have the tendency to reject the fact that migrants may separate from Korean churches and have their own religious lives, exclusively for their own ethnic groups. Why is it that South Korean Christians reject religious division in their church settings? It might be the reason for their tendency toward religious assimilation. It also shows that the degree of intercultural interest in South Korean Christians is considerably limitation. Their multicultural circumstance opens generally the dual cultures with migrants, but their intercultural interest has difficulty in welcoming different faiths and religions of the migrants.

The multicultural circumstance reveals a limited openness. I believe that the more important thing for interculturalism is initially to respect different faiths, cultures, and religions. Its general approach is that of cultural-religious pluralism, but a more required approach produces visible integration and harmony. Respect toward others is

⁶⁶ This survey is based on data collection which targets 260 Christians in small, medium, and large-size churches of certain D places. D place has 10.4 percent of Protestants rate (cf. 18.3 percent of Protestants rate in Korean population) in 2010.

⁶⁷ Bong Doh Choi, "The Perspective of Immigrants and the Task of Christian Education in Christians," *University and Mission* 21 (2011), 216.

required of the authentic interaction for interculturalism. The missional ministries might claim that there is a certain level of openness for mission projects. Their religious stance might not be unconvertable. Under this exclusive religiosity, their intercultural ministries quite often ignore migrants' religious differences and freedom. The above survey helps me to see the main reason for the intercultural support in South Korean churches. The main reason for such support is for the mission.⁶⁸ Is engaging mission work wrong? The mission work is good as a tool to send God's love in the world. However, the exclusive mission approach in this survey does not consider migrants' differences. It shows that migrants' religious lives should be confined within the existing South Korean Christians' religious boundaries. It appears to be the demand of religious assimilation. While Koreans can accept the migrants' dual cultures, they cannot accept their dual beliefs.

Such theological reflection about cultural diversity dates back to the Council of Jerusalem in biblical history. Even though the Council of Jerusalem approved the Church's cultural diversity in chapter 15 of Acts, the historical model of the Church lacks theological reflections on the different cultures.⁶⁹ According to Orlando Espin, the root of this problem is that the Western Church does not consider culture as an element of theology and doctrine.⁷⁰ As Western theology has been going to become dominant; the western missional ideology has also become an absolute way to proclaim God's sovereignty to non-believers. This method of mission is exclusive and reflects a

⁶⁸ Ibid., 217.

⁶⁹ Orlando O. Espin, "A Multicultural Church? Theological Reflections from Below," in William Cenkner (ed.) *The Multicultural Church: A New Landscape in U.S. Theologies*, (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996), 54. Espin uses the term, "multicultural," in a manner that differs from my own multicultural discussion. His attitude for the multicultural church is positive because he urges that Christian churches need to abandon the Western missional understanding and move toward multicultural dialogues.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 60.

colonialized approach. Feminist theologian, Letty M. Russell, criticizes that Christian mission has had the colonial project that is destroying the different cultures and proclaiming the distorted image of God who is patriarchal, transcendental, and monarchical.⁷¹ Christian exclusive and colonialized mission refuse the cultural and theological hermeneutics about mission in which people find out their liberation and recognize their identity as God's children. Rather, Christian mission emphasizes a proselytizing practice and mimicking of the missionary's home culture and value.

This exclusive and colonialized mission-approach is based on the exclusive understanding of God. According to the feminist theologian, Rosemary Ruether, Judeo-Christian culture is characterized by the exclusive understanding of God.⁷² The monistic God in Judeo-Christian culture is rooted in nomadic religion, which is exclusive, aggressive, and hostile to agricultural people and religions. This monotheism of Judeo-Christians has been accepted for a long time. Ruether criticizes that the exclusive image of God reinforces patriarchal rule and the monarchal socio-political order.⁷³ God is symbolized directly as male or king who reigns over all. One sees this hierarchy in the patriarchal structure of the Old Testament, which shows the male as the head of family and others including women, children and servants as secondary.

In addition, this monistic God in Judeo-Christianity is addressed as a being who

⁷¹ Letty M. Russell, "Cultural Hermeneutics: A Postcolonial Look at Mission," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, (2004): 29.

⁷² Rosemary R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 53.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

transcends reality in the understanding of dualism between Spirit and Body.⁷⁴ This monistic God as a transcendental being in traditional Judeo-Christianity influences the world, but cannot be influenced by the world or by suffering in the world. Thus, monotheism emphasizes the supernatural and authoritarian image of God who rules over the universe. The Christian God is thus seen as the zenith of authority. Unfortunately, the highest God is male in monotheism. As Mary Daly puts it, “if God is male, then the male is God.”⁷⁵ The gendered symbol of God creates and reinforces the vision of society as patriarchal and male-dominated.

This masculine symbol of God is presented as ‘Sky-Father’⁷⁶ who creates people, knows everything, leads our lives, and blesses people. If people believe in God, God blesses people and makes people go to heaven. If people do not obey or believe in God, God punishes people and indorses that people go to hell. The understanding of the monistic flow has impacted and continues to impact modern churches in South Korea. South Korean Christians in modern cultures are influenced by this problematic theology called *Kibok shinang* that is related to shamanic fortune belief.⁷⁷ The reason to believe in God is to meet God’s blessing, *bok*. The fundamental understanding in this theology emphasizes God’s sovereignty, because God is the almighty ‘Sky-Father’ of the South Korean Christians.⁷⁸ Why is the metaphor of the ‘Sky-Father’ problematic? Some Christians often feel and experience closely the God-self in this ‘Sky-Father’s image.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁷⁵ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 9.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ James Newton Poling and HeeSun Kim, *Korean Resources for Pastoral Theology: Dance of Han, Jeong, and Salim*, (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 81.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Even though its metaphor has been acceptable, its unconditional enforcement has not made a space for rethinking of difference and gender equality.

In Namsoon Kang's critiques, the arrival of Christianity in Asia combines with the patriarchy of Asian culture to form a patriarchal Christianity in each Asian country.⁷⁹ In the Korean case, Confucianism has been the main religious ethos that reinforces the social structure of the 'Father-Son' relationship. Kang criticizes that the patrilineal lineage excludes women's space in family and society.⁸⁰ This legacy of Confucianism influences a modern ideology of strict gender differences and distinct gender roles. It creates the problematic social ideas of gender inequality. In addition, the deformed social structure constructs the masculine and hierarchical Christianity in South Korea. I believe that these hierarchical ideas in South Korean Christianity produce not only an extremely competitive attitude toward different denominations and neighbor-churches but also an antagonism toward different religions and ethnicities. If migrants in South Korea want to be believers, they have to accept this monistic God who lives amidst the masculine and hierarchical ideas of South Korean Christianity.

As monotheism connects with the hegemony of monarchy, patriarchy, and hierarchy, the monotheistic God constructs the circumstance of the theological discrimination against married immigrant women. Since the exclusive theology is not welcoming the difference, South Korean churches understand that their monistic God is not embracing the different cultures and beliefs of the migrants. Instead of proclaiming

⁷⁹ Namsoon Kang, *Feminist Theology: Women, Spirit, and Life*, (Seoul: Korean Theology Study, 2002), 95.

⁸⁰ Namsoon Kang, "Confucian Familism and Its Social/Religious Embodiment in Christianity: Reconsidering the Family Discourses from a Feminist Perspective," *Asia Journal of Theology* 18 (2004):168.

the exclusive mission, South Korean churches must reflect theologically and critically on their monistic concept of God. Instead of imposing their almighty God, South Korean churches also need to listen to how married immigrant women think of this God and why this God is not helpful for foreign married women. South Korean churches in this theological reflection need to make solidarity with them.

The consequences of this patriarchal theology can be very dangerous for immigrant wives. For example, Hee Sun Kim, in her study of pastoral care for Korean congregations found that there are sometimes extremely inadequate pastoral responses to these women. Sometimes patriarchal theologies seem to assert that victimized women should endure their suffering. Kim criticizes how traditional pastoral counseling in Korean churches emphasizes female endurance and sacrifice.⁸¹ If females experience powerlessness under gender inequality and racial discrimination, they often suffer from their psychological vulnerability. Unfortunately, they often experience spiritual hardship with God, since they feel that their suffering is God's punishment or results from God's abandonment. These assessments are related to a way to find the reason for their suffering in themselves or in God. God is an almighty one and controller in patriarchal theology. Along with this approach of pastoral counseling, the female's sufferings (including married immigrant women) are viewed as God's will in which all suffering is transformed later into God's blessing in their lives. How can female sufferings as the will of God

⁸¹ HeeSun Kim, "Domestic Violence: Nothing happens in Our Church?", *Christian Study of The third Age* (186th Monthly Forum, 2015): 6. In her study, the feminist pastoral counseling proposes that the cause of their hardship is not coming from them or God, but from certain persons and socio-cultural oppressors. It urges the responsibility of the oppression from the shift of oppressive paradigm. It represents that married immigrant women need to empower themselves recognizing what their oppressors are and who they are deserved to have their blessed lives. In addition, feminist pastoral counseling encourages Korean churches and society facing the socio-cultural injustices, breaking the silence of female suffering, and consequently stopping the victim blaming.

under patriarchal theology be allowed? We may not know now, but it is argued that God's will is sovereign. Its counseling by considering female suffering as God's will seem to be violence for oppressed women.

Furthermore, some critics view the traditional understanding of the cross in classic theology is criticized in terms of the oppression of women. They argue that the sufferings of Jesus on the cross became redemptive for all humankind; the sufferings of women are validated and justified. In South Korean churches, women's suffering is easily regarded as the situation of their participation in the work of the crucified Christ and as the process that God wants to teach them.⁸² If the suffering of Jesus functions as a sacrifice model to save someone, why is it not possible to save married immigrant women from domestic violence, gender inequality, patriarchal sexism and racism, and exclusive classism in the South Korean family, church, and society? Even though married immigrant women try to endure their suffering, it should be voiced as God's will or salvation for them to endure their suffering. Even though married immigrant women have learned from their church that their suffering entails God's blessing at the end, their pains do not always lead to meet happiness.

To conclude, the argument in which the missional approach of South Korean churches seems to be problematic can be summarized as follows. Because the exclusive mission is rooted in the exclusive understanding of God, this monotheistic God is not welcoming to the different cultures and beliefs of the migrant wives. South Korean churches and theology need to embrace and respect the difference of others. However, as

⁸² James Newton Poling and HeeSun Kim, *Korean Resources for Pastoral Theology: Dance of Han, Jeong, and Salim*, (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 96.

it is, married immigrant women are forced to convert to Christianity and to adopt the beliefs of South Korean Christianity. Who is the exclusive God? As feminist theologians argue, the Christian God is presented with masculine image in patriarchal rule and in a monarchical socio-political structure. In South Korean society, the integration between Christianity and Confucianism constructs the oppressive circumstance against women. In this environment, married immigrant women have to endure their suffering by hoping in God's greater plans. As Jesus on the cross did, their sacrifice is enforced for their patriarchal family, church, and society. If South Korean churches do not rethink the exclusive nature of God and its attendant theology, their missional approach can be viewed as a weapon against married immigrant women.

3. Objectified Identities in South Korean Christian Racism

This section discusses about how South Korean churches perpetuate a racial response to married immigrant women. A problematic mechanism in South Korean churches is a racist view toward migrants. This section explores issues of race utilizing a post-colonial approach. The purpose of this section is to criticize South Korean Christian racism in which married immigrant women have lost their voices and their identities. The first racial response is to identify the women who are devalued in the church support. Since they are people of color who come from the poor countries, one can assume that these women definitely need help and support. Even if they need some help from church ministries, this assumption devalue migrants from a racist view. The second racist response in the South Korean church is related to the neo-colonial understanding in which married immigrant women should be assimilated into South Korean families,

churches, and society. Its response is also demonstrated in the language programs in the church ministries. The last racist response is that South Korean churches do not feel in need of transformation. They assume that married immigrant women in missional ministries should always be converted to Christianity. They are compelled to be identified as objects, but not subjects in the quest for church mission.

Otherness in the Racial Double Response

How do South Korean churches regard the cultural identity of married immigrant women who have different ethnic and national backgrounds? This question is important for South Korean Christianity because the churches' support programs reveal racist responses. Even if churches create intercultural circumstances and provide huge missional support systems, their basic attitudes might make immigrant women feel as strangers. According to Heungsoon Park, most South Korean people have a racial double response, 'envy and disregard.'⁸³ It applies the "envy"-attitude toward European and American people, but the "disregard"-attitude to people of color. This racial double response cannot be generalized, but most people in South Korean society have an ambivalent attitude toward different races. In keeping with an Oriental understanding of the "other," married immigrant women in South Korean churches' missional approach are often regarded as those who come from the poor countries. Furthermore, they are also required to conform to traditional patriarchal stereotypes of docile femininity, sensuality, and domestic subservience. At the same time, the socio-cultural paradigm also expects

⁸³ Heungsoon Park, 12.

that women learn how to be rebellious individuals.⁸⁴ In this sense, married immigrant women encounter the gendered and racialized message even from church mission efforts.

A postcolonial interpretation is helpful to have a practical reflection toward colonial discussion and to criticize the racialized response.⁸⁵ The postcolonial lens allows one to see how the church ministries tend to have a colonial approach toward married immigrant women. It is not a physical conquering, but emotional and spiritual hegemony. If the South Korean churches do not accept married immigrant women's language, history, culture, and values, it is a colonial response to reject other's difference. If the South Korean churches force married immigrant women to convert to South Korean culture and Christianity, it can be a religious form of neo-colonialism. How do the South Korean churches look at married immigrant women? Their answer to this question smacks of neocolonialism. In the name of development, social integration, and mission, if South Korean churches insist that a sense of superiority can control what is perceived as inferiority, they cannot avoid rigorous neo-colonialism.

In this vein, Gayatri Spivak's critical position is meaningful. She claims that the oppressed subaltern cannot speak out in certain circumstance in which the listeners are not listening to the subaltern.⁸⁶ Even though the South Korean churches can provide support programs for married immigrant women, it is not supportive for these women as the churches do not recognize married immigrant women who need to be accepted as

⁸⁴ Christie Cozad Neuguer, *Counseling Women: A Narrative, Pastoral Approach*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 83.

⁸⁵ Jong-Sung Park, *The Reflection to Post-Colonialism: Foucault, Fanon, Said, Bhabha, and Spivak* (Paju: Salim Press, 2006), 86.

⁸⁶ Gayatri Spivak, Essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossber, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (1988), 90.

themselves. If their difference and distinctiveness are not accepted, the South Korean churches are not listening to these women's voices. Furthermore, married immigrant women can be the spoken objects through many South Korean churches and programs, but it is difficult for married immigrant women to become subjects who can speak. The South Korean churches often adopt the neo-colonial mask with discrimination and prejudice. Thus, postcolonial discussions in South Korean churches might help elucidate where married immigrant women are examples of racialized otherness that might help illuminate what the churches-themselves are doing.

Unspeakableness in Neo-colonial language

What kind of programs do South Korean churches emphasize for married immigrant women? The most well-known and common support is in language programs for them to learn the Korean language. It might be an urgent one for married immigrant women in order to adapt well. In fact, the development of language skills in migrant lives is a significant barrier for communication with their families and society. The language barrier makes them feel isolation and discrimination. However, the churches need to ask about what it means to force married immigrant women to learn the Korean language. Might it be a better way for female migrants to learn Korean for social integration? The language does not exactly show the subject-object relationship, but lack of language skill in a completely new society usually leads to marginalization. It can be a survival tactic to learn Korean; rather, it can be a way to be adopted into the socio-linguistic power structure. The South Korean churches' design for language programs might be supportive in intent, but these churches need to explore other post-colonial approaches.

On the other hand, South Korean churches should also ask why they do not learn other languages that are spoken by the migrants. From the perspective of the churches, the dominant do not need to break their traditional positions, but the marginalized persons need to adapt to the new coeternal environment to diminish their discomfort. The enforced system, including language, is a neo-colonial approach to deal with the the marginalized. According to the Kenyan novelist and critic, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, decolonizing the mind starts by stopping the colonizer's language.⁸⁷ He emphasizes that any language has dual characteristics. On the one side, language is a communicational tool, but, on the other side, it can be a cultural weapon. The effect of a cultural weapon is to annihilate dignity, belief, language, and value of people who come from other countries. In the case of the married immigrant women in South Korea, it makes struggle in the different language and land. Ultimately, it does not encourage them to identify with South Korean people and to remove themselves from their own culture.

Why do the South Korean churches keep on working the one-sided language approach, in the same way as South Korean society's adaptation programs? The one-sided language approach can make a one-sided religious dogma. The Korean worship approach toward migrants emphasizes a Korean understanding of God and Christianity. The enforced religious circumstance through the one-sided language can be a significant barrier to long open to the different understandings of God and religion. It is also an obstacle against co-existence with married immigrant women. In connection with the idea of co-existence, the South Korean society and churches need to broaden their

⁸⁷ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publisher, 2004), 45.

understanding of others, learn others' cultures and languages, and give up their one-sided conversational pattern. If the South Korean churches, like social integrational programs, emphasize religious conversion and assimilation, their ministry cannot create a space for interculturalism. The linguistic integration in church ministry means that outsiders have to be absorbed into South Korean churches. The cultural-linguistic integration can also turn into religious integration.

In this process, married immigrant women can become voiceless. Their language is absent in the worship and ministry of South Korean churches. In this way, they are compelled to become South Koreans, Korean wives, and members of Korean congregations. Ethically, what does it mean to set for the each language-oppression? The hegemonic power controls visibly and invisibly the marginalized with unspeakableness and voicelessness. They are required to assimilate their thoughts and desires by acquiring a South Korean voice and language. It is definitely related to the legacy of neo-colonialism and certain tools for social-religious regulation and unification. Then, the marginalized have huge limitation regarding speaking out the liberty and justice for themselves. This is a racist ideology and should not be supported.

Objectified Objects in Missional Projects

The missional approach of South Korean churches often considers married immigrant women exclusively as weak victims. This is also problematic. It sets up some assumptions: married immigrant women are only vulnerable and unable to live by themselves, so they need only to receive the churches' support. Furthermore, this understanding forces married immigrant women to see themselves as a group who have

to receive support and change themselves by education and religious conversion. Who needs education and change for interculturalism? Beyond the objecting approach, the South Korean churches need to learn that married immigrant women can be subjects in an intercultural society. South Korean churches also need to change their one-sided conversation for missional projects. Married immigrant women cannot remain in the position of being weak victim. Rather, they should be understood as intercultural subjects in South Korean churches and even society.

As the missional theologian, Anthony J. Gittins, points out, the missional dogma of Christianity has dichotomous positions: master and stranger.⁸⁸ A missionary, as a master, does not always need to do good, and a non-believer, as a stranger, does not always need to be transformed. I believe that the true missional field should not have any positions such as master or stranger. In keeping with Wesley Ariarajah's thought, the intercultural approach realizes that *missio dei* reveals God's justice. There cannot be any structures that speak as the dominant and the powerless. The authentic mission inspires the change of all and inspires hope in God's justice as a movement of the grace of God. It means a change of power structure in the concept of mission-in-reverse.⁸⁹ In this radical concept, a provider becomes a receiver, and a master in missional ministry becomes a guest. Furthermore, the usual master-stranger arrangement thus disappears. Its range of change goes above and beyond these structural relationships. In this mission-in-reverse, the religious system and social structure can be moved to change. Its radical positions can imagine the change to release or alleviate the accumulated oppressions for married

⁸⁸ Anthony J. Gittins, "Reflections from the Edge: Mission-in-Reverse and Missiological Research" in *Missiology*, vol. XXI, No. 1 (1993): 22.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

immigrant women in South Korean churches.

Thus, in this change, South Korean churches need to reject the missional and racist approaches that produce the objectified status of married immigrant women. The one-sided language and missional approaches cause migrants wives to be marginalized, unspeakable, and voiceless in the ministry field. It requires the change of attitude into interculturalism, which means to respect others and give up religious hegemony. Married immigrant women have always been considered as receivers, learners, and converts in the general mission project. Their identities have been objectified in the exclusive society and among patriarchal families, and they, as persons viewed as inferior, are also voiceless in the Korean churches' missional approach. They become the objectified objects under the complex oppressors. The shift of the missional paradigm will highlight the different relationships and circumstances. In the shift of the missional paradigm, South Korean churches and married immigrant women do not meet in the distorted relationship of provider and receiver, of educator and learner, or of missionary and convert. They meet each other as equals, as children of God.

Chapter 4

Empowering Theo-Ethical Visions of South Korean Churches for Married Immigrant Women

The focus of this chapter is the empowering of theo-ethical visions of South Korean churches for married immigrant women. Notwithstanding the variety of theo-ethical voices, I suggest two features of the theo-ethical visions of the understanding and justification of the South Korean churches' praxis for married immigrant women. The theo-ethical visions can be imagined firstly by the consideration of interdependence, and secondly by a new understanding of God and gender. One might immediately start to wonder if it is not strange and special to start a search for a Christian ethical response. There are, however, reasons for including the interdependence and new understandings of God and gender. First, the concept of interdependence is essential to many liberationist Christians in intercultural societies. Academic theologians and philosophers take this concept seriously. By focusing on the concept of interdependence, I hope to take the theo-ethical vision seriously in Christian lives. Second, this concept claims to have a unique theological answer to ethical questions. This is about who we ought to be and what we ought to do in intercultural circumstances.

In addition, the second consideration about new understandings of God and gender are helpful as South Korean churches look for Christian theological contributions to an elaborated conception and justification of God and women. It might be natural to be curious about what one of the distinctive Christian ethical voices has to say. Although radical and sophisticated discussions of so-called conservative understandings of God and

gender in South Korean churches exist, there seems to be few comprehensive discussions of how South Korean Christianity has known who God is and in what ways women are understood in the Korean Christian understanding. The contention that the South Korean churches ought to accept the understanding of God that is not comfortable to most Korean Christians seems to be on going. However, how to expand the understanding of God and how to support married immigrant women as agents in communal liberation needs to be probed and acted upon.

1. The Theo-Ethics of Interculturalism: Interdependence

In this subsection, I explore the need for Interculturalism in South Korean churches. The co-existence with married immigrant women cannot be realized simply through good intentions. It needs the earnest efforts and serious reflection on the need for Interculturalism. It will entail the acceptance and respect for the distinctiveness of the other, the understanding of the relational culture, and love and peace from cosmopolitan theology. Instead of simply speaking about the need for equality between South Korean Christians and married immigrant women, it is necessary for South Korean churches to have a deep understanding of the difference. For South Koreans such as myself, we must appreciate the ways in which married immigrant women from other nations are different from Korean people. They are living in and with different weather conditions, a distinct natural environment, social system, language, custom, and religion. They have a different physical appearance. They have followed a different code of ethics and values. They also have experienced different economic circumstances, because of the different government economic structures. Consequently, some might have had to move to the foreign land for

their own survival.

Although their differences should be respected, the differences can also be sources that make them more vulnerable. Social restrictions create boundaries that indicate the ways that such women are similar or not. However, they are living together with Korean families. The interdependence dialogue for the living-together is the ethical belief in which every person has his/her own dignity and rights. Even though everyone is different, each one deserves to be respected. To live together successfully and harmoniously, an understanding of others is required. Instead of just providing many programs and assistance for married immigrant women, what ethical sense do South Korean churches need to engage? They need the sense of ‘living-together’ with others. What does it mean to live together? We all are a part of interdependent living with others. Their lives show that each one listens to others’ stories and concerns about others’ situations and needs. Their lives also show their interconnection. In this sense, South Korean churches need to find the paths for people to live together successfully with married immigrant women. Beyond the one-sided approach to change others, the South Korean churches need to be open to be changed by others. Along with the following categories, I suggest specific required elements for interdependent lives.

The space of the acceptance and respect for the distinctiveness of other

The increasing number of married immigrant women in South Korean society and churches shows the need not only for the social support programs, but also for intercultural responses. However, it is often shown that a lack of understanding of interdependence exists within South Korean society. When married immigrant women are

considered as the powerless objects in church ministries, it is a time to change and foster interculturalism. According to Heungsoon Park, married immigrant women need to be identified differently.⁹⁰ They should not be integrated objects, but they should be the subjects in an intercultural society. I think that it is a very different approach. If South Korean churches keep providing one-sided programs based on social and religious integration, married immigrant women cannot be subjects in intercultural transition. Their voices might be just ignored. What does it mean that married immigrant women become the subjects in intercultural circumstances? It might mean that their voices are accepted and, further, respected. It might also mean that their identities are considered as the subjects who ask for changes to the distorted churches and society.

This constructive space for intercultural subjects can start by accepting and respecting the distinctiveness of the other. The space is different from one of plurality. As mentioned in chapter 1, multiculturalism can be negative because it can be used simply to emphasize the generality in the diverse possibility.⁹¹ In this sense, the concept of multiculturalism does not acknowledge or foster the deep understanding and respect of people's difference. Rather, the social, cultural, and religious risks formed by the different cultures are neglected. By accepting the dynamics of interculturalism, the South Korean churches need to positively evaluate the difference and distinctiveness of the other. It also needs to be based on mutual respect and interdependence, going beyond the discrimination and prejudice exhibited toward married immigrant women. In respectful interactions, their skin color, life patterns, values, cultures, and religions are welcomed.

⁹⁰ Heungsoon Park, 28.

⁹¹ Kwok Pui-lan, 25.

For this possibility, South Korean churches have to give up their exclusive missional approaches and the comfortable status under their power structures.

According to an intercultural counselor, Wanda Lee, discrimination happens when one group benefits at another group's expense.⁹² That these "benefits" differ is, in itself, not a problem, but it definitely is a problem that the benefit of the dominant group generates the sacrifice of the minority. The one-sided mission of South Korean churches results in an inappropriate standard and judgement of married immigrant women. Furthermore, the subjective benefit can cause a cognitive ground and build of collective systems. Such a development shows that the discrimination can be visible. Wanda Lee also explains that the violence may be experienced as psychological and social oppression in a group, although it is not experienced as the form of physical violence.⁹³ The superior group perpetuates this violence in order to control the group that they perceive as inferior. The visible and invisible violence in this process underscores the differences between the groups. Then, it calls on obvious discrimination. This discriminatory violence, unfortunately, tends to be internalized in both the dominant and the minority group.

The accepted and respected difference might start from the place to overcome the discriminatory violence. It can be a great point to overcome the racist attitudes in South Korean society and churches. When I think of the importance of the difference and distinctiveness, the view of Luce Irigaray, the French feminist philosopher is interesting.

⁹² Wanda M. Lee, *An Introduction to Multicultural Counseling* (Philadelphia: Accelerated Development, 1999), 10.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

She finds carefully the respect of the difference in theo-philosophical dimension. She explains that all people should be respected. This view derives not from traditional authority or religion, but from the conviction or desire to help one another in situations of cultural interdependence. All persons can be beings who are respected and, in doing so, they are becoming images of the divine.⁹⁴ Seeking to become truly human fulfills the divine-ness. It requires a philosophical understanding based on human dignity, but I think that it has great implications for interculturalism.

Irigary also explains in the theo-philosophical approach in terms of the difference in relationships. ‘A vertical transcendence’ keeps people simply staying in the family or in inherent relationship, but ‘a horizontal transcendence’ encourages people going beyond the individual boundaries and relationships.⁹⁵ In a situation of horizontal transcendence, people can pay attention to difference. The horizontal relationship respects the difference of others. It can be a way of realizing a human-becoming. Its process helps the fulfillment of the divine in individual lives. When this concept of relationship extends to church ministry, I can see the theo-ethical vision for the interdependence of South Korean churches and Christianity. The churches’ self-discipline to accept and respect the difference of married immigrant women can be a way to develop and deepen their spirituality. This new approach to spiritual discipline can help churches to fulfill the divine-ness in themselves and live together with others in interdependent responses.

⁹⁴ Luce Irigaray, “On Old and New Tablets,” trans. By Heidi Bostic, Morny Joy, Kathleen O’Grady and Judith L Poxon (ed.), *Religion in French Feminist Thought-Critical Perspective*, (England: Routledge, 2003), 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

The deep understanding of the responsible relationship

Along with the respect of the other as noted in the above section, this section asks to do something more for the practical setting of interculturalism. After recognizing the difference of the other, what is it that the people need? They do not need to just live together. It does not need to simply have an I-it relationship which understands that you are very different from me. I suggest the philosophical approach first for understanding the difference. In particular, Emmanuel Levinas describes the ontological respect toward the Other. The Other who has infinity presents themselves as face.⁹⁶ Levinas claims that the orientation toward the Other can meet in the Other's face. He defines the face relationship as discourse. The face relationship brings for the discourse, and discourse requires the face relationship. This experience and discourse are an epiphany of face.⁹⁷ This relational discourse respects the singularity and dignity that each being has.⁹⁸ People cannot avoid the relational discourse that occurs as a face opens. It is likely to plead the change of defense-attitude against strangers and difference. This relational discourse in face-to-face is ethical.

Levinas' ethics encourage people opening to the others' presence and questions in relational discourse. The face becomes the "self" of the person. People can pay more attention to the others. It can be a way to listen to others and accept their demands and voices. It produces the responsibility to the face of other. Constantly, it is an appeal to

⁹⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 49.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

people for helping others.⁹⁹ Levinas claims that “the face resists possession, resists my powers”¹⁰⁰ and “the face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation incommensurate with a power exercised, be it enjoyment or knowledge.”¹⁰¹ Under interdependent circumstances, the neighbors are not carelessly the others, but they stand as the face in front of me. They need to remove any violent defense and threat to others. Rather, one respects the stranger and difference, and then seeks the religious and peaceful community.

In this philosophical approach, I can suggest the theo-ethical vision for South Korean churches and want to ask them: can you see the women’s face in your church mission? Do you stand in front of these women’s faces? Do you build up this responsible relationship through face-to-face? Married immigrant women have their own faces, which should be accepted and respected. They have their own face as the image of God. If one is welcomed without a smiling face, the one cannot feel acceptance. If one is welcomed with compassion and regards, the one can show his/her face with joy. This face-to-face relationship entails the ethical response to one another. Beyond an easy response with a smiling face, the thinking of Levinas demands that South Korean churches do not evade moments and places where they encounter the face of others and accept the critique and evaluation from others. Furthermore, Levinas suggests that the face-to-face relationship has the ability to intimately engage with others without violence or any desire to reduce the other’s absolute alterity.¹⁰² That is, the responsible

⁹⁹ Ibid., 179.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 197.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 198.

¹⁰² Ibid., 43.

relationship rejects any heteronomy, patriarchy, racial hierarchy, and one-sided religious approaches.

Likewise in Levinas' critique, the face-to-face relationship cannot control the others for a certain people/group's recognition, determination, or religious dogma.¹⁰³ This theo-ethical vision of the face is helpful to recognize the socio-racial-sexual-religious "Other." The South Korean churches need to recognize the married immigrant women as the absolute "Other." How do they give a theo-ethical response to interculturalism? Their exclusive-religious mechanism needs to be reduced. Their violent one-sided mission-dogma needs to be diminished. Their patriarchal Christianity needs to be lessened. Their neo-colonial racism needs to be decreased. Also, South Korean churches need a different paradigm to change the place where oppressed "Others" are produced.

In keeping with Levinas's theo-ethical sensitivity, I engage another question: how can the South Korean churches live together through the interdependent relationships with married immigrant women? This ethical question is driving me to seeking the practical response. At this point, Letty Russell's feminist hermeneutic of hospitality will be helpful. Russell suggests the practical hospitality in our locations. She claims that the society living with the "Other" does not represent the culture of hospitality because God's sight does not have any "Other."¹⁰⁴ No one can be an "Other." No one can be separated from God's hospitality. This hospitality of embracing is for all. Russell

¹⁰³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 101.

¹⁰⁴ Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference*. ed. by Shannon Clarkson and Kate M. Ott. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 43.

indicates that the hospitality ministry of the Church is to welcome all and be partners with strangers. Whatever the different classes, religious backgrounds, genders, races, and ethnic groups they have, they are all welcomed. It might be a struggle when opening the safe space, conceding the comfort privilege, and sharing inconvenient lives, but it needs to be undertaken.

But Russell's theo-ethical vision for hospitality is not just a service with food, drink, facility, money, or worship. The ministry of South Korean church often focuses on that kind of hospitality. In this view, South Korean churches need to listen carefully to Russell's suggestions. The hospitality in Russell's theo-ethical vision is to participant in God's welcoming and healing process through God's justice. South Korean churches, where is your hospitality to bring God's welcoming and healing people in God's justice? What are your criteria to unpack the boundaries of hospitality? Furthermore, Russell's theo-ethical vision suggests solidarity with strangers. The Church needs to check carefully how to distribute power quotient.¹⁰⁵ This solidarity is not simply level of welcoming, but it is a sharing of power. It requires that we keep asking what is said, who is saying what, and what is not said among them. Keeping away from the provider-receiver relationship in South Korean mission projects, the churches keep reflecting the things to be said, the voice, and the voiceless. The churches are willing to be providers, educators, care-givers, and speakers, but I want to ask them again. What do they hear from them? What do they share with them? Just food and materials are not enough, but the distribution of power and abandoned privilege are needed closely to be enough.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 44.

How can the South Korean churches distribute their power for solidarity with married immigrant women? Russell's theo-ethical vision from a feminist postcolonial interpretation puts the priority on the perspective of the outsider.¹⁰⁶ It might mean that their mission project is less important than responsible hospitality. It might mean that their patriarchal Christianity and racial privilege are less important than their subdued voices. It does not adhere to the traditional missional approaches of the South Korean churches. In this process, it might be a hard decision for South Korean churches. This theo-ethical vision might create for them a huge inconvenience. They might ask themselves again about what the mission is, what they have done for the women, and what they need for the cultural shifts within the community. Such a theo-ethical vision suggests that the churches redefine their mission as it is not to force others to conversion to Christianity any more.¹⁰⁷ This theo-ethical vision hopes that the churches reflect on themselves. Their reflection is to find out what they need more for interculturalism.

The unconditional hospitality from cosmopolitan theo-ethical visions

The responsible and relational sense seems to be quite important for interdependent lives. This subtitle is also related to a theo-ethical paradigm for co-existence. This interdependent response helps the South Korean churches to regard married immigrant women as the children of God. According to Namsoon Kang's cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision, the cosmopolitan approach also initially respects each's

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 45.

¹⁰⁷ Christian conversion is not wrong in this statement. Through the process of Christian conversion, I believe that many people meet love, peace, freedom, and justice in Jesus. What I criticize in this statement is not the concept of Christian conversion, but the distorted attitude that South Korean churches have regarding exclusivity, neo-colonial racism, and patriarchal Christianity.

alterity. As the Apostle Paul mentions, no person has reason to or is permitted to subordinate others who has been created in the image of God. All people are accepted by mutual recognition, respect, and solidarity. Each alterity has its face as God's image, so that face has an ontological equality and dignity. Similiar to Levinas, the cosmopolitan theo-ethical gaze is also to look at others as precious beings, especially as the image of God.

In addition, the cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision emphasizes the cosmic community to connect with one another as a form of universality. Each belongs to others. It is very meaningful. In the South Korean church' situation, churches belong to married immigrant women. Women belong to churches. It is not simply for the missional approach, but for ontological understanding. In this sense, Kang rejects the dichotomous thinking that divides superiority and inferiority, the insider and the outsider, us and them, and locality and globality.¹⁰⁸ Under the sun, all human beings are equal. They have the citizenship of kin-dom regardless of race, gender, age, ability, class, sexuality, and so on.¹⁰⁹ The cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision also rejects the violence of discrimination. It seeks an ethical response for living-together.

How is the notion of living-together understood in the light of a cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision? I find deep similarity with Russell's view. The living-together ideal in a cosmopolitan theo-ethical understanding is also to receive an interruption to the suffer-

¹⁰⁸ Namsoon Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology: Reconstituting Planetary Hospitality, Neighbor-Love, and Solidarity in an Uneven World*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2013), 21.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

with relationship with others.¹¹⁰ When we think of the interruption itself, it might produce negative feelings and present an inconvenient image because it requires a crossing of the boundaries. Yes! The living-together ideal is not romantic. It is not ideological. It is not utopian. Rather, it is real, so it compels one to engage responsible decision-making. The living-together ideal with love and care anticipates the interrupted life. It is valid that there is no connection with others, no interruption-experience toward one another.

In this cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision, the interrupted relationship for living-together suggests unconditional hospitality.¹¹¹ This unconditional hospitality might sound vague. Namsoon Kang also knows that unconditional hospitality is difficult because it entails a complex socio-political dimension. It is under national regulation. It can be categorized under the legal-identical documents or sociological profile. It is definitely subject to socio-political risks. The transnational realities have a strict value system in which the host's ownership demands clear documents for a legal status to stay in the land and also suggests a legal process for migration. The host land, in the name of transnational legality, regulates and controls foreigners. However, the cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision points that it is not a form of legal hospitality, but a critique of the superiority-inferiority hierarchical system. If unconditional hospitality is ethical, legal hospitality is political. The cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision proposes unconditional hospitality. It is a radical response. It is necessary, but it may seem unfortunately impossible to be implemented by some.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 153.

In this dilemma of unconditional hospitality, however, the unconditional hospitality connects to the ground of Christianity.¹¹² It is based on the neighbor/enemy-love-as-self-love. It reflects Jesus's gaze. To learn Jesus's gaze does not deal with the "other" in the Christian dogma and institutionalized creed. Rather, it is a way to remember Jesus' command to love not only one's neighbor but also one's enemy as myself. It inspires people engaged in the endless border-crossing for love. It gives passion to South Korean churches to offer unconditional support in its ministries. However, the massive proposition, the 'unconditional' approach, still seems like a special form of action that only Jesus can undertake. The cosmopolitan theo-ethical approach also encourages that the exercise of unconditional hospitality toward others becomes what I do to God. It is found in Jesus's parable. "For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcome me; naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me; in prison and you came to visit me.... The truth is every time you did this for the least of my sisters and brothers, you did it for me." (Mt. 25:35-40).

In the cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision of Namsoon Kang, unconditional hospitality is viewed as unconditional love.¹¹³ It might mean that authentic spirituality is shown through the ways in which we engage in the Christian notion of "love your neighbor." The cosmopolitan theo-ethical vision asks South Korean churches: what does your form of Christian love look like? It needs to look like unconditional love. Keep asking: in what ways do South Korean churches love married immigrant women? It

¹¹² Ibid., 160.

¹¹³ Ibid., 172.

needs to love them as you love God. It is beyond just welcoming strangers into churches. It becomes a manifestation of the theo-ethical actions against a monotheistic God, Christian hegemony, colonialized racism, and gendered images. Unconditional hospitality is to describe the lives of human being experiencing Christian love. To be love is to fulfill the divine in our interdependent lives.

2. New Understandings of God and Gender: Supporting Women as Agents for Communal Liberation

The task of this chapter is to suggest the alternative approaches for new understandings of God and gender. It also follows the theo-ethical view for living-together with married immigrant women. In the South Korean churches, the explicit barriers reflect the conservative understandings of God and gender. As criticized in the above chapters, the exclusive understanding of God produces exclusive belief and religion. It may even turn to violent responses. It may generate problematic circumstances against interculturalism. In order to live together with others, I have suggested that South Korean churches need to enlarge their understandings of God through feminist wisdom. In this chapter, I have considered new understandings related to the reconstruction of traditional theological approaches. It will help married immigrant women in South Korean society and churches to reinterpret their suffering and empower themselves as agencies for communal liberation.

New understandings of God in expansive languages

The understanding of God from the traditional theology is most familiar with

masculinity and monotheism. It has produced gendered socio-cultural environments. The image of God often becomes that of a father-king. This approach hinders believers to meet the diverse images and languages for God. The diverse images of God are already in the Bible. Yet, the problem is that the diverse images of God are not introduced in the churches. In contrast, feminist theologians have attempted to seek new reflections to the traditional understanding of God. Sallie McFague warns that a one-sided image of God is idolatry.¹¹⁴ She suggests God's new images as mother, lover, and friend. A single metaphor is not enough to explain God. New understandings of God need as many metaphors as possible. If the current images of God are not appropriate for married immigrant women, the images are meaningless. South Korean churches need to seek the different images of God for intercultural dialogue. This process entails an expansive language for God.

Some people are uncomfortable with God employing only a father-image. Other people are uncomfortable with God as in a mother-image. Rather, the expansive language for God invites many images and symbols of God. It is a significant gift for all through diversity. People meet their own God in their specific situations. In the case of married immigrant women, the image of God is trapped beneath South Korean language, culture, and Christianity and is not able to be embraced. Their God can be expanded through their own languages and cultures. Their complex and diverse experiences are great resources for them to meet their own God. Many have engaged their relationship with God for many years prior to their arrival in Korea in the culture of their respective nations.

¹¹⁴ Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 204.

Expanded understandings, of course, advocate for a diversity of understandings of God, which come from different social locations of races, genders, cultures, and nations. In this sense, an intercultural understanding embraces an inclusive stance toward exclusionary approaches. Yet, the goal of intercultural understanding is not simply perceived as quantitative inclusion. Rather, it is to challenge unequal relationships and promote the interdependent relationship in the expanded language.

Individual understanding of God in the expanded language is changeable in life process. This changeable process might lead people to meet unfamiliar images of God such as Daughter, Midwife, Sophia, Ambiguous God, Sister wisdom, Divine Compassion, or The Darkness.¹¹⁵ The changeable and inclusive process leads people to modify their understandings of God and meet the abundant images of God. For instance, Korean feminist pastoral counseling sees married immigrant women who consider their suffering as God's punishment or abandonment.¹¹⁶ Females experiencing powerlessness and oppression often suffer due to their psychological vulnerability. They feel that their hardship is result of God's judgement or themselves. However, feminist pastoral counseling proposes an ethical vision. Their hardship is not caused by God, but by certain oppressors or socio-cultural-religious mechanisms. It shifts the understanding of their God and sources of their suffering.

God is not to be intended in married immigrant women's sufferings. God does not change all things later into God's blessings. South Korean churches needs to reject

¹¹⁵ HeeSun Kim, "Domestic Violence: Nothing Happens in Our Church?" *Christian Study of the Third Age* (Seoul, South Korea: 186th Monthly Fourm, 2015): 9.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

this belief, which avoids the responsible examination of the responsibility of the sources of such oppression. Married immigrant women do not need to hold God responsible as the One who enforces only sacrifice and obedience. I believe that God is dancing with women and playing a significant, positive role in their lives. It means that God empowers them to recognize who their oppressors are and who they are in terms of deserving to have their lives blessed. In addition, the feminist theo-ethical approach in pastoral counseling encourages South Korean churches and society to face the socio-cultural-religious injustices, to break the silence of female suffering, and to stop any victim blaming.

Women as Agents in communal liberation

Unfortunately, married immigrant women's experiences in South Korean society and churches are understood in the light of patriarchy, neo-colonialism, and exclusive Christianity, all of which have wounded women's self-understanding. These wounds exist and still are deep. In this process, they weaken self-concepts and cause women to develop a false sense of who they are. It diminishes their vitality, self-esteem, innate capabilities, and free spirituality. The patriarchal and hierarchal experiences destroy women's capacities to see or experience relationships of equality. The neo-colonial and exclusive-religious experiences demolish their ability or desire to seek freedom and justice. Such experiences go beyond one's individual problems to become social-gender issues and intercultural problems.

Although it has been continually experienced, empowering women through a new understanding of God will persist an acknowledgement of their own understanding

of God. This new understandings of God will give voice to married immigrant women who have been living in silence and suffering. It will give them the capability to eagerly pursue the equality between men and women. It will give them the ability to hope for and seek freedom and justice from social-cultural-religious discrimination. Currently, whenever they define their reality, their vulnerable experiences are repeatedly penetrated into their self-experience of powerlessness and hopelessness. Despite all of the continuous uncomfortable issues, they have to tell the truth of their experience. The new understanding of God will help them to seek their faith as well as God who brings new meaning to their lives as they understand it. As the feminist scholar, Hee An Choi, points out, “the process of reconstructing images of God involves reconstructing the image of self.”¹¹⁷ It is true that the new understanding of God will help them to find their true selves created in the image of God.

As married immigrant women build up their relationships and communication with God within new understandings, they will open their eyes to the meaning of their own lives. They can clearly see who they are as the children of God. They can gain strength to fight against dynamic oppression and unjust violence. They will enjoy the wisdom to make new choices that will create better lives for themselves and their communities. They can feel a holy calling of who they are as agents for liberating their communities. As agents, they can stand independently in their places, and as agents, they can empower themselves interdependently, to transform their relationships, their Church, and their society.

¹¹⁷ Hee An Choi, *Korean Women and God: Experiencing God in a Multireligious Colonial Context*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 159.

In this sense, the feminist biblical scholar, Musa W. Dube comments that the concept of liberating interdependence is insightful. Dube emphasizes the feminist postcolonial analysis, which criticizes the colonized ideology and highlights female's liberative interdependence. She tries to reinterpret the Canaanite woman of Matthew 15:21-28¹¹⁸ from the perspective of postcolonial analysis. In fact, this scripture among Western male readers is interpreted as a possibility and necessity for universal mission.¹¹⁹ At the same time, it is interpreted as affording female autonomy and independence among Western feminist readers.

In contrast, from a postcolonial feminist view, Dube tries to interpret it beyond the importance of the universal mission and female independence. She brings the non-Western feminist insight involved in African Independent Churches. She focuses on the active discourse of the Canaanite women. It leads people to focus on the relationship to heal the disconnectedness and confirm the dignity of the beings. 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table' (v.27). It does not mean that the Canaanite woman recognizes herself who does not deserve the children's food because of her nationality or lack of faith in the God of Israel. Rather, the woman was insisting that nothing can make her an undeserved child.¹²⁰ That is, the woman was confirming that she also was a child of God.

¹¹⁸ Matthew 15:21-28 ²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." ²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." ²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. ²⁶ He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." ²⁷ "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." ²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

¹¹⁹ Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louise: Chalice Press, 2000), 163.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

This strong confirmation of dignity helped to change the views of people in this scripture fragment. Dube does not understand this relationship between Jesus and the Canaanite woman in the sense of one-sided teaching and acceptance. Rather, her strong action and discourse create the change, which transforms the views of Jesus, his disciples, and even readers of the Bible. She called for liberating interdependence.¹²¹ The Canaanite woman's active insistence makes all people seek different approaches to the rejection on disconnection from others, privileged culture, racial supremacy, universal religion, and patriarchal approaches.

This active claim can be a political act against structural forces. Not only does the woman perceive herself as the child of God, but also empowers herself to heal the social-cultural-religious ills. It can be a way to proclaim herself as an agent for changing social-cultural-religious problems and liberating people into interdependent discourse. This interpretation is very meaningful for the married immigrant women in South Korean churches and society. The new understanding of those women should go beyond the missional relationship between receivers and providers. Rather, it should empower them to have their own voices and active insistence. There is no question that their voices are not only for themselves but also for others. They can speak out that they are God's children, regardless of their unequal situations. They can also speak out that they are subjects of God's agency to change their injustice and oppressions. Thus, this progress of change urges the independent liberation for all.

If new understandings of women are declared, married immigrant women still

¹²¹ Ibid., 195.

will encounter language barriers, oppression, inequality, injustice, and threatened assimilation in South Korea. What does the Church need for this interdependent liberation? South Korean churches need to reflect on the women's voices in their ministry. The churches need to make space to let them speak up by themselves. As a request, there can be a way for the Churches to see their situations, solve their problems, make relational reconciliation available, and restore God's vision in their lives. Their voices should be encouraged to speak more actively without any barriers resulted from language, patriarchy, racism, and exclusive religiosity. This position offers an interdependent discourse. This creative integration offers a liberating vision for today's intercultural life-place. It shows how to live together with others.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Interculturalism is a new opportunity for South Korean churches to reflect on themselves and rethink living together for married immigrant women. Instead of just celebrating this new opportunity, they have to ask themselves: are they ready for it? or is their ministry enough for intercultural dialogue and reaction? These questions can be their challenge. The co-existence in interculturalism is not simply accepting the difference. Rather, it needs more responsible reactions. Respect, hospitality, justice, liberation, and love should keep flowing like a water stream. It is different from a way to desire unity in diversity. It is to seek harmony and interdependence in diversity. This approach invites the theo-ethical visions to see those of them who are called for God's justice and love. It is to restore the sight of God and follow Jesus's gaze. This following summarizes the results of this investigation.

The first chapter of this study is an analysis of the married immigrant women and their lives in the South Korean intercultural society. It reports oppression, injustice, and discrimination against the married immigrant women. In particular, this study shows that the environment of women's vulnerability is shaped by global influences, gender assumptions, and socio-political exclusion. While the flow of globalization influences the international migration, the motivation of female migration is under the gendered dynamic. Female migration patterns are related to gender roles, and they are exposed to sexualized job-positions. Likewise, the case of married immigrant women in South Korea is also shaped by the interactive reactions between the demand of South Korean

patriarchal families and their economic needs under global influence.

This international marriage produces gender inequality and racialized vulnerability in their marriage process. Under the huge flow of the international marriage business, systematic restrictions ignore their own voices and treat them as the gendered commodity as birth-givers, motherhood, and obedient wives/family members. This problematic treatment connects racial discrimination and domestic violence in the women's Korean family. The language barrier and socio-cultural exclusions are another difficulty to hinder adaptation to the new environment, job-finding, and mutual relationship in their family and society. To be worse, it produces domestic violence, suicide, and relational conflicts. Furthermore, the South Korean socio-cultural environment is exclusive. The low acceptance of women is shown through stereotyped job distributions and low job participation. Thus, the multiple socio-cultural exclusions cause them also to meet economic hardships in South Korean society.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses on the reflection of non-theological and exclusive missional approaches, and patriarchal and racial Christianity in South Korean churches. Many South Korean churches and their congregations meet married immigrant women for missional projects. Their supporting projects are quite active, but their greatest problem is the strong religious assimilation into South Korean culture and Christianity. For discussing intercultural approaches, South Korean churches need to listen carefully to Kwok Pui-lan's critique about the difference between interculturalism and multiculturalism. Instead of multicultural approaches rooted in diversity, the intercultural approach shows interactive and interdependent understandings of others.

Under the name of the missional approach, the churches' primary attention is to transform the women into becoming Christians in South Korean churches.

Such thinking is based on conservative and exclusive views in theology. It is hard to respect the difference, and that is, the churches' approaches as they are not sufficient for the intercultural question. The exclusive theology produces a distorted image of God related to patriarchy and masculinity. In the case of South Korea, patriarchal Christianity mingles with Confucianism based on the social structure of the 'Father-son' society. This patriarchal Christianity is dangerous because it demands female endurance and sacrifice. In addition, the racial response in South Korean Christianity produces the exclusive response to the women of color who come from the poor countries. It makes the women become otherness in the exclusive religiosity and nationality.

The last chapter is about theo-ethical visions that empower the women and churches to engage intercultural discourse and seek communal liberation in new understandings of God and gender. The concept of interdependence is important for the co-existence with the women. It needs basically the space of acceptance and respect for difference. It also requires more responsible actions for the reality. Emmanuel Levinas' philosophical vision in face-to-face relationships leads people to rethink the ontological response to the individual's dignity. This ontological sensitivity deepens the theo-ethical responsibility for living together with others. Along with it, Letty Russell's hospitality indicates that no one can be otherness in God's sight and everyone should be welcomed, regardless of any social class, gender, race, and religious background. Instead of cheap hospitality such as 'welcome everyone,' an authentic hospitality is required. It suggests

the inconvenient demand that distributes power that the dominant have traditionally had.

In addition, Namsoon Kang suggests the unconditional hospitality from cosmopolitan theology in which the unconditional love in Jesus' gaze is realized and encounters actively the complex sociopolitical dilemma. The theo-ethical approach suggests the necessity of the new understanding of God and married immigrant women. The conservative and exclusive understanding of God becomes continuously an interruption of intercultural discourse. In order to get beyond the religious exclusiveness and privilege, the theo-ethical vision suggests the expansive understanding of God which is not limited to a certain language, culture, race, gender, and religion. It can be a challenge for the unequal relationship, but it can promote interdependent relationships. In the shadow of patriarchalism, neo-colonialism and exclusive Christianity, the women's oppression and injustice still are deep and continuous. However, the theo-ethical vision suggests the new interpretation for the women as agents. It encourages the women to look at themselves as the children of God in the restored understanding of God and also empowers them to find their holy calling for agents for liberating their communities. Musa W. Dube's liberating interdependence leads the women's active discourse to make a change for justice and liberation. Their voices are not just noise, but become political actions.

The term, interculturalism, in South Korean churches reflects to the theo-ethical challenges deeply related to migration, church, and women. The intercultural challenge has the vocation to change the reality, and not simply describe and explain the reality. It reflects the intercultural phenomena in South Korean churches and seeks new visions that

include married immigrant women. This intercultural challenge leads people to recognize married immigrant women as the children of God and South Korean churches as partners of interdependence. The interdependent dynamics encounters a question about how to live together. Theo-ethical visions contribute to imagine the responsible relationship to respect the difference and seek the unconditional hospitality to others. The visions also create the new understanding of God and women and establish justice and liberation for interdependence in South Korean churches.

Intercultural dialogue is a way to ask about how people can live together. It is not constructed by abstract desires for diversity, but concrete reactions in which all cultures, philosophies, and theologies will make their contribution toward a further pluralist humanity, a respectful attitude, and a changeable activism for interdependence. The Post-colonial era offers opportunities for Christianity to interact with diverse cultures, but Christianity needs to recognize that intercultural dialogue is not created by a missionizing force, a conquering ideology, or a re-terrorizing religiosity. In light of interculturalism, this research is making sounds for South Korean society and Christianity. What married immigrant women live together is spiritual and ethical experiences that deepen diversity, accept difference, and learn harmony in that diversity. Instead of exclusive theologies and aggressive mission-paradigms, they need more openness and respectfulness for difference. It is a reaction to have sensitivity for what is not said, to listen to what women keep saying, and to speak out about what the unspoken wants to say.

Intercultural dialogue is not only for the responsibility of South Korean churches. It is not a task that is one-sided, and cannot be established by an effort that is one-sided.

Both South Korean churches and married immigrant women need opportunities to communicate responsibly and make changes for their faith communities. As this research reveals, these women are often silenced in the ministry setting of South Korean churches. They should be empowered to see themselves as the children of God and to seek ways for them to generate an interdependent liberation. Their authentic identities are formed by social relationships, cultural contexts, and communal interactions in their faith communities.

Thus, this discourse for married immigrant women is a key issue of interculturalism in South Korean society and Christianity. It goes beyond an individual problem to become a social, economic, political, theological, and ethical issue. This issue reveals the understanding of women in South Korean society and Christianity and the social, cultural, systematic, and religious limitations for married immigrant women. In this research, I have tried to look back at these women's life-positions in a system of interconnectional dynamics. Their life-positions show socially and religiously contradictory relationships that internalize individual experiences and everyday-life. In order to overcome social prejudice, patriarchal culture, and an exclusive mission-approach that have oppressed female's life-positions, this research also has attempted to answer theo-ethical visions with respect to individual dignity, the distribution of power, unconditional hospitality, and new understandings of God and women. In the theo-ethical visions, I hope that South Korean churches will work to restore the essence of Jesus' gaze in which "the truth is every time you did this for the least of my sisters and brothers, you did it for me." It will be a fulfillment of the divine and life together in the divine.

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