

**“Greater Works Than These’:
A Postcolonial Reading of the Johannine Healing Stories”**

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Introduction

Over the course of her history, Korea has coalesced into a religiously pluralistic society: Keel Hee-sung defines Korean religious history as “a confluence of diverse religious streams” which have flowed into Korea.¹ Among many religions, shamanism, as the oldest folk religion, has formed the backbone of Korea’s religious life. As the most popular religion among the ordinary people, however, shamanism has been often suppressed by the so-called state religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism. With the introduction of Western Christian influence, political forces have further attempted to eradicate shamanism by despising it as a superstitious religion. Nevertheless, Korean shamanism has not only managed to survive but ironically has also gained credit for being a rich soil for the rapid growth of Korean Christianity. The success of the Korean Christian church would not have been possible without incorporating many aspects of Korean shamanism, since, as Harvey Cox observes, it is not easy for any new religion to appeal to people unless it is able to include or transform the elements of the already

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¹ Keel Hee-sung, “Outline of Religion in Korea,” in *Religion in Korea* (ed. Korean Conference on Religion & Peace; Seoul: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2003), 14.

established religions.² In that regard, Christianity itself is not exceptional. Christianity did not come out of a vacuum; rather there were multiple layers of religious history behind the life of Jesus and the inception of Christianity. For a better understanding of Christianity, Gregory J. Riley insists that one should consider the religio-historical background of Christianity (which he calls “the River of God”) by applying a model of “a great river system” to the rise of Christianity:

“Above the delta, there would be a mixing of all the elements that had survived the trip downstream, perhaps something from nearly every stream and rivulet in the entire system. Not everything would survive ... but a huge amount does survive. Once the river enters the delta, as if in reverse, it begins to divide again into many smaller rivers and streams on their way to the sea.”³

The River of God is full of religious ideas or belief systems by inspired people such as prophets, teachers, shamans, and other wise people who have responded to elemental concerns and spiritual experience. The River of God did not produce Christianity, but it brought to Jesus and the early Christians the various religious ideas and traditions which they used to form Christian belief. If such is the case, there should not be any biblical ground for persecuting a certain religion in the name of Christianity, but rather we should find a way to respect other religious beliefs by drawing on the common features between Jesus and other religious figures.

This contextual background inspires me to explore the possibility that Jesus was also a folk shaman. From the Synoptic Gospels to the Gospel of John, we read accounts of people being brought to Jesus who were ill or possessed by devils. Jesus cured sick

² Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1994), 219. See also, Jeong-sook Kim, “Humanization and Divinization: The Theological Dimension of Salvation as Revealed in Korean Shamanism,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 18 (2004), 69-81; Dongsoo Kim, “The Healing of *Han* in Korean Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15 (1999), 123-39.

³ Gregory J. Riley, *The River of God: A New History of Christian Origins* (New York: Harper SanFrancisco, 2003), 9.

people of all kinds, and they and those who had seen the signs he performed in healing the sick followed him. Nothing can be more certain about Jesus than that he was understood by his followers as an exorcist and a healer. Jesus is widely attested in the Gospels as a healer, and even after his death Jesus' acts of healing might have become definitive for his followers in continuing his mission.⁴ Jesus' healing stories have often been interpreted as faith stories showing that God is at work healing people through the faith that Jesus had engendered in them.⁵ These interpretations, however, have often been at pains to distinguish Jesus as a healer from contemporary shamanic miracle workers, thus precluding the use of broadly observed shamanic characteristics – what Pieter F. Craffert calls the shamanic complex – in examining Jesus' social type.⁶ Only recently have some scholars suggested that Jesus was indeed a spirit-possessed person by examining Jesus' healing stories from an anthropological as well as a psychological perspective.⁷ Yet even these studies fail to recognize the possibility that Jesus was not a simple healer but rather, a shamanic leader who not only revealed but also released the *Han* (wounded heart) of the ordinary people living in an oppressive society.⁸ I suspect that the possibility that Jesus might be plausibly viewed as a shamanic leader has been

⁴ Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 200).

⁵ Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 37-44; Gerald Ebeling, *Word and Faith* (London: SCM, 1963), 232-33; see also Barry W. Henaut, "John 4:43-54 and the ambivalent narrator. A Response to Culpepper's Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 19 (1990), 287-304.

⁶ Pieter F. Craffert, "Jesus and Shamanic Complex: First steps in utilizing a social type model," *Neotestamentica* 33 (1992), 321-42; J. R. Davila, "The Hekhalot Literature and Shamanism," *SBL Seminar Papers* (1994), 767-89.

⁷ Todd Kluzz, *The Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 186-206; John J. Pilch, "Altered States of Consciousness in the Synoptics," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and The Gospels* (eds. Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Manila, and Gerd Theissen; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 103-15; Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1995); John Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 62-72.

⁸ One of the major reasons that shamanism has survived in Korea is because it was capable of liberating the ordinary people from their *Han* caused by abuse, exploitation and violence .. etc.

ignored largely because of Western essentialization of shamanism, an essentialization with two facets: first, there is the almost universally accepted idea, inspired by the work of Mircea Eliade, that a shaman is a completely depoliticized person, a primitive, weird, unscientific healer who undergoes ecstatic journeys to heaven or the other world for purely private reasons⁹; and second, the characterization, fostered by Western Christianity as well as Western rationalism, of shamanism as a non-empirical religion, a religion of “witch doctors” associated with wildness and transgression, and moreover, as a primitive belief existing as a hindrance to the “civilizing” and “Christianizing” project of Western imperial expansion around the globe.¹⁰ A shamanic ecstatic, however, cannot be understood as a merely involuntary participator in a process controlled by unknown forces but as a conduit who provides connections between ordinary and extraordinary states of existence by negotiating his/her unique experience. Shamans, as consulting agents, determine the presence of sickness as well as afflictions caused by various reasons which are not mutually exclusive but intersecting. In other words, shamanism has not existed in isolation but always has been involved with or embedded in a wider system of human activity such as culture and politics by being a part of “the River of God.” Even though the relationship between political power and shamanic religion varies widely according to historical contexts, an analysis of shamanic religion in relation to power structure is necessary for de-essentializing the conventional understanding of shamanism.¹¹ Their experiences, especially in a colonial context, should be understood

⁹ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (trans. Willard R. Trask; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 3-180.

¹⁰ Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey, “Introduction,” in *Shamanism, History, & The State* (eds. Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey; An Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1996), 2.

¹¹ Ake Hultkrantz, “A Definition of Shamanism,” *Temenos* 9 (1973), 25-37; Alison Marshall, “Negotiating Transcendence,” *Ethnologies* 25 (2003), 10-11; Shane Greene, “The Shaman’s Needle:

within a socio-political as well as a religious context, for transformations of shamanic powers within a colonial context can be altered by colonial powers, and vice versa.¹²

If we approach Jesus' healing stories from this de-essentialized shamanic religious perspective, the fact that Jesus healed his people who were suffering under the Roman imperial setting as well as the fact that there are similarities among Jesus, the Greek shamans and Israelite prophets in an imperial situation¹³ lead us to conjecture that Jesus might also be plausibly understood as a shamanic leader similar to figures who can be found in various (de)colonizing contexts. With this assumption, in the following sections, I would like to explore an unconventional reading that views Jesus as an Israelite shamanic figure who was fighting against the Roman imperial power through a postcolonial reading of the Johannine healing stories (4:46-54; 5:1-18; 9:1-41; Jn11-12). I hope that my reading can confirm that one religion cannot claim its own superiority over another, but that each religion continues to exist only through mutual transformation as it mingles its own current with the ever-flowing stream of "the River of God."¹⁴

Development, Shamanic agent, and Intermediality in Aguaruna Lands, Peru," *American Ethnologist* 25 (1998), 634-58.

¹² Jane Monning Atkins, "Shamanism Today," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992), 307-30.

¹³ Michael Taussig's insightful work examining the relations between shamanism and colonialism has made an important influence on Halvor Moxnes in his understanding of Jesus as a struggling leader who fought against Roman imperial power. See Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); idem, "Folk Healing and the Structure of Conquest in the Southwest Columbian Andes," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 6 (1980), 221. Also, I am indebted to Halvor Moxnes, who inspired me and introduced me to the issue of colonialism and shamanism in relation to the Gospels. For his work, see *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 125-41. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 135-78; J. P. Brown, "The Mediterranean Seer and Shamanism," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 (1981), 374-400.

¹⁴ For various shamanic forms of resistance, see Jonathan Hill, "Shamanizing the State in Venezuela," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 21 (2003), 163-77; Jean Jackson, "Preserving Indian Culture: Shaman Schools and Ethno-Education in Vaupes, Colombia," *Cultural Anthropology* 10 (1995), 302-29; Michael F. Brown, "Beyond Resistance: A Comparative Study of Utopian Renewal in Amazonia," *Ethnohistory* 38 (1991), 388-413; Frank Salomon, "Shamanism and Politics in late-colonial Ecuador," *American Ethnologist* 10 (1983), 413-28; Gaston Gordillo, "Shamanic forms of Resistance in the Argentinean Chaco: A Political Economy," *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8 (2003), 104-26.

Absorbing the Colonial Other (Jn 4:46-54)

Modern discussions of the relations between shamanism and the state have tended to describe shamanism as a set of ritual practices involving possession, ecstasy, and inspiration while describing a state as a complex nexus of power, hierarchy, and a sense of identity.¹⁵ Yet the state and shamanism, especially in a (de)colonizing context, are not two opposing poles. In *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, Michael Taussig insists that shamanism must be studied in relation to its colonial historical context by observing that even though white colonizers controlled the colonized by using their brutal power, they often depended on native Indians or shamans when they traveled in rough areas or when they came to ask for healing.¹⁶ The ambiguous power relation between colonizer and the colonized Indians/shamans provides a possible backdrop for reading the first healing story of John.

When the royal official whose son was ill heard that Jesus had come to Galilee, he went and begged Jesus to heal his son (4:47). This first healing story of John (4:46-54) is often correlated with the incident in Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10 where the sick slave's master is presented as a centurion (εὐκατο, νταρκοῦ). In general a centurion is regarded as a Roman legionary non-commissioned officer. The centurion in the Gospels has not been considered a legionary because almost all the Roman troops in Judea were auxiliaries – provincial non-citizens. Because of this, the centurion in Matthew and Luke is regarded as a Gentile provincial rather than Roman, while the royal official

¹⁵ Mary Beard, "The Roman and the Foreign: The Cult of the 'Great Mother' in Imperial Rome," in *Shamanism, History, & The State*, 164-90.

¹⁶ Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, 287-335.

(*basilikos*, *j*) in John is regarded as a Jewish official of Herod Antipas.¹⁷ However, Josephus attests that Rome offered Herod Roman legions to fight against his enemies (*Ant.* 14.451-61), which suggests that Herod had supported a legion. Furthermore, Roman troops had to pass through their client states when traveling between Syria and Judea and they may have been employed on diplomatic missions to Herodian courts.¹⁸ We cannot therefore rule out the possibility that the Gospels are describing an officer in the Roman service, and there is no need to assume that the *basilikos* *j* in John is a Jew. Also, the plausibility that the royal official might be a Gentile becomes much likelier when we consider the narrative context of this healing story. The connection between the first (2:1-12) and the second sign (4:43-54) suggests that the healing story is not a simple continuation of the Samaritan episode (4:1-42), but rather, that it shows the expansion of Jesus' reputation from the Jews (2:1-3.30) to the Samaritans (4.1-42), and from there to even the royal official and his whole household (4:43-54).¹⁹ As the last in a series of characters that are portrayed across John 4, he is from the border town of Capernaum, which was well known for the presence of Gentile soldiers. Therefore, it is entirely plausible that the royal official might be a Gentile from the world outside Judaism - even a Roman Imperial official, perhaps, in the service of Rome.²⁰

The royal official appears as an ambiguous figure who spans the boundary between the Jewish-colonized and the Roman-colonial world. Such ambiguous figures often emerge from the history of colonialism: for example, when white colonists explored

¹⁷ John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: the Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 327. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 119.

¹⁸ A. H. Mead, "The *basilikos* *j* In John 4.46-53," *JSNT* 23 (1985), 71.

¹⁹ Mead, "The *basilikos* *j* In John 4:46-53," 71.

²⁰ Recent research has supported the possibility that the royal official in John was a Gentile; see Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 153.

the Andean slopes, they had to travel by riding on the backs of indigenous shamans who were able to cope with the mountains; in other instances, Indians accredited with magical healing power made that power available to the white colonists who came to the Indians for healing.²¹ Like the white colonists, the royal official asks Jesus “to come down” to heal his son. Yet Jesus does not go with the royal official (cf. Mt 8:7; Lk 7:6a). Rather, he simply says to the royal official, “Go, your son will live” (4:50) while keeping distance between himself and the royal official’s son. While the royal official is on the way home, he is informed by his slaves that his son is alive (4:51). In this long-distance healing, Jesus is presented as a shamanic healer who has the power of bi-location, for a shaman can be seen simultaneously in different places as he leaves his body and travels to distant places to heal the sick.²² As a royal official, the sick boy’s father is invested with official power and authority. In other words, his dignity comes from his association with a worldly ruler, the emperor. But the royal official, like a white colonist seeking help from an Indian shaman despite an ingrained contempt for all things Indian, lays aside any further concern with his official rank, and acts as a human father, his obedient reaction leading him to believe. Through this healing, John highlights the decisive character of Jesus’ authority and healing power,²³ which is set off against the official’s power and authority that ultimately derives from the Roman Emperor.

²¹ Taussig states the Indians became mountain gods, or increased their shamanic status (*Shamanism, Colonialism, and Wild Man*, 324-33, 467).

²² In John, we can easily correlate the shamanic features with those of Jesus: he speaks God’s revelatory words through his “contact with the Spirit” (1:32-34; 3:34-36); he is depicted as the “repository of truth” (1:14-17; 8:40, 45-46; 14:6; 18:37); through an “altered state of consciousness,” he walks on the sea (6:16-21). According to the legend of Empedocles, which is a source from which we can be informed about shamanism in Greek culture, the crowds followed Empedocles in search of occult knowledge or magical healing, and he himself claimed to be a god made flesh (Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 140, 144-45). Cf. Cornelis Bennema, “The Sword of the Messiah and the Concept of Liberation in the Fourth Gospel,” *Biblica* 86 (2005), 35-68.

²³ Barnabas Lindars, “Capernaum Revisited: John 4, 46-53 and the Synoptics,” in *The Four*

But what exactly did the royal official believe? The precise nature of his belief is not clearly laid out (4:49, 53b). One may interpret Jesus' rebuke as a challenge to those who seek signs as a basis for their faith (4:48).²⁴ However, the Johannine Jesus does not dispense with signs, but rather, signs often serve to confirm his true identity (1:50; 10:38; 14:12).²⁵ In order to clarify what the royal official believes, it is worth paying attention to the narrative flow of this healing story as compared with the Johannine narrative leading to the first sign. After John the Baptist identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God" (1:35), the multiple identity of Jesus is presented as Rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel by a "true Israelite," Nathanael (1:49). As a response to Nathanael's confession, Jesus says, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these" (1:50).²⁶ Right after Nathanael's confession of Jesus, the first sign at Cana leads the Jews to see Jesus' glory and to believe in Jesus (2:11). In this way, John presents a gradual elevation of Jesus' identities which reaches its climax when the Samaritans confess him as "the Savior of the world" (1:14, 29, 49; 4:42). In following the Samaritans' confession of Jesus as the Savior of the world, the healing story of the royal official's son shows a similar grammatical pattern in terms of what the

Gospels (ed. Frans Neirynck; Louven: Louven University Press, 1992). Also for the John 4:46-54 and Synoptic Gospels, see Frans Neirynck, "John 4,46-54: Sign Source And/Or Synoptic Gospels," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 60 (1984), 367-75.

²⁴ Barry W. Henaut, "John 4:43-54 and the ambivalent narrator. A response to Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 19 (1990), 301. cf. Against this, Craig R. Koester insists that the royal official's faith is not based on a sign but confirmed by a sign. Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 52.

²⁵ Andries G. van Aarde, "Narrative Criticism Applied to John 4:43-54," in *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament* (eds. P. J. Hartin and J. H. Petzer; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 125.

²⁶ The dialogue between Jesus and Nathanael (1:47-51) shows Jesus' shamanic powers of penetration, bi-location, prophecy, and transcendent journey. In Tacitus' and Suetonius' accounts of Vespasian's visit to the temple of Serapis in Alexandria, Vespasian is reported to possess somewhat similar powers when he sees in the temple a man named Basilides, who proves to have been far away at the time of Vespasian's vision (*His.* 4.82; *Vespasian* 7.2)

Samaritans and the royal official believed: while the objects of what the Samaritans and the royal official “believed” (εὑρί, steusen) in are clearly mentioned in v.39 (him) and v.50 (his word), the verb “believe” (πίστευ, w) in verses 41, 42, and 53b lacks a grammatical object. However, from the narrative perspective, we can assume that, just as many more Samaritans come to believe in him as the Savior of the world “because of his word,” the royal official’s whole household subsequently comes to believe in him as the Savior of the world “because of his sign.” Furthermore, this gradual elevation of Jesus’ identities, confirmed by the Israelite Nathanael, the semi-Jewish Samaritans, and the possibly Gentile or Roman official and his household, has a twofold function: this elevation is not just in a crescendo in socio-ethnic sphere, but also a crescendo in authority of witness:

Nathanael (1:50)	Samaritan (4:39-42)	Gentile/Roman (4:50-54)
ei=po,n (le, gw)	(her) lalia,	lo, goj
⇒ o;yh (o`ra, w)	⇒ (Jesus’) lo, goj	⇒ shmei/on

In this way, the Johannine second sign fulfills its goal of confirming Jesus’ true identity as “the Savior of the world” by superceding the evidentiary authority of “his word” that had in turn superceded the woman’s gossip-like talk.²⁷

In a colonizing context, the colonial power exercises control through knowing the Other, but the discourse of knowing the Other paradoxically empowers the colonized subject. Considering that Jesus and Caesar are alternative foci for a divine-human order by which John intends to take over the Roman imperial power space,²⁸ the discourse on

²⁷ Jean K. Kim, *Woman and Nation: An Intercontextual Reading of the Gospel of John from a Postcolonial Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 110.

²⁸ Kim, *Woman and Nation*, 90-115. Also, see Ivan Head, “Mark as a Roman Document from the Year 69: Testing Martin Hengel’s Thesis,” *Journal of Religious History* 28 (2004), 240-59.

household management (οἰκονομία) cannot be seen as a merely moral discourse on how the family members should behave, but must be understood as a substructure of the Roman *paterfamilias*, on whose behalf campaigns were mounted by successive emperors from Augustus and Hadrian in order to maintain the stability of the Roman Empire.²⁹ Through Jesus' healing of the son of a royal official who exercises power over the colonized Jews, leading his whole household to believe in Jesus as the Savior of the world – the same title as that given to the Roman emperor – John sets up the initial stage of Jesus' resistant mission against Rome.³⁰ In other words, the royal official enters into a “contact zone” where he, as a colonial agent, meets Jesus and where their asymmetrical power relation clashes, through which a constant re-negotiation of power is produced as part of the ongoing re-negotiation between colonizer and colonizer.³¹

Mimicking the Colonial Self (Jn 5:1-18; 9:1-41)

After Jesus heals the royal official's son, he goes up to Jerusalem to participate in a Jewish festival. When he sees a paralytic man lying beside a pool, Jesus, like a shaman who has special insight into the conditions of people's illnesses,³² “sees” and “knows” that the man had been ill for a long time (5:5-6a). Without being told either of Jesus' compassion or of a request from the sick person, we immediately hear Jesus' initiating question: “Do you want to be made well?” (5:6b). Instead of answering, “Yes, I want to be healed right away. Can you heal me?”³³ the man explains why he could not go into

²⁹ Mary R. D'Angelo, “Euvsebeia: Roman Imperial Family Values and the Sexual Politics of 4 Maccabees and the Pastorals,” *Biblical Interpretation* 11 (2003), 13-65.

³⁰ Craig Koester observes that the full title ‘the Savior of the world’ which appears only in John was not a Jewish or Samaritan concept, but a title which was used for the Roman Emperors. Craig R. Koester, “‘The Savior of the World’ (John 4:42),” *JBL* 108 (1990), 665.

³¹ Mary Louise Pratt defines “contact zone” as “the space of colonial encounter,” in *Imperial Eyes: Traveling Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6.

³² For more information on shamanic powers see Eilade, *Shamanism*, 67-109.

³³ See also L. T. Witkamp, “The Use of Traditions in John 5.1-18,” *JSNT* 25 (1985), 19-47.

the pool: “Sir I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me” (5:7). His explanation reflects one of the daily rituals of a temple dedicated to a pagan healing god: in the early morning a priest of the cult would throw a snake, which was believed to have curative power, into the pool of water located at the temple; and the first person to get into the pool after the snake had been thrown in would be healed.³⁴ The five porticoes (5:2) were probably a part of a Roman imperial temple dedicated to Serapis, the Egyptian syncretistic deity who held political significance for Roman Emperors, and especially for Vespasian (Diog. Laert. 5.5.76; Tac. *Hist.* 4.81-84; Seuton. *Vesp.* 7.1).³⁵ It is believed that the temple, in earlier days, was devoted to Asclepius who held the titles “sole healer-god and only true savior of the world,” and who had been absorbed into the cult of Serapis.³⁶ How, then, did the Roman emperors cement their relations with the healer-god?³⁷ Considering the fact that the title “the savior of the world” is given to the Roman

³⁴ Charles R. Page II suggests that the temple might have functioned as a sort of military chapel for the soldiers stationed in Jerusalem, since the temple is located just to the east of the Antonia fortress. For his work, see Charles R. Page II, *Jesus & the Land* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 160-61. For a discussion of textual difficulty of John 5:4, see Zane C. Hodges, “The Angel at Bethesda – John 5:4,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 136 (1979), 25-39; The most recent archeological discoveries of two great pools and six caves support that the whole therapeutic center was the center of a pagan cult dedicated to a pagan healer-god. It is believed that the healing center was active from the Maccabean time until the reign of Constantine. Jerzy Klinger, “Bethesda and the Universality of the Logos,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983), 171-72.

³⁵ Ruth Stiehl, “The Origin of The Cult of Serapis,” *History of Religion* 3 (1963), 21-33.

³⁶ This pagan healing cult was so popular even during Jesus’ lifetime that both Jesus and Asclepius came to be called simply “the savior,” and a rivalry developed between their followers. Harold Remus, *Jesus as Healer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9. Cf. Klinger, who insists that just as “Christ is the fulfillment of the symbols and figures of the Old Testament, Christ may be the fulfillment of all that was right in paganism, which was expressed in the symbols of some pagan cults – in particular the cult of Asclepius” (Klinger, “Bethesda and the Universality of the Logos,” 178-79).

³⁷ That Rome accomplished her expansion by allowing herself to be assimilated into the healing cult of Serapis is well supported by a tablet found at the church of Santa Maria in Via Lata: the Roman singers of the paeon, who were the earlier servitors of the healing cult of Asclepius, became recipients of the Roman imperial power who served Jupiter Sun Great Serapis and the Deified Emperors (*IG* 14:1084 = *IGRom* 1:114 = *IGUR* 77). Robert E. E. Palmer, “Paeon and Paeonists of Serapis and the Flavian Emperors,” in *Nomodeiktēs: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald* (eds. Ralph M. Rosen and Joseph; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 355-65.

emperor as well as to the Johannine Jesus, it will be fruitful to pay attention to the religio-political resonances in the relationship among healer-god, the Roman emperor, and the Johannine Jesus.

John presents Jesus as performing the healing without being asked to heal, without making a statement of faith, and without entering into the shrine or carrying the paralytic man into the pool. John then makes a temporal reference: “Now that day was a Sabbath” (5:9b). Unlike the Synoptic accounts, which start their conflict story with a temporal reference to the Sabbath,³⁸ John adds his temporal reference after Jesus’ healing performance. Because of the sudden mention of Jesus’ violation of the Sabbath, it has been generally accepted that the Jews begin to persecute Jesus at this point. Yet Jesus’ violation of the Sabbath itself is not a likely motivation for wanting to kill Jesus (5:18) not only because the tense of the verb ($\epsilon\iota\lambda\epsilon\gamma\omicron\nu$) in v.10 suggests that the Jews’ accusation was an ongoing issue, but also because their charge was made against the man who carried his mat (*m. Sab.* 11.1-11), not against Jesus.³⁹ Rather, the Sabbath reference might well be a Johannine trick to include the Pharisees – who have been suspicious of Jesus – in ensuing sign stories: this Johannine trick serves to interlink Jesus’ healing of the paralytic man around the temple of Serapis with the next healing story of the blind man at Siloam on the Sabbath (9:1-41). The Pharisees, who had been aware of Jesus’ increasing power (3:1; 4:1; 7:32, 45-53; 8:13), finally begin to be directly involved in investigating Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath, and they are divided among themselves regarding Jesus’ identity (9:16). In the former healing story, what made the Jews even

³⁸ Mk 2:23-28; Mt 12:1-8; Lk 6:1-5.

³⁹ John Christopher Thomas, “‘Stop Sinning lest Something Worse Come Upon You’: The man at the Pool in John 5,” *JSNT* 59 (1995), 12-13. Also, that the story in Jn 5:1-16 had initially been a miracle story without any Sabbath reference in it has been argued by some form critics. For more discussion see Herold D. Weiss, “The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 110 (1991), 311-22.

more intent on killing Jesus was not simply that he broke the Sabbath, but that he spoke of God as his own Father, and so made himself God's equal (5:18). Likewise, in the healing story of the blind man, what matters to the Pharisees is not so much Jesus' violation of the Sabbath as what Jesus did or who Jesus was.⁴⁰

It is significant that these two healing stories follow Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman' story on the issue of worship (4:20-24), which also resonates with Vespasian's encounter with an unnamed god at Carmel: "The god has not image or temple – such is the rule handed down by the fathers; there is only an altar and the worship of the god." When Mucianus urges Vespasian to seize the empire by recalling the prophecies of seers, Vespasian remembers the favorable omen that he had as a young man, and re-interprets it as referring not to victory in Judea but to Empire. While he is thus pondering, Vespasian stops and sacrifices at Carmel, and the priest Basilides assures him that whatever he attempts will be successful. Then Vespasian leaves for Caesarea of Judea with a clear purpose (Tac. *Hist.* 2.78). In John, after Jesus affirms that the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, Jesus presents himself to the Samaritan woman as the coming Messiah (4:21, 26), and then is proclaimed "the Savior of the world" (4:42; cf. 4:53b). Jesus then begins to perform healing miracles. In ancient times, it was believed that a sign of healing the sick

⁴⁰ John might be trying to lessen or shield Jesus from the charge of Sabbath violation by switching the expressions "make mud" (9:6) and "go and wash" (9:7) into "put clay" and "I washed and I see" (9:15) instead of repeating the same expressions (Jeffrey L. Staley, "Stumbling in the Dark, Reaching for the Light: Reading Character in John 5 and 9," *Semeia* 53 [1991], 67). In this healing story, in fact, Messianic overtones surround the advent of God' sign at Siloam, which means "Sent." According to the pseudepigraphal *Lives of the Prophets* (Isa), when Isaiah prayed for water when he was about to die, God answered his prayer and miraculously sent him water from the fountain of Siloam. Subsequent reflection on this miracle launched the Jewish axiom that a free-flowing fountain of Siloam signifies God' blessing, especially in the Messianic age, and a dry fountain signifies God's wrath. Josephus blames the fall of Jerusalem on Jewish iniquities by interpreting the free-flowing water of Siloam as showing that God is quite content to allow the waters of Siloam to flow copiously in Jerusalem for Titus; otherwise, He would have dried up the fountain for Israel's enemies as he had done in times past (*War* 5.409-412).

was in fact due to the supreme divine reality revealed in the ability to heal.⁴¹ Under Vespasian, the Roman imperial cult found its justification in the king's epiphanic experience of Serapis. After Vespasian's triumph over the Jews, as he was waiting at Alexandria for favorable winds to carry him to Rome, two invalid men – a blind man and a crippled man – approached him asking for a cure. After some hesitation,⁴² Vespasian, having been granted the power by Serapis, and using his saliva in the case of the blind man, successfully healed the two men, after which he mediated alone in the temple of Serapis and then set sail for Rome and for rule (Suet. *Ves.* 7.1-2; Tac. *His.* 4.81-82).⁴³ Likewise, the Johannine healing story of the paralytic man proclaims the powerful presence of Jesus in the temple area. Simply commanding the paralytic man to take his mat, Jesus rescues him from a system of competitive healing. In so doing, Jesus not only invalidates the healer-god Serapis who allures the weak with false promises but also ridicules the same Serapis who had prophesized the reign of Vespasian. Just as Jesus knew that the paralytic man had been ill for thirty-eight years (5:5), he again was able to see and know that the blind man was born blind (9:1). Then he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes (9:7). Considering that Suetonius and Tacitus' recounted stories of Vespasian were surely in the public domain at the time of John's writing, the Johannine healing stories seem to mimick – and go beyond – Vespasian's healing of the two invalid men at the temple of Serapis in

⁴¹ There were miracle workers who lived in Jesus' contemporary times such as Hanina ben Dosa, a miracle worker who lived before the Temple destruction in the first century C.E. (*Babylonian Talmud*, *Baba Kamma* 50a = *Yebamoth* 121b). For more discussion of the first century miracle workers, see Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 58-82.

⁴² Contrast Vespasian's hesitation and careful consultation with his advisors in Tacitus' account with Jesus' immediate action in John.

⁴³ In contrast to his father, Titus spent the final days of his short rule in a vain attempt to cure the plague besetting Rome: "For curing the plague and diminishing the force of epidemic there was no aid, human or divine, which he did not employ, searching for every kind of sacrifice and all kinds of medicines" (Suet. *Tit.* 8.4).

Alexandria. Following not only this religio-political context as well as the literary context, it is likely that John presents his healing stories as a confirmation of Jesus' divinity through his mimicry of Vespasian's healing ability that had been granted by Serapis.

Where there is power, Michel Foucault argues,⁴⁴ there is always resistance. Power is not simply a centralized, hierarchical force that emanates from the upper social orders; rather, power is a diffuse and shifting network of relations, emanating even from below. In a colonizing context, where power is always entangled in a dialectical relationship with resistance and struggle, shamanic leaders have also continued to exist through their engagement in mimicry, as we can observe through the battles over prestige between the shamans and the Jesuit priests during the colonial mission in Latin America:

“to gain greater prestige with his followers, he [the Guarani shaman] pretended to be a priest. In his private chamber ... robed in ... brilliant feathers and other adornments, he pretended to say Mass. He would spread a table with cloths and place upon them a manioca cake and show the cake and wine as priests do, finally eating and drinking everything. His vassals venerated him as a priest.”⁴⁵

This ambivalent power relationship can also be found in an Amazonian shaman's appropriation of a powerful symbol of Western medicine, the hypodermic needle. Faced with the “rationality” and “dynamism” of Western medical science as an ideological upholder of colonial expansion threatening the social validity of shamanism, the Aguaruna healer Yankush mimics Western medical injections and thereby “incorporates

⁴⁴ Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 57-90.

⁴⁵ Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest Accomplished by the Religious of the Society of Jesus in the Provinces of Paraguay, Parana, Uruguay, and Tape* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Source, 1993), 53. See also Dor Tuer, “Old Bones and Beautiful Words: The Spiritual Contestation between Shaman and Jesuit in the Guarani Missions,” in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500-1800* (eds. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff; New York: Routledge, 2003), 77-97.

them into his shamanic discourse,” thus revalidating social belief in shamanism within a cultural context that ascribes socio-political meaning to the needle’s ambivalent power.⁴⁶ Likewise, by mimicking Vespasian, the Johannine Jesus ridicules the power of the healer-god Serapis who served as a symbol of imperial power, and challenges Vespasian whose rule was prophesized by Serapis. By entering a “contact zone” where a blurring of boundaries between Roman power and the Jewish resistance takes place, the Johannine Jesus thus extends his power beyond the Jews.

Transgressing the Colonial Self (Jn 11-12)

Sign and subsequent belief is a major motif which surfaces repeatedly in the midst of Jesus’ many-faced teachings and miraculous performances.⁴⁷ John consistently associates Jesus’ identity with the miraculous signs he performs, with the ultimate sign being the raising of the dead, as Jesus’ speech following the healing of the paralytic man makes clear: “... and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes” (5:20b-22). It is significant that the Pharisees’ open hostility to Jesus begins with the healing of the paralytic, and reaches its climax with the raising of Lazarus: at the point of Jesus’ speech following the healing, John is mapping out the interwoven trajectories of Jesus’ growing popularity, his confirmation as a powerful subversive figure, and his increasing offensiveness and threat to both Jewish

⁴⁶ Greene, “The Shaman’s Needle,” 649-54.

⁴⁷ Harold S. Songer, “John 5-12: Opposition to the Giving of True Life,” *Review and Expositor* 85 (1988), 459.

religious leaders and Roman colonizer, culminating in Caiaphas' ironic prophecy (11:49-53).⁴⁸

Just as Jesus had previously discerned the connection between sin and illness with his supernatural knowledge (5:14; 9:3),⁴⁹ in the story of Lazarus, Jesus already knows that Lazarus' illness will not lead to death, but will be used for God's glory (11:4). Like a shaman who is able to restore life to the dead,⁵⁰ Jesus raises Lazarus from his death. In so doing, Jesus stresses the intimate relationship between God and himself through the "Father/Son" language in order to convince the crowd that he was sent by God (11:42; also 5:20b-22). The glorification of Jesus that is accomplished through his raising Lazarus then moves to the center of attention: many of the Jews believed in him, while some of them went to the Pharisees to tell them what Jesus had done. The reaction to the sign is thus twofold: some believed in Jesus while others became his opponents (11:45, 53). The trajectory of confrontation between Jesus and his opponents reaches its apogee of intensity when the Pharisees and the chief priest plot together to kill Jesus, ironically following the Jewish yearly prophesying tradition (11:45-55; 12:9-11).

⁴⁸ The miracle catena which takes place during the Jewish festivals and culminates in Jesus' raising of Lazarus is in line with the Jewish prophetic tradition which recognizes in the raising of the dead that the end time has already started (Isa 35:5-6; 4Q521): in John, Jesus is proclaimed as "the Lamb of God" (1:29), and crucified as the King of the Jews before Passover begins, as the high priest prophesizes (11:49-52). Then the story of Lazarus concludes with a summarizing statement that Jesus, as the one sent by God, had come as a light to into the world to save those who believe in him as well as the world, but to judge those who reject him on the last day (12:44-49). Jesus' raising Lazarus heightens the interest of the crowd in Jesus (12:18), and the great crowd who came to the Jewish festival hail him as the "King of Israel" (12:13); and Jesus now responds by the prophetically symbolic act of riding on a donkey (cf. All four Gospels include the account of the entry Jerusalem, but only John relates Jesus' entry to Jerusalem to the raising of Lazarus). Jesus was understood as the "wise Jewish King" by Mara bar Serapion; also Jesus was described as "a king who did not reign" or "wonder worker" in the Slavonic Josephus (*War* 5.5.2; 6.5.4). For more details, see Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 53-58, 81-104.

⁴⁹ Thomas, "The Man at the Pool in John 5," 19.

⁵⁰ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 145.

What then causes the high priest to call for the death of Jesus? Rome controlled her colonized territory by assimilating the religio-cultural traditions of the natives as well as by the remarkable openness with which she bestowed her political rights and privileges.⁵¹ However, this does not mean that Rome was uniformly gentle or tolerant. Rome censored or oppressed resistant behavior which was believed to have something to do with superstitious, charismatic holy figures – figures that we would call shamanic – since they subverted the proper Roman control of civic religion, negated the absolute integration of politics and religion, and even threatened Caesar as a divine ruler (cf. 12:10-11, 19; 7:35).⁵² Roman official *pietas* signified right relationship to *familias*, state, and emperor. On the other hand, the oriental cults offered right relationship with the cosmos.⁵³ Rome’s alliance with officially recognized cosmic cults supported the parallel temporal rule of empire by supplying a universalistic ideological discourse in support of a cosmopolitan vision of empire.⁵⁴ One of the most important foreign cults into which Rome absorbed her imperial cult was Mithraism, which also overlapped with the cult of Serapis through their mutual connection with Sol.⁵⁵ Once Mithraism arrived in Rome, it

⁵¹ Beard, “The Roman and the Foreign,” 164-90.

⁵² Rome patrolled unacceptable religious behavior and controlled meetings that were subversive; Tiberius crucified some priest of Isis and expelled Jews from inside the city limits; deified Claudius abolished the “cruel and inhuman” religion of the druids among the Gauls. For more details see John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’s Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 255-56. Pliny’s letter to Trajan shows his fears about the disruptive behavior of Christians (*Letters* 10.96-97).

⁵³ A shaman cannot be dismissed as a psychically unstable person, but should be viewed as a “repository of a supernormal wisdom” that helps people integrate into their societies as inherently socio-politically and cosmologically conditioned beings. And this essential element of the shamanic world view – which still exists in Siberia and South-America etc. – has left traces of its past existence in the oriental cults in the Greco-Roman world. Dodd, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 135-78; Eliade, *Shamanism*, 181-465.

⁵⁴ Luther H. Martin, “Roman Mithraism and Christianity,” *Numen* 36 (1989), 8.

⁵⁵ The connection between Serapis and Mithras through their association with Sol is clearly presented in a coin of Valerianus, which was found in the masonry of the altar (253-259 AD), and in the Mithraeum of the Foot-sole installed in a Hadrianic hall. The Mithraeum that was built on the east bank of the Walbrook stream in 240 AD in Roman Britain shows the connection between the cult of Mithras and of Serapis.

quickly spread out to the edge of empire through the Roman army. As a religion of loyalty, Mithraism provided “an economical aspect of social control” by its confirmation of the formal, authoritarian and ritualistic social experience of its primarily military and bureaucratic adherents.⁵⁶ Tacitus also informs us that Roman legions participating in the Jewish War were adherents to Mithras. It was at the military headquarters in Caesarea that Vespasian was proclaimed emperor by his soldiers, as Serapis had prophesized, during the Jewish War (*His* 5.10; 2.79-80). Mithraism was able to establish itself at Caesarea – the center of operations during the Jewish War and a place declared a colony by Vespasian. The ruling classes of Caesarea were likely to have been members of the Mithraic cult, and these leaders might have been those who would have carried out orders of persecution against Jews.⁵⁷

This situation might have contributed to the decision of the Pharisees and high priests to kill Jesus. Just like Jesus, Mithra was worshipped as a god who had power to restore life and who took on the role of the ruler of the cosmos: “[Mithra] drags it [the primal bull] into his cave, and kills it, thereby creating the basis that allows the cultivated world to come into existence; he fights the sun god and is reconciled to him, they make a covenant with one another, eat a farewell meal and then return to heaven, whence Mithra is expected to return at the end of time.”⁵⁸ Considering these similarities, John seems to be replacing Mithra, who was worshipped by many in the Roman army and in the ruling

⁵⁶ Martin, “Roman Mithraism and Christianity,” 8.

⁵⁷ R. Jackson Painter, “The Origins and Social Context of Mithraism at Caesarea Maritima,” in *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Caesarea Maritima* (ed. Terence L. Donaldson; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 205-25.

⁵⁸ Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 140. There are many episodes attached to the figure of Mithra, but these two episodes resonate with Jn 11-12, 13-17. Also, Euboulus’ description of Mithra as “creator and father of all, and lord coming into being” resonates with Martha’s confession of Jesus as “the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world” (11:27).

class of Caesarean society, with Jesus. Through an act of transgression which is one of the most important knots in the Johannine network of power and resistance, Jesus sparks a brief burst of power by breaking the limit of resistance. Many of the Jews had already begun to desert and believe in Jesus because of what he did (12:11), and the world had also begun to “go after him” to the extent that the Greeks who came to worship at the festival sought an interview with Jesus (12:10-20; cf. 7:35). Since the signs that Jesus performs and the people’s subsequent belief in him are thus linked with the Jewish religious leaders’ fear of the Romans, the leaders’ desperate plot to kill Jesus might be a political reaction to Jesus’ raising of Lazarus. When the leaders are together hatching their plot, they justify their plan by saying, “this man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation” (11:47b-48).⁵⁹

The fact that this anxiety is beginning to invade the minds of the Jewish religious leaders implies that Jesus, as the “colonial Other,” had already begun to shake the “colonial Self” prior to Jesus’ encounter with Pilate. John ironically interjects that the high priest Caiaphas’ prophecy that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation (11:51) is fulfilled when Jesus is sentenced to death by Pilate (19:1-16). For John, this is the very reason that Jesus, as the Lamb of God, had come into the world for his own nation (12:27). In other words, the Johannine Jesus does not simply yield himself to the Pharisees and high priest’s plot to kill him. Rather, by creating a hybrid space where the process of death and life is not irreversible (11:51-53; also 5:25-27), Jesus not only

⁵⁹ Of course, this is ironic, since at the time of John’s writing, the Romans had already completed the destruction of both.

appropriates the Roman imperial cult but also subverts Roman imperial power so that his life and death can continue to be efficacious for his followers.

Conclusion

After a series of invasions, which were quasi-automatically accompanied with Christian missionary invasions, Western colonizers also worked to bring the indigenous world into their own world. In the midst of establishing colonial settlement, they often found themselves compromising and negotiating with, accommodating, and even showing a grudging respect for the native peoples and traditions.⁶⁰ In other words, the Western Christian colonizers were, to a certain extent, themselves converted in the process of converting. Individuals and groups have often crossed the boundaries of a dominant system by inventing various strategies of survival and resistance. Throughout history, the dominant cultures have thus been adulterated by the “colonial Other” as well as by the “colonial Self.” Yet attention has rarely turned from the periphery to the center, and, as a result, the ambiguous but mutually influential power relationship between colonizer and colonized, and between state-sponsored religion/Christianity and shamanism, has been ignored. Shamanic traditions are not monolithic, but have proliferated as a source of cultural energy shaping the production of local histories by open resistances against state authorities or by covert resistances through syncretistic merging with state-sponsored religions.⁶¹ Religion is by no means a purely spiritual or transcendent affair; it is also a

⁶⁰ For more details on the issue of hagiography and colonization of America, see Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff eds., *Colonial Saints: Discoveries the Holy in the Americas* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁶¹ Korean shamanism resistance culture could survive by developing a means not only of preserving Korean native cultural heritage but also of coping with the difficulties wrought by being pushed to the margins of society, since Korean shamanism represents an important part of the people’s lives: it provides entertainment and relaxation; it allows for the venting of frustrations and the overturning of unjust and repressive aspects of society; and it provides for the religious needs of the people. For more details,

political kind of power. Especially in a colonizing context, like nationalism, shamanism is also a mode of socio-political history which is involved in the construction of political communities⁶²: shamanism and nationalism have become articulated with each other by engaging in mimicry of state-religion and colonial power. Shamans, as “colonial Others,” integrate the social world by combating the antisocial force, like the Johannine Jesus who negotiated continually to prove himself a benefactor in local social relations by placing himself at “the center of the world” as well as at “the source of absolute reality.”⁶³ On the other hand, “colonial Selves” have absorbed aspects of indigenous shamanism into their state-sponsored religions as part of their process of expansion, as we have observed in Roman/Western imperial religio-political discourse. It is in these crossings that hybridities emerge. Hybridity, as Homi Bhabha argues,⁶⁴ subverts the narratives of colonial power and dominant cultures. Hybridity, as a counter-narrative, criticizes the canon and its exclusion of other narratives. The series of inclusions and exclusions on which a dominant Christian culture is premised are therefore to be deconstructed by the very entry of the formerly-excluded subject such as shamanism into the mainstream discourse. With this postulation that the shamanic discourse should be also incorporated into the Roman imperial discourses which may well have made an impact on the Johannine Jesus,⁶⁵ in this essay, I have proposed that the Johannine Jesus might be a shamanic leader who heals the sick as a struggle against the Roman Empire by

see Michael J. Pettid, “May the God Strike you Dead!: Healing through Subversion in Shamanic Narrative,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 62 (2003), 113-32.

⁶² Hill, “Shamanizing the State in Venezuela,” 165; Young-ho Kim, “The Nation (Korea) as the Axis Mundi or Center of the World to Be – a Common Perspective of Korean Shamanistic Practitioners and Religions,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 16 (2002), 112-28.

⁶³ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (trans. Willard R. Trask; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), 65.

⁶⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁶⁵ Beard, “The Roman and the Foreign,” 185.

entering into a “contact zone” where both “colonial Other” and “colonial Self” are forced to exchange through absorption (Jn 4:46-54), mimicry (Jn 5:1-18; 9:1-41), and transgression (Jn 11-12). I hope this reading can offer a biblical ground that can contribute not only to stop the persecution of shamanism in Korea but to bring a new prophetic understanding of our contemporary indigenous religions such as those in the Amazon rainforest that are being led by native shamans fighting against neo-colonial globalization and neo-liberal exploitation of resources.

Abstract

John's description of Jesus' manner of healing the sick and his raising of Lazarus seems to present Jesus as a shamanic leader of Jewish community, similar to shaman leaders in (de)colonizing contexts. There has always been a tension between shamanic practices and centralized political authority. The experiences of terror unleashed by colonial power have configured the practice of shamans and turned them into a counter-hegemonic force in colonial contexts. The paradoxical power relationship between power/state and subject is not confined to a central place but displays an ambiguity through which the two form a hybrid space where they resemble or depend on each other. This relationship appears in John's healing stories: the royal official asks for healing for his son; Jesus heals the paralytic man by sharing a space near a pagan Roman temple, heals the blind man by mimicking Vespasian, and raises Lazarus by appropriating Mithra. Considering that John and his community were living under the harsh Roman Empire, this essay proposes that John's healing stories present Jesus as a subversive shamanic leader seeking to restore the community that had been cowed and subjugated by Roman imperial power.