

A Postcolonial Christology Revisited in Hybridity: As an Alternative to Dichotomous Tensions¹

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Abstract

Many slangs and newly coined words such as “gold spoon” and “dirt spoon” that emphasize bipolar tension are widely spoken. This is because the structure of dyad polarity immersed people into continuous battles, and the class demarcation is abruptly intensified. In this bipartite context, I found postcolonial insights and cultural theories useful to analyze the mentioned social phenomenon of endless dichotomy as a construct. Because the polarity is forged and produced by the interest of the more powerful, the apparent success of an overthrow could not cease the agony. In this article I then study how Christology still convey a redeeming message to humanity under the

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1 This paper is modified and supplemented from my own work. Seong Joon Park, “The Christological Image from the Perspective of Yuk-Jeong” (PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 2014).

hidden, conflictive and ambiguous power structure. Soteriological elements of Christ's life and crucifixion will be reinterpreted uncovering the plot of the binary scheme.

- Keywords

Christology, Postcolonial Hybridity, Dichotomy, Tension, Postcolonialism, Soteriology

I. Introduction

Currently Korean society is surrounded by a variety of bipolar tensions. The conflict between the so-called “gold spoon,” heirs of great fortune, and the “dirt spoon,” the deprived, is augmenting day by day. The gender struggle has been intensified to the extent that one can easily have access to extreme man-hating web activities such as Womad and Megalia.² In addition, political ideologies demarked Korean population along with intergenerational confrontation. The structure of dyad polarity immersed people into continuous battles. Furthermore, the US-China trade war seemingly obliges Korea to unwillingly choose a side. In this bipartite context, what is the significance of believing in Jesus as the savior? How does Christ save His people who are deeply engaged in dichotomous struggle?

Theologies have historically presented various appreciable Christological images supporting transformation from conflictive social contexts. These theologies have contributed in many ways to society, serving as a voice for the forgotten and voiceless. There was a time when the absolute and infinite within the transcendent order was the primary focus; then others searched from existential perspectives to fulfill their commitment to a divine passion. However, in front of the imminent calls of social transformation, theologians, such as those of liberation and minorities, found a God whose existence was implied in God’s immanence in the flesh by living in resistance to current context. Christ not only came to serve the weak and the victimized, but

2 Dr. Sun Hee Kim analyzed Womad as a mirroring movement to misogyny discourse. Sun Hee Kim, “The Schism of Womad: the Collapse of Mirroring Discourse of Hatred,” *Sekye-ilbo*, Jan 16, 2019. <http://www.segye.com/newsView/20190115001713>.

also fought to release the agony of oppression. Resistive Christologies allowed the liberating purpose and actions of God to be recognized.

Different parts of the world experienced phenomena of unfairness, inequality, and enslaving threats. The liberating movements had their heyday, and significantly impacted societies in Latin America and other regions of the world; however, the outcome apparently seemed less than successful. The confrontational exploitations are still augmented cries of ordinary people. Decades ago, the emancipating motive influenced Korean grassroots in their political struggles. The physical tyrant power disappeared, yet Koreans still suffer from the repressive power. Today the oppression is still eminent in spite of the apparent collapse of dictatorship. What do theologians have missed?

The polarizing power structures tend to show the reality in a simplistic dichotomy. The confrontational conflict creates tensions, which quickly becomes the object to be solved. However, its attempts have failed because the simplified scheme misled to respond to the manifolds of complex power. Prior to cultural studies and postcolonial views, theologies have often showed unintended consequences of oversimplification to the extent that they failed to address the ambiguity inherent to any social system. The scheme was described as clear demarcation of the bipolar “we and they” syndrome. A dualistic differentiation was methodologically pursued to acknowledge the grassroots’ tears and struggles and to encourage various minority groups, raising their voices to challenge current unjust structures. However, the liberating agents lost the ground of resistance to the derivative forms of oppression when the initial targeted power collapsed. Oversimplifying in dichotomy, the agent is unable to recognize the newly shaped brutality.

To overcome the simplified structure, I suggest that a perspective of postcolonial insight will provide a theological “lens” to address this complexity. The postcolonial argument asserts that the colonizing power still exists in invisible but more cunning ways even though the era of colonialism went past. Since it is sensitive to the manifold forms of power differentials, the postcolonial hermeneutics will provide us analyses of current complex and intricate context. The findings may suggest a Christology that brings redemptive messages which earlier dichotomous approaches did not.

I will first expose some helpful arguments from cultural theories and postcolonial perspective in order to analyze complex hybridity of human reality. Its fundamental methodology will lead us to understand the power mechanism beyond the monolithic bipolar structure. Then I will suggest a constructive postcolonial Christological assessment in the effort to be responsive to such reality. This Christological study will attempt to respond to the limitation and “blind spots” of bipolar analysis in order to discover a salvific Christ who unmasks the hidden oppression.

II. Useful Insights from Cultural and Postcolonial Theories

1. A Countermeasure to Monolithic Fixed Identity in Binary

A dichotomous structure has been a useful method of liberation. Those leading the civil-rights movement and early feminist thinkers also strategically employed binary formulation to empower the oppressed. By articulating their experiences of oppression, the conscious-

ness of the oppressed raised to fight against diverse forms of injustice related to ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, and religion. However, since a single dichotomous structure cannot fully represent the complex reality of contemporary life, the strategical dichotomy has its own limits.

Postcolonial theory has become an essential tool of cultural analysis and critique of the multi-faced colonizing power. The insight of postcolonial theory is not restricted to the experience of political colonialism and its aftermath. Rather, it has much to share with regard to the various types of oppression.³ R. S. Sugirtharajah defined the contemporary world as the following,

Postcoloniality is perhaps the sign of an increased realization that it is not feasible to deduct a civilization, a custom, a narrative history, a literature, from the wider influences and trends of increasingly shrinking globalized world.⁴

Simply put, the contemporary reality is so interlaced that it is almost impossible to define an unalloyed pure root. The dualistic scheme with a delineating tendency of clear demarcation may fall in narrow-mined interpretation.

Power is the vital element because of its influence on entire cultures; and thus, it shapes actions and perceptions of societies as a whole. While political imperialism was over, the dynamics of power through economic and political influence remained.⁵ Marcella Althaus-Reid examined the gender issues of the poor within South American coun-

3 R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11-14.

4 *Ibid.*, 197.

5 Joerg Rieger, "Liberating God-talk," in *Postcolonial Theology: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2004), 8, 206, 207.

tries in light of the political economic environment and concluded the postcolonial situation as “ripe without consent.”⁶ Korea is in postcolonial period not because physically is set free from Japanese colonialism, but because the oppressive power continues with a new face. Regardless of its independent status, the actual dependence of Korea to powerful countries such as China and the United States, and also to multinational enterprises, deepened the wounds of the people. The fact that the collapse of visible coercive power did not end the oppression demonstrated the invalidity of apprehension of the world in monolithic dichotomy.

So called classical progressive studies such as liberation theologies and other critical theories challenged this dominating structures in dichotomous opposition. However, does the binary adequately reflect the living reality? When the oppressed assume the place of the oppressor, do the former behave better than the latter? Is the binary always strategically efficient? Perhaps, their intention was noble, but they are belated in following the modern cunning oppression amid complexity.

The power attributes fixed identities. Edward Said precisely addressed the problem of binary fixation. In his book *Orientalism*, The Orient was a European invention that allowed the contrasting image, idea, personality and experience of Europe.⁷ The conceptualized “the orient” is a forged image to maneuver the colonized. In short, the Orient was the pejorative other to the European self. The danger resides not only in the unilateral discourse of the dominant, but also in

6 Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 154.

7 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 259.

the repetition of the forged construct by the indigenous culture.⁸ Similarly, Richard King argued that the other is often described as the poetic, mystical, irrational, deprived, uncivilized, and feminine. These characterizations are the foundation of ontological and epistemological distinction, enabling the formation of a bipolar structure to objectify domination.⁹ The qualities justified the Western conquest and domination over the Orient, stereotyped as the one in need of former's guidance. The given identity becomes fixed to denote a constant hierarchical hegemony. According to Said,

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.¹⁰

The totalization and essentialization of dichotomy expresses the desire of the dominant. Dichotomous identity is presented as if it is fixed to provide an aura of unity. As the other entity is ridiculed, the dichotomous process tends to separate the other from the self. The more powerful typically places themselves in the throne of dominant self,

8 Sugirtharajah exemplified the rejection of Madanu Francis about his trivial view on Indian mystic narration of history. He contended that reorientalization of stereotypical construct image by the dominant intensified the misinterpretation of the indigenous culture. See Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism*, 76.

9 Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and the Mystic East* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 83.

10 Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1991), 2-3.

depicted as the desirable image to be imitated by the marginalized other. The dominant culture gains greater strength and identity by presenting itself as the ideal against the other. The absolute demarcation of identity serves the interest of the powerful by distinguishing “us” from what they marginalize as “them.” The intricacy of identity argument brought discernment how power differential can disguise its oppressive character.

Richard King added more complexity to Said’s discourse of orientalism. For King, Said overly emphasized the passivity of the indigenous people to a point that the indigenous resistance to colonialism is underestimated.¹¹ The refusal of Third World subjectivity not only provides justification for the intervention of the First World, but also solidifies the view of Western superiority as an imperial agenda. Although Said did not intend, his discourse may be quickly adapted by the power to exercise coercive influence with a fake benevolent appearance.

The dichotomous identity of the superior self and inferior other serves to maintain inequality. To deconstruct the oppressive binary, an understanding of the web of interrelationship and ambivalence is required. Rey Chow conceptualized the idea of abjection, which is a fluid line of demarcation to describe a cruel experience of abject where no subject/object duality is definable.¹² In a relational understanding, the difference is not understood as the other, an object to be conquered, rejected, deficient, or oppressed. The other is there to interact and negotiate in tension, already becoming internalized.

11 King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 86.

12 Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 148.

2. A Countermeasure to Unrecognized Complexity and Hybridity

Laura Donaldson and Kwok Pui-lan warned that an oversimplified categorization would result in an absurd equation.¹³ These researchers contended that the solidarity between Brown women and White women cannot and should not be established under a simple fact that women are generally oppressed by men. During colonial period, women of the colonial elite exercised their power over brown women in an attempt to maintain their privileged status. The suffering caused by patriarchy was executed in different ways. The kind of oppression the colonized women confronted in no way comparable with that of the colonizer. For instance, the experience of African-American women is dissimilar to that of white women because the symbiotic constituent reality of slavery extremely demarked the difference. Audre Lorde remarked, "White women face the pitfall of being seduced into joining the oppressor under the pretense of sharing power. This possibility does not exist in the same way for the women of Color."¹⁴ To illustrate with Korean women's experience during Japanese colonialism, they were object of sexual abuse. Some of them were forced to join a comfort women squad, *Wianbu*, a sexual slavery for soldiers. The Japanese colonizer designated with a name of *Jungsindae*, as dedicators of the body for the empire, to romanticize the inhumane military conscription. They were sexually abused against their will

13 Pui-lan Kwok, "Unbinding Our Feet," in *Postcolonialism, Feminism and Religious Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 66.

14 Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Feminist Theory: a Reader*, 2nd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2005), 340.

more than their body could bear.

Circumstances of different sectors are unique contexts to which the various types of power exercise its oppression. Similarly, the oppressive power within the contemporary world is increasing in complexity while remaining on hidden surface. Claims of a shared experience and identity must be critically analyzed with regard to multiple aspects.

The complexity surrounding dynamics of power has recently gained greater attention. A subaltern can be defined as the excluded or suppressed from the hegemonic power structure. Gayatri Spivak postulated that an accepted subaltern within multiculturalism works for the powerful by intensifying the gap between individuals and the balance of the subaltern.¹⁵ During the Japanese colonization, Koreans were selected to work for the Japanese government in areas, such as the police department. Similar to the tax collectors during the times of Jesus, these workers were forced to repress their own people in order to preserve their positions. Employing the colonized was an effective way of controlling this population because they knew their own people better than did their oppressors. The acceptance functioned in a nominal sense and was used as a “scapegoat” for the oppression by effectively preserving the subaltern as subalterns.

3. Emphasis on Characteristics of Hybridity

Homi K. Bhabha concluded that contemporary life is a hybrid environment. Identities become more fused and hybrid; and their porous characteristics demonstrate their malleability and constant shift. The

15 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 405.

idea of fixed, settled, irreducible, and unchanging identities is challenged because identities are often social construct. The identity of hybridity can be an efficient challenge to the monolithic fixation.

For Bhabha, a hybrid reality indicates a merging of the existential contexts of different groups, resulting in an interconnected self-definition.¹⁶ Hybridity is not a role, but rather, a condition already established. The hybrid reality indicates that the existential contexts of each group are merged, resulting in an interconnected self-definition.¹⁷ Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture*, juxtaposed the tension between politics and theory within a luminal space, which does not separate, but rather, mediate their mutual exchanges and relative meaning.¹⁸ Two different elements with different types of power meet within an “in-between” arena where both the center and the margins reform their identities as they are influenced by each other. In this in-between space, none of the two competing groups are classified by the preexisting traits and thus cannot take the central place to control the other.¹⁹ The in-between space prevents the fixation of polarities and maintains the free flow of cultural differences.²⁰

Hybridity alone is not a term that dissolves the tension between the

16 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 4, 38, 58, 127, 207-209.

17 *Ibid.*, 107, 108.

18 *Ibid.*, 21, 41.

19 Yongbum Park studies Leonardo Boff's liberation theology with strong emphasis on community to extend the concept of solidarity over the nature. Interestingly, he double-layered the dichotomous struggle between ecological deterioration and economic injustice along with the ecological wholeness and interconnectedness. Yongbum Park, “Liberation Perspective in Ecological Ethics: Focusing on Leonardo Boff's Liberating Ecojustice,” *Madang: Journal of Contextual Theology* 27 (2017), 10.

20 *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

two groups. Rather, it is recognition of the presence of power in multidimensional directions that does not allow for an easy self-apprehension of reality. Bhabha contended,

Colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity between two different cultures which can then be resolved as an issue of cultural relativism. Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that the other “denied” knowledge enters upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rule of recognition.²¹

The remarkable characteristic of hybridity in this excerpt is clearly ambiguity. Bhabha’s assertion of redefining self is a reminder that no one is autonomously static and pure. The hybridity emphasizes mutuality and negotiation as a present act. Susan Bickford supported the notion of hybridity, defining identity as “not merely an internal affair; it takes shape partly in appearing to others.”²² The Hybridity is a useful concept to disrupt the universal and unchanging aspects of the superior self. In hybridity the subjectivity of the oppressor is partly formed by the oppressed, and vice versa. In this inter-subjectivity the construct of dominating absoluteness is challenged.

Spivak rejected all fixed definitions of identity in an essentialist fashion. For her, cultural context does not operate as a monolithic entity,

21 Bhabha, *Location and Culture*, 114.

22 Susan Bickford, “Anti-Anti-Identity Politics: Feminism, Democracy, and the Complexities of Citizenship,” in *Theorizing Feminism: Parallel Trends in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 68.

but rather, as multifarious and mutually inflecting constructs. The attempt of fixation would be as serious “epistemic violence.”²³ The creation of the stable categories is viewed as a construct for a self-interested purpose. As a result, Spivak viewed the task of deconstructing the ethnicity, gender, and class as imperative

Hybridity has a transformative motif. The reality of hybridity is not merely a mixed entirety of various parts. Just as assimilation does not occur unilaterally, both the subversive and resistant factors dynamically interact in the mimicry process, an imitation. Bhabha expressed, “mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.”²⁴ In the process of reproducing the dominant culture, the colonial discourse problematizes racial and cultural superiority, whose authority is therefore constantly challenged. The product of mimesis is “almost the same, but not quite.” As a consequence the destabilization of the intentions of colonizers, including the distortion of constructed colonizing identities, is inevitable.²⁵ The multiplicity and particularities are simultaneously present within the fictitious frame of a homogeneous whole. Anne McClintock asked, “If colonial and anti-colonial mimicry are formally identical in their founding ambivalence, why did colonial mimicry succeed for so long? If all discourse is ambivalent, what distinguishes the discourse of the empowered from the discourse of the disempowered?”²⁶ As mimicry produces both homage and menace to the power, its negotiation partially but inevitably creates a disavowal, going

23 Gayatri C. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 202.

24 Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 86.

25 *Ibid.*, 89.

26 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 63.

wide of the mark of the colonizing intention. The ambiguous reality of hybridity is the collision field of both suppressive and resistant powers.

Hybridity does not imply a reality totally unidentifiable. The oppression is not vague; what is ambiguous and opaque is the manner in which the oppression exercises its power. A Latin American feminist Gloria Anzaldúa posited that the consciousness of *mestiza*, Mexican blended female, who is characterized by multiple personality and perplexity, does not forget the machismo oppression.²⁷ Just like her metaphor of mirror, one cannot see one's face except in a mirror.²⁸ Although the figure reflected is a product of many conditions such as the light and mirror's surface, the inescapable concrete physical face must be present in front of mirror. Similarly, John Beverley adopted the notion of *transculturation* from Fernando Ortiz as an alternative to the idea of *acculturation*.²⁹ Whereas the latter describes a subordinate culture subject to be adjusted to a dominant one, the former portrayed both groups in mutual interactions of combination. Breaking down the subject-object duality does not imply to mingle everything to the extent that one's identity is totally lost. Rather, the perplexity liberates the agent from being confined in one essence.

27 Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza: toward a New Consciousness," in *Feminist Theory*, 420-426.

28 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Making Face, Making Soul/Hacienda Caras* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation, 1990), xvi.

29 John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 43.

III. Constructive Elements of a Postcolonial Christology

Considering the life of Christ without an understanding of its complex web will lead readers away from the important messages about Christ. Christology considering from the perspective of hybridity and postcoloniality challenges the fixation of identity provided from the surface of dichotomy. Perhaps, it is impossible to reconstruct Christ in any pure fashion because all existing information is a product of power interaction. However, the truth may emerge from underside of the repressed, the side of untold and hidden by the imposing power. The dominant exposes only limited matters that they desire others to see and hear, repressing the rest of them. Below that surface, an image of redemptive Christ different from an imperial Christ can be found below the surface.³⁰ The postcolonial Christ will help to reconstitute his emancipating lordship even in the hybrid reality with hidden powers.

Contemporary Korean society is becoming increasingly hybrid, yet people are submitted to dualistic conflicts: gold-spoon vs dirt-spoon, rich vs poor, progressive vs conservative. Remembering the dichotomy may be provided by the vested power for a better control, the claim suggests that Koreans are more than just likely wandering among constructs fabricated by the superpower. Therefore, a Christology based upon the postcolonial perspective is necessary to redefine one's condition below the surface, and to go beyond the outdated claim of dichotomous binary.

30 Joerg Rieger provides an exemplar work on how Christ depicted from the empire could be oppressive than liberative, and yet Christ's redemptive character does not cease. For more information, see Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: from Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

1. Soteriological Messages from Ambiguous Complexity

The commingle existence of the oppressed and oppressor does not indicate the solution of an easy reconciliation. The multifaceted character of Christ's love in ambivalence reveals the limit of the power system because it reveals the views of those repressed and hurt. The power is typically what attempts to give identity to all people and things in such a way that is favorable to itself. The power puts forth its best effort to ensure all believe that the given identity is unchangeable. As Rieger noted,

The empire does not like the kinds of mirrors that reflect the realities of repression. The only mirrors that are readily available in empire are the two-way mirrors of its panopticons (those in power can see out, those without power cannot see in from outside) and the gold-anodized exterior of its skyscrapers, both of which deflect the view from that which hurts and from that which inflicts pain.³¹

Transparent views are presented that allow an understanding of opposing perceptions and confront false belief in a construct Christ in support of prolonging the power structure.

For Rieger, Jesus was a salvific figure who was pushed to the margin in the reality of the repressed, and revealed the distortion of the present power.³² Jesus "never quite fits in" the dichotomy described by the power.³³ He employed the cross, which must have symbolized the im-

³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

³² *Ibid.*

perial absolute power, as a resisting means. Rieger used the term *Christological surplus* to address the subversive nature that such surplus reveals and that the empire repressed. The discovery of Christ within the complex power mechanism and the hidden imperial oppression suggests a Christology of a new alternative and hope.

Christological pursuit immersed in ambiguity and complexity rethinks the acts of negotiation and translation by which new hybridity manifests; and existing hybridity is affirmed. The destabilization of human existence in all its complexity will allow a simultaneous possibility of constructing a new interpretation. As Grace Janzen affirmed, “[The] dismantling of particular structures of thought in order to reveal their underlying but unacknowledged assumptions...creates new possibilities which open a passage for thinking otherwise.”³⁴ The liberating love of Jesus Christ is a double task of rethinking complex relationships by deconstructing each element and reshaping meanings that were hidden or intentionally unspoken.

2. The Incarnation as God’s Lumping Togetherness

From a postcolonial heart the biblical significance of the incarnation must be revisited. While a divine becoming a human could be logically explained, classical theories of atonement exhibited little interests in Christ’s historical suffering and the catastrophic economical context. From a perspective of hybridity, the account of Christ’s life is full of shared stories of human realities. Christ’s incarnation is his immersion

³³ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁴ Grace M. Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 4.

in the oppressive situation to allow the people to experience God's fulfilling liberative actions. Because the context in hybridity is intangible and not an object to be clearly defined, the postcoloniality enables expressions of its multiple, contradicting, and ambivalent aspects such as loving in ugly thing and appeasing of uncomfortable characters. Incarnation was a truthful divine choice of loving humans under the "ugly" circumstances of injustice. Christ could not be apathetic in a world where his people cried of desperate despair and frustration.

For instance, in times of Jesus carpenters belonged to a group of technicians that corresponded to a middle class. However, in reality, the majority were likely to be unemployed during the time of Jesus. The largest amount of construction work related to artisan job carpenters was the Herodian renovation of the temple. As the temple was finished, many workers lost their jobs. As described by Hanson and Oakman,

A "technician group" included architects, engineers, and specialized artisans. Artisans, for instance, worked on the temple from the time of Herod the Great to just before the First Judean Revolt. When the temple was finished, eighteen thousand men were put out of work (Jos. Ant. 20.219). These would have included workers in wood, both carpenters and cabinet makers, stone masons, metal smiths, people concerned with the water supply roofing, lifting heavy stones, and so forth.³⁵

It is unknown as to whether Jesus prior to his public life participated in the temple construction as a carpenter. Even so, as a carpenter, he

35 Kenneth C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 150.

was positioned closely enough to understand those who lost their jobs due to the project completion, and those who had been “used and thrown away like an old shoe” by the Roman Empire. Not only the reconstruction was used as a faithful act to hide imperial cunning domination, but also its aftermath was disinterested in the actual life of working class. The dichotomy purposed by the Roman Empire was associated to Jewish religious code. The reconstructed temple became the hub of vested rights of Jewish leaders who maintained their hegemony regardless of colonialization. The Roman Empire masqueraded itself as a benevolent regime as it provided all financial assets to renovate Jewish religious facility which Israelites was not able to do it. The temple pilgrim divided the people between those who could and those who could not, but all of them were blinded from Roman conquest agenda.

On May 28, 2019, the *Korea Herald* announced, “unemployment-benefit payment surges 58% during Moon’s term.”³⁶ The number provided by the Ministry of Employment and Labor shockingly marked the highest record of 770.4 billion won (approximately \$649.8 million) as the allowance payments for the jobless. What is more striking is that, of the total, the 20s are 13.4 percent whereas 30s are 19.2 percent, which demonstrates the critical unemployment of the young generation. The employment dropped from 330 thousand to 3 thousand in August, 2018. The government boasted that they have made a progress of recovery to 263 and 250 thousand last February and March respectively. However, *Munhwa Ilbo*, a daily newspaper, disclosed that the positive influx of 340 thousand came from senior welfare

36 Yon-se Kim, “Unemployment-benefit Payment Surges 58% during Moon’s Term,” *Korea Herald*, May 28, 2019. http://www.koreaherald.com/search/list_name.php?byline=Kim+Yon-se.

program.³⁷ The more labor force population actually lost their jobs, which indicates a practical negative figure of employment. Frustrated by the job market, people deplore for not being born in rich family. Classifying themselves as “dirt-spoon,” they stigmatized their life as a misfortune. The economy gained a place in Korea as a clear criterion of demarcation of stratification. While the dichotomy was seemingly evident, in which the struggle had to disrupt the hegemony, such frame was actually given by the backdrop idea of “success” which continually seduce people to be enslaved. The vested power will remain as the structure of oppression remains.

Christ of hybridity should not be understood as neutrality. Indeed, it is an imperative to recover that there can be no neutral Christ in a world with a variety of power differentials. Lindell E. Cady argued the intellectual coherence such as the middle road is “exposed to ignore the dissenting voices, and thereby for legitimating the current configuration of power and privilege.”³⁸ She asserted that truth lies on the continual negotiation of meanings rather than on the delivered shared meaning, which is the forged construct. Roberto S. Goizueta opined that loss of the fundamental notion of God’s preferential option for the poor will result in loss of the theological ground upon which God favors to accomplish the divine will of liberation.³⁹ Goizueta

37 Min-chul Park, “Over 60s Employed 340 Thousand...the Worst Effective Unemployment of the Young Population,” *Munhwa Ilbo*, Apr 10, 2019. <http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2019041001070803020001>.

38 Linell E Cady, “Loosing the Category that Blinds: Modern Religion and the Promise of Cultural Studies,” in *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 21.

39 Roberto S. Goizueta, “Knowing the God of the Poor: the Preferential Option for the Poor,” in *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology* (Oxford, New

claimed that God's universal love is a meta-narrative from which the pursuit of the truth of liberation begins. The colonial power would desire to cover such truth. Christological image of a postcolonial perspective interacts within the complexity of the lives of people who are simultaneously colonizers and colonized, as well as the sly nature of oppressive power.

The Christological assertion from postcolonial hybridity adopts the basic premise of God's solidarity with his people. The incarnation was the "drawing near" and "closeness" of God to humanity.⁴⁰ Jesus demonstrated to his people how to not fit into his contemporaneous bipolar frame. His disruption allowed others to see alternatives besides those given by those who conspired with imperial power. Christ's historical experience of abandonment and oppression of humanity revealed the very God's ontological union with humanity. The incarnation of Jesus Christ does not simply signify physical presence with his people; rather, it refers to God's salvific love enfolding humanity.

3. Cross as Christ's Ultimate Hybrid Language

The language of the cross is the ultimate multi-language communication.⁴¹ Jesus tenderly embraced the marginalized and the sick, but

York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 147-152.

40 Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: a Historical-theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis books, 1993), 229, 243-244.

41 Walter D. Mignolo emphasized *bilanguagism* as a way of life, "an act of love and a longing for surpassing the system of value as a form of domination." For him, bilanguaging or multi-languaging exposes and denies the controlling idea and the purity of a single ruling power. In bilanguagism, the border language is the foundation of epistemology because borders are "places

his anger also was expressed when forced to stop those in alliance with the Roman imperial power.⁴² Jesus returned a tender position if the powerful ceased the oppression and began anew, such as the case of Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-7). However, Jesus' context was much more complex than the two groups. For instance, Jewish leaders seemed to adore the Herodian temple, rebuilt in the interest of dominating Israelites through the religious power. Richard Horsley argued that Rome deployed military forces to settle the indigenous rulers in order to effectively control the empire; and so Herod the viceroy in Judea maintained the religious order as part of his regime.⁴³ The cooperated Jewish leaders were complice in this massive imperial agenda. In this instance, the deeper oppressive power created other surface oppression. It was more than foreseeable that Jesus would undergo a murdering process by the people affected by imperial dichotomy set by religious code.

The crucifixion of Christ demonstrated the cruel consequence of an imperial backdrop power. The cross represents a speechless language while delivering many messages to both the oppressed and the op-

where the distinctions between the inside and the foreign collapse; the borders themselves become the location of thinking and releasing the fears constructed by national intellectuals toward what may come from the outside." In the same vein, Christ's language manifests multilayered communicative expressions when different entities meet at the margin, and creates voices that challenge the controlling language. See, Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 260-272.

42 Chun Hoi Heo asserted that the language of political actions was the first language of Jesus. Chun Hoi Heo, *Multicultural Christology: a Korean Immigrant Perspective* (New York et al: Peter Lang, 2003), 160.

43 Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: the Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 31-34.

pressors. For the oppressed, the cross conveyed that their suffering is a reality even for divinity. Anne Joh described “the return of the abject” as when the cross becomes the confrontational locus between the logic of love and the logic of violence.⁴⁴ The repressed Christ as a victim on the cross exercises redemptive work overcoming oppression. The cross of Jesus contained multiple messages of protest, resistance to empire, ultimate togetherness, and ambivalent alternative values that eventually lead toward liberating resistance. God is present in the side of those living in crucified reality. Christ’s resistant spirit of liberation was transmitted through the cross.

Christ’s hybrid language of ongoing resistance can be both loud in its hardheartedness and quiet in its tenderheartedness, but certainly never passive. Therefore, the task of multilingual communication is to resist the monolingual imposition of selfish interests.⁴⁵ To speak only one language implies a self-centered mindset, and an unwillingness to understand the concerns of others.

In Christ’s death and resurrection, the clear demarcation was fused. He was a faithful Jew, but a friend of sinners and the despised; he loved the Father’s house, but scorn it as a den of robbers; moreover, he was the crucified on the cross as a victim, but he was the resurrected converting the cross as a sign of life. Jesus was fetter-ridden, from in-

44 Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: a Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 109.

45 Hohyun Sohn asserts that Jesus Christ has a paradoxical identity. Jesus as an incarnate was the one living as a minjung, while as Christ worked for liberation. My argument of Christ hybrid language as a mode of being is in the same vein, yet does not require to separately discern Jesus as God and human because He is God-human all the time. His hybridity is part of his ontological existence. Hohyun Sohn, “Minjung Theological Aesthetics,” *Madang: Journal of Contextual Theology* 29 (June 2018), 28.

dividual and collective suffering under the Roman Empire. However, his unexpected subversive reaction the existing dichotomy brought the beginning of a new hope.

Simply put, the cross is the multi-language of Jesus, usurping the mono-language of the empire, the colonial power. Jesus' cross certainly destroyed Herodian temple that controlled the colonized. The imperial power intended to display its superiority and magnificence by a dreadful castigation on the cross; however, with Jesus the cross had an unintended effect. Under the cross, the centurion confessed, "Jesus is truly the Son of God" (Mt. 27:54), which a confession that Caesar imposed on his vassals.⁴⁶ Joseph of Arimathea went boldly to Pilate, asking for the body of Jesus (Mk. 15:43). As a prominent member of the Council, he was in a position of power, but parted his former party to follow Jesus. The scattered disciples returned with burning heart (Lk. 24:13-34). The imperial message of the cross as a disappointment was demolished by Jesus in his multi-language, which was not quiet to the menace of the imperial cross. The excluded and marginalized, who had once lost hope in resistance, were again empowered by the cross and resurrection of Jesus. The Holy of Holies was wide open by Christ's cross. His followers no longer are subject to bipolar frame, striving to fit in to the field that the imperial power assigned. The imperial speech of the cross as fear to the absolute domination of the empire was challenged by the responses to multi-language of Jesus who uninterruptedly communicated with his people even through his death. Jesus on the cross, as the remarkably resistive expression, continues his fight against the controlling ideology of mono-language.

46 Rieger, *Christ and Empire*, 25-26.

IV. Conclusion

The tensions in the dichotomous structure of the elite versus the common, the “gold-spoon” versus “dirt-spoon,” the aggressor versus victim, and the intellectual versus illiterate, does not negotiate the reality of the suffering in which different powers collapse in hegemonic movement. Power challenges individuals or groups to be submissive, to become “we” or to be pushed to become “they.” Material possessions also make the social divisions clearly visible. While such perceptible distinctions and identities are given to maintain the hegemony, they are not permanent.

Christ of postcoloniality urges to Korean society to go beyond the dichotomy between success and failure, employed and unemployed, rich and poor. All these classifications are the construct given by the dominant power structure. Just as Christ demonstrated how to break the dichotomy set by the Roman, Christians need to be empowered from the below the surface, the side of untold and repressed.

Choan Seng Song asserted the “transposition of power,” which is a transformation of human politics from triumphalism to compassion.⁴⁷ The transposition is read as the empowerment of others. The politics of God are based upon the simple logic of love, which is becoming a co-suffering servant, rather than being “gold-crowned.”⁴⁸ As Song argued, redemptive love without selfish motives is referred to as compassion.⁴⁹ Compassion is not helplessness. Not yielding to despair and

47 Choan Seng Song, *Compassionate God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 119.

48 *Ibid.*

49 Years later, Song offered a parallel story of God’s compassion: *The Tears of Lady Meng*. A tyrannical ruler ordered the building of the Great Wall and in every mile a man was to replace a brick. The story illustrates how the compassion of a woman changed a tearless empire. The

hopelessness, exposing the murderous actions of monolithic discourse of “dirt-spoon” may be the transformative beginning and the halt of unfairness. The constructed greatness of empire is troubled because pretext of the usage of cruel method is challenged.

Therefore, it is not a matter of which “spoon” belongs to, but to discover the hidden referencing power, and resist to bisectarian formulation. Christ gave of himself selflessly, taking on the suffering of the world and perceiving human pain as his. Rejecting the definitive identities previously given as granted, human agents initiate following Christ’s multilayered love in the crucified reality.

As the cross is viewed as God’s engagement with the afflictive reality of others, Christ’s love on the cross did not exclude the oppressor. Christ with his overflowing love shattered the vicious circle of bipolar conflicts that caused continuous wounds and hatred. The simple scheme of subject-object duality is no longer identifiable on the cross of Christ. The hierarchy of lords versus slaves was collapsed when Christ the Lord took the place of the victimized for his servants. On the cross, Jesus, in a resolute manner, denied the logic of dominating power. Rieger suggested the “self-critical” mode as an alternative to the force of exclusion.⁵⁰ His view of new self is not individuals placed in a controlling position over others, but rather, an open self that embrace.⁵¹ The refusal of dichotomy promotes consideration of the basic and fundamental cause of incidents. Truth left by the dominant lie on

compassion includes the dimension of protest to the emperor acting on behalf of others. See Choan Seng Song, *The Tears of Lady Meng: a Parable of People’s Political Theology* (Lima, Ohio: Academic Renewal Press, 2003), 1-23.

50 Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blind Spots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 179.

51 *Ibid.*

the surface while the interests of others are repressed below the surface. Therefore, it is imperative for Korean Christians to determine what has been hidden by the oppressive hierarchical power. The powerful alternative emerges at this point and outside the control of the empire that permeates all aspect of living circumstances.

The crucified Christ is no other than the resurrected. Just as the brutality of crucifixion of Jesus was real, his victorious resurrection was also an undeniable fact. His resurrection implied a significant challenge since the menace of Roman cross was demonstrated ineffective. The resuscitated Christ was the redemptive lord, whose life-giving salvation coercive power could never imitate. In resurrection, Christ clearly showed a different type of power of lordship. While the imperial power was murderous, with terror to control and subdue, the power of Jesus was a provider of hope and empowerment. The repressed grew in resistance through the cross of Jesus because the grassroots was empowered by Christ's resurrection.

Crucifixion was originally a brutal tool to inscribe terror and vengeful power to rebellious provincials. After Jesus, the cross became beloved. Christ was unfitting to the imperial purpose. Stopping the divisive actions, Christ was beyond the plot of the imperial forged construct in dichotomy. Just as Jesus did, today Korean Christians are called to carry his/her own cross to break the dichotomy that stigmatizes people into economic and political categories.

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