

Editorial

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Editorial Foreword

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As you may notice at once, significant editorial changes have been implemented starting with this 43rd volume. Whereas previous issues were published in book form, this issue marks a major shift toward enhanced accessibility through an online format. Readers can now conveniently access key information about each article on the first page and print the full texts in either A4 or Letter size for ease of reading. These changes in format reflect the editorial intention to foster wider engagement with readers, and more importantly, they signify our aspiration to position Asian contextual theologies within a broader international academic discourse.

This volume comprises four articles and one book review. The articles address a range of theological themes, including a missional ecclesiology grounded in grassroots ecumenism, the critical revitalization of theistic discourse, an examination of Korean religious studies, and an analytical exploration of gender inequality. Each contribution raises incisive questions within the Korean context: how missional ecclesiology mediates the historical divide between ecumenism and evangelism, proposing an innovative model of grassroots ecumenism; how theological discourse in a post-religious milieu situates the religious subject within an ethical framework for confronting social injustices; what constitutes an appropriate conceptualization of religion in dialogue with culture, politics, and history; and how societal gender conflict intersects with gender inequality within the church. Additionally, the book review offers a comprehensive overview of the conceptual history of the term *minjung*, tracing its semantic evolution as a symbol of political subjectivity in contexts of resistance.

In detail, Kang-Hee Han's paper, titled "Shifting Disunity to Unity: Missional Ecclesiology and Grassroots Ecumenism in Korean Protestantism," introduces the idea of missional ecclesiology, aiming to resolve the historical divisions and conflicts within the Korean church and to provide a theoretical foundation for grassroots movements that seek a breakthrough from the accelerating decline of Christianity in recent years. Historically, Korean Protestant churches have been marked by unprecedented fragmentation in the wake of the Korean War. Since the 1970s, this division has been exacerbated by the growing disparity between conservative churches, which adopted quantitative growth strategies amid rapid industrialization, and progressive churches, which emphasized social engagement and activism. Consequently, there is an imperative to interrogate the necessity of a new missional paradigm capable of reconciling these entrenched ecclesiastical divisions. Concurrently, the prevailing conservative orientation within the Korean church has engendered widespread social distrust, further precipitating the erosion of church influence. In light of these developments, issues of ecclesial self-renewal and

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social responsibility have assumed heightened significance. Within this context, the article critically examines the discourse surrounding missional ecclesiology as it is currently articulated in Korean Protestant circles.

Sukhun Huh develops his covert interest in political theology through a comparative study of theistic discourses of Levinas and Bonhoeffer in “Returning to the God-Talk after Atheism: Levinas and Bonhoeffer”. While both thinkers share a critical stance toward modern ego-centric theories of subject and traditional theistic discourse, they articulate divergent ideas regarding the status and function of the “Other” in ethics and faith. Huh points out that Levinas’ ethical turn—which posits that the infinite call of God is mediated through the other—may be limited by the danger of “the return of the egocentric self, which is disguised as the other.” Instead, he draws upon Bonhoeffer’s assertion that ethics cannot be directly reduced to faith, and that the genuine path to encountering the other lies beyond mere individual responsibility. For Bonhoeffer, Christ symbolizes ‘collective personhood,’ and the authentic way to confront the other is made possible through the act of faith in Christ. The political implications paradoxically invoked by this fideistic approach will require further critical evaluation.

Kyung-Taek Hong examines the religious thought of Chai-Joon Kim (1901–1987), a pioneering theologian who opened a new pathway for socially engaged theology in Korean Christianity. Kim not only criticized the fundamentalist tendencies of the Korean church and interpreted Christianity in a more inclusive, universal manner, but he was also a leading figure in the Korean civic movement during the era of military dictatorship. His comprehensive theology is rooted in an original understanding of ‘religion,’ through which he exerted significant influence on the interpretation of traditional Korean culture, the commitment of faith to political participation, and the transformative character of the church within history. Hong understands that minjung theology, a representative Korean theological movement, emerged out of his influential thought and thus conducts a multifaceted analysis of Kim’s understanding of religion as its foundational background.

Jinsoon Song addresses in “Gender Conflict in South Korean Society and Gender Injustice in the Korean Church” one of the prominent phenomena in contemporary Korean society, namely, gender conflicts between the Feminism Reboot movement and the ensuing cultural backlash. The gender conflict, which is often politically instrumentalized in conservative groups, becomes further exacerbated within the church, thereby aggravating longstanding gender inequalities and undermining the integrity of Christian faith and identity. Song introduces empirical indicators derived from a recent survey conducted by the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, providing concrete evidence of this phenomenon. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Nancy Fraser, the article explains these realities and raises critical questions about how to overcome the problems of misrecognition, maldistribution, and misrepresentation.

Finally, Hiheon Kim’s book review provides a succinct summary of the two volumes of Kang

In-cheol's comprehensive study on the conceptual history of the term *minjung*, which is well known as an outstanding signifier of the political subject in Korean society. Kang's study centers on the semantic reconfiguration of the term, particularly during the 1920s and 1970s, as it transcended its earlier connotations of 'subordination' and 'numerical majority' to embrace meanings of 'resistance' and 'subjectivity.' This transformation not only mirrors significant socio-political shifts but also constitutes a distinctive linguistic revolution within Korean intellectual discourse. Furthermore, his research systematically analyzes the evolution of the minjung concept since the 1970s, categorizing its theoretical characteristics into three distinct generational phases. Kang's research vividly demonstrates the unique historical trajectory of Korean minjung discourse, including its theological dimensions. Kim refers to this development as "A Birth of Korean Studies," highlighting the emergence of an intellectual paradigm rooted in the lived experiences and aspirations of the Korean people.

I invite all readers to enjoy these open-access articles and to feel free to cite them in their own work.

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Editor-in-chief