

“Colonialism, Han and the Transformative Spirit”

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from Grace Ji-Sun Kim's book "Colonialism, Han and the Transformative Spirit."

We live in a global economy where we affect people in poor lands as directly as we affect the poor within our own country, and we are unaware of our culpability.

Decent, fair-minded persons like us benefit by demanding cheap goods and produce, which simultaneously drives jobs overseas where no labor regulations exist, and near-slave labor conditions are prevalent.

As we become aware of our roles, we are called to repentance - a change of heart, habit and life.

Since the rise of Western colonial empires, followed by the Industrial Revolution and global trade, voices have been raised to proclaim the damage these innovations have caused to humans, to communities and to our ecology.

These voices challenge us to gain a deeper understanding of self and faith, calling us to restore spirituality and love, which transcends lands and religions.

From their insights, we can move to new levels of moral living that will preserve and protect our planet as well as care for the poor and oppressed.

We often forget that in Genesis 9, the LORD had Noah save all the plants and animals of the world. Noah's LORD was not a big fan of extinctions!

We must change our ways if we are to live on an earth that will have to be sustained as long as our species survives.

This book will examine a crucial question: how can we be motivated to live a sustainable life in a world filled with the toxins of empire, colonialism, consumption and greed?

Today's nations exhibit a form of imperial behavior that goes way beyond the ancient agriculture-driven landed empires or the 18th- to 19th-century mercantile empires.

People define their value by owning worldly goods with no onus attached to depriving others of basic needs.

This is devaluing and harmful, not only to human beings but also to the ecology of the planet. Indeed, we are ultimately depriving our children and the children of all human beings on the planet of the ability to sustain their future lives.

We need to examine ways of articulating our errors and seeking the best direction for a safer, sustainable planet.

Virtue is never free of the times. Theology always happens in a context. It never happens outside of context. Therefore, when it comes to addressing morality, it is also important to address the questions of politics.

We need to engage in conversation about how the influence of one person on another must be restored to the standard vocabulary of theology, just as we are learning to develop theologies of living with peoples of different faiths.

As people live with one another, subordination and subjugation occur. In many ways, the subordination of species is as old as hunting and gathering.

Subordination of peoples is as old as agriculture, and subordination of the earth is as old as the plough and the ax.

Therefore, more than ever before, it is essential to reverse the destructive role of habitual lifestyles.

Either we can remain passive and accept these destructive structures in society, or we can do something to fix the damages that have already occurred.

An important challenge to reversing destructive roles is to address the question of power and power dynamics.

Addressing questions of power does not mean carping from the sidelines. Dealing with power aims at conceiving, developing and testing alternatives of theological discourse and construction.

Theology is in danger of becoming an advocate of globalization. In Christian theology, a new level of engagement with biblical sources can point us in the right direction.

Forgotten traditions that were against dominating sources of power need to be brought back into our consciousness as we move forward to articulate a theology for those on the underside. Theology needs to be a source of empowerment for those who are pushed into distant corners of the earth.

Theology is about God, but the beauty of the Trinity requires that it adduce those spiritual values which our times demand, based on changes in our world seen though the values of the God, the Son and the Spirit we hold sacred. It is the breath of life in every being that exists.

God is not a possibility within reality, but the value and hope of reality. By acknowledging God as a reality in our lives, we can be empowered to value those things that will help and engage us to live as better stewards of the earth.

We will be able to see ourselves in the other and, as we do, we can then move toward embrace rather than isolation and domination.

Living a damaging lifestyle will leave us with a planet of death. We must live a faithful life in which all of us can share hope. For us to lead a new life of goodness, resource-saving values must be re-established.

This book will examine ways of rethinking our errors so that we can work toward a safer, reimagined, sustainable planet. We will also explore traditional and nontraditional concepts of God as the Spirit who gives, sustains, cooperates and empowers life to all.

Our God has given us the power to assess the causes of environmental changes. We know that these problems do not result from the “wrath” of God as many have suggested.

It is urgent that we try to reverse the problems that we have already created through our lifestyle of greedy, exploitive, wasteful practices.

This book will examine our planet and the path to its destruction we have taken through our irresponsible egotism. We are called to mend our ways now.

[Grace Ji-Sun Kim](#) is associate professor of doctrinal theology at Moravian Theological Seminary. Her writings can be found on her [website](#). Her book is available at [Amazon](#) and [Palgrave MacMillan](#).