

Jaeyeon Lucy Chung. *Korean Women, Self-Esteem, and Practical Theology: Transformative Care (Asian Christianity in the Diaspora)*. London, UK: Palgrave Pivot, 2017. 138 pages. \$69.99 ISBN 978-3319695075.

Jaeyeon Lucy Chung's book provides a criticism of Korean women's development of "low self-esteem" and "false-self identity," isolated from their parents, husbands, and parents in law, and suggests a practical methodology of pastoral care for Korean women for overcoming this problem. Chung argues that this is a consequence of the Korean patriarchal socio-religious culture, preventing Korean women from establishing equal and mutual relationships with others. To resolve this problem, she proposes that anyone interested in developing their high self-esteem and wholesome self-identity should utilize a "relational-transformative pastoral care" in which they acknowledge developing themselves is possible when Korean women construct mutual and reciprocal relationships with their parents, husbands, and parents in law. As a part of conducting feminist theology, the author expects that this methodology will construct the desirable faith solidarities where Korean women share their oppressive experiences and eventually reflect on their own issues.

To analyze Korean women's low self-esteem and false-identity, Chung employs various theories and methodologies of sociology, psychology, and gender studies. For example, Chung's interviews with 11 Korean women in Seoul and Chicago show how their self-identities of women in different age and socio-economic groups have been formulated in their struggles to satisfy other people's expectations toward them. In this qualitative data, she finds a general portrayal of Korean women who always give up their own selves and desires in the tension between egoism and altruism. The author also insists that the Confucian value of *sam-gang-o-ryun*, promoting the idea that women's "inferiority" to men with emphasis on their chastity and the Christian value of self-affirmation as human sin have been adapted as "oppressive" devices for women in the Korean context. Chung's employment of Donald Winnicott's and Heinz Kohut's psychological theories supports her claim that Korean women's development of false self-identity is caused by lack of mutual and reciprocal relationships with their parents, husbands, and parents in law.

One strength of the book is the way the author pays attention to both "oppressive" and "liberative" roles of religions in the de/reconstructive process of the Korean women's wholesome self-esteem. For example, Chapter 3 points out how both Confucianism and Christianity play the role to oppress the Korean women, while Chapter 5 elaborates on how the Confucian value of "true friendship" and the Christian assertion that human beings are created in God's image on earth could both promote healthy mutual and reciprocal relationships with others.

Nevertheless, this book could have further provided a more sophisticated case study of Korean women's development of self-esteem and self-identity, differently contextualized in both Korean and U.S. contexts. The concepts of transnationalism and hybridization, in particular, may have helped articulating this process. Furthermore, these theories would have helped the author to overcome the dualistic understanding of the "true/false" self-esteem and self-identity. Instead of victimizing Korean women's development of "low self-esteem" and "false self-identity" and putting them into vacuum as a diasporic community, Chung could have explored the active ways they re/constructing their "oppressive narratives." Asking open-ended questions that women to narrate their experience of God would have enabled the author to explore this issue. This approach would have revealed the "liberative" aspects of the "submissive" socio-religious culture of Korea and the U.S. that women have implicitly and explicitly endorsed, which may provide them with limited freedom and benefit.

In sum, this book should be appreciated that it pays a greater attention to both the "oppressive" and "liberative" aspects of religions for Korean women, while it could have

applied a more flexible framework to articulate their complexity, which can hardly be encapsulated by the dualism the author employs, in differently contextualized in both Korean and U.S. contexts. This non-dualistic framework would have allowed the author to find an alternative practical pastoral care to construct “desirable self-esteem” and “wholesome self-identity for Korean women.

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