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Book Review: "Healing our Broken Humanity"

Book: Healing Our Broken Humanity, Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill, 2018

Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill's "Healing Our Broken Humanity" introduces us to ideas on how to "update" our Christian thoughts. The authors showed Christians and Christian churches nine specific suggestions of solutions for our broken world. In the introduction, the authors mention Eric Garner's death (July 17, 2014), and mention social problems in America not only racism but also misogyny, violence, and various conflicts. They say that we live in a broken world. Although the authors show the problems in the United States in the introduction, neither of the authors are American. Grace is immigrant from Korea, and Graham is Australian. Therefore, this book is not written from an American perspective, this makes the book unique. This writing reminds us of "how American society is broken" from foreign perspectives and gives the authors' ideas about action American Christians should take.

The nine points authors suggest are: "Reimagine Church", "Renew Lament", "Repent Together", "Relinquish Power", "Restore Justice", "Reactivate Hospitality", "Reinforce Agency", "Reconcile Relationships", and "Recover Life Together." All of these points seem to be necessary for modern society in America, but I think the one most relevant to Christian communities in the multi-ethnic United States is the "Reinforce Agency." Because what we

Christians consider to be "good intervention" can actually make things worse. Graham cites the Australian government's intervention into the indigenous Aboriginal community for the elimination of sexual abuse of children as a good example of this. For every country, children are the future, and it is clear that it's good to reduce child abuse. However, the United Nations pointed out that this intervention by the Australian government amounted to a violation of human rights (P127). Why does such a difference in viewpoint occur?

The author cites a "Lack of consultation" as the reason, and I deeply sympathize with this. I was born and raised in Japan and have lived in the United States for 16 years. It can be said that that "Japanese common sense is American nonsense" (or vice versa). The author, Grace, is an Asian woman like me, and she writes about how she felt when she was young, "I felt I had no voice" in America. Asian immigrants are a minority in the US and their voices are not heard here. "Black fell a bashing has become part of a political football in this country." (P128) The authors point out that the Australian Government's intervention in Aboriginal society was not fair. The attitude of deciding that Aboriginal society is evil and forcibly improving it can be said to be seen as undue pressure. This is similar to how America thinks of the Taliban, "The Taliban is evil and the United States must get rid of it." Historically, it is clear that white societies have pressured and intervened in the societies and cultures of people of color. Of course, not all interventions are evil, but Graham says about interventions in different cultures, "It should have reinforced their agency, not robbed them of it." (P128)

Authors say today's Christian churches need to understand multiethnic culture too. For example, the atmosphere of the Christian church in the Japanese community is completely different from

that of the Pentecostal church in Harlem that I currently attend. At the worship service of the Japanese church, people quietly sing hymns, listen to the pastor's message for about 15 minutes and then pray quietly. The Sunday service in my church is very different, we have a lively performance by musicians, people listen to the energetic message of the pastor for about an hour while applauding, and we pray in a loud voice during the service. This is a stark contrast between static and dynamic worship styles., but it doesn't mean one is right and the other is bad. We just have different worship service styles that suit our cultures. In today's life, people have more choices. Americans eat Sushi and Japanese people eat McDonald's, this is not strange. For me, the Japanese church feels boring and sleepy, so the church in Harlem is like an oasis. Grace points out that the church needs to become a multi-ethnic place and so she chose Rev. Karen Hernandez-Granzen of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Trenton New Jersey as an example. Grace describes that church as "A light to a divided and broken world" (P133). The Bethel Gospel Assembly I attend also has a unique history. It is a race-agnostic church that a German woman started as a Bible study session for two Black girls in Harlem over 100 years ago. If this church member had discriminated against me because I'm Japanese, I might not have attended church in the United States at all. I agree with the point Grace makes, "strengthening other agencies" to pursue mutual understanding, and that this should be done first in the church. If the church, a small community, still has prejudice within it, we cannot eliminate discrimination and prejudice in the nation. Grace quotes Matthew 5:14 and says, "Church is the light of the world and city on a hill that cannot be hidden."

In the Corona pandemic, the technology of the Internet allowed us to remain connected even when we had to be isolated. We were able to connect with people online and through technology,

we were able to continue our participation in various church services. The world has changed a lot from when I was young 30 years ago. There is a word in Japanese idioms, "A frog in the well doesn't know the ocean." There would be many churches and Christians around the world who live in the past and don't know or recognize the modern world. I can strongly recommend this book to not only American Christians but to all Christians who are still in their comfortable old out-of-date ways. This book challenges all Christians to look first to reform our church, if we can't do that in the church, how can we hope to reform our broken world?