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Great Ideas from a Not so Great Book

(Healing Our Broken Humanity, Grace Ji-Sum Kim, 2018)

I have read 70% of the book.

This book attempts to save a faltering ideology by painting a beautiful picture of a religion that has faced harsh criticism from the outside world, developed a dubious reputation over time, and struggles to hold its members who are constantly drifting in different directions together. The literature is replete with concepts of unity, tolerance, love, and compassion in an effort to unite people of many ethnicities and political ideologies for the purpose of making Christianity impactful and real in the world. It does convey a good message, however it does not actually accord with the core ideas of the Bible, and in certain instances, the author resorts to deceit and term manipulation to strengthen the argument. Yet, it doesn't matter because the book's goal is to uplift believers, give them a more full and beautiful understanding of Christianity, and inspire them to make a difference.

This is meant for Christians, but considering that the majority of Americans identify as Christians, it may apply to practically anybody in the country. It may be attempting to appeal to a wider audience by appealing to religious sentiments that are universal and unaffiliated with any one particular denomination while also addressing general challenges in American culture. The goal is to unify as many people as possible under a single religion and one God, serving one another by drawing power from one another's flaws, which we will discuss in more detail. The author attempts to undermine the reader's confidence right away (this is a useful tactic when attempting to sell an idea, the person has to feel like there is something wrong with them, like they require something to purchase or accept).

This is a form of manipulation that is employed in the book, but maybe it serves a useful purpose. The author states, "Our difficulty is our weakness" (Kim, 7), implying that a person is weak when compared to a country, corporation, or military—a comparison that is unfair. A person is not weak only because they are contrasted with a larger group of individuals who are stronger collectively. In the same way, someone is not weak because they are compared to something or someone stronger; they are not stupid because they are compared to someone wiser; they are not ugly because they are compared to someone prettier; etc. That is merely a deception strategy. The way this book's concept is developed, however, is that it labels a person acting alone or pursuing their own interests as "weak," whereas a group of individuals working together to achieve a common purpose is considered "strong." This introduces the concept of unity. We might build a just and peaceful society free from division, segregation, racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination if we were willing to set aside our own goals and egos in favor of contributing to the "strength" of the community as a whole.

The author promises a society that is utopian in nature and inspires her readers with lovely expressions of equality, love, and tolerance. The issue is that the book attempts to support those notions with references to Christian doctrine and Bible teachings, but that approach doesn't appear to work very well because those concepts are in direct conflict with the Bible, as we shall explore next. Despite the fact that I really value what Grace is doing, I simply criticize the methodology since she can write about brilliant ideas without naming a source. Let's start with the Old Testament. According to the gospel, "The story of the triune God saving all of humanity through the story of Israel" (Kim, 49) Despite the word "gospel" being used in the quote, the Old Testament contains the history of Israel. In that section of the Bible, God was not trying to preserve all of humanity; rather, he only cared for one nation, and he mercilessly either slaughtered the citizens of other nations, or gave orders for others to

kill them, or waged war against them. What else is going on if that isn't racism and segregation? "Whenever we sanction violence, we contradict God's peaceable, loving, reconciling, and compassionate kingdom" (78), When Grace argues that these actions would be contrary to his character or the teaching of the Bible, she conveniently forgets how many times in the Bible God has approved acts such as war, genocide, murder, and torture—as well as the threat of an endless hell. There are examples right now that show a loving, reconciling Jesus, which can make it easier to agree with things like, "Jesus Christ showed us what peace-making looks like by living a life of nonviolence, justice, reconciliation, and forgiveness" (Kim, 47). Another passage from the Bible that is ostensibly concerning Jesus is quoted, "The Messiah is our peace, and he has abolished the conflicts and enmities that divide people (Eph 2:11-14)." However, in the Bible, the character that was Jesus (if he was the Messiah that is under debate because it does not say that explicitly) said that he brought a sword instead of peace, which makes it harder for this personal proclamation to match with the quote. The teachings of the book about love and peace may actually have their roots in contemporary eastern concepts rather than Christianity and the Bible, which makes it more challenging to couple with the lessons of damnation that Jesus taught. The book does a fantastic job of forming an idea, motivating change, tolerance, growing compassion for others, yearning for justice, and coming together rather than dividing, in order to construct a better future for us all. Nonetheless, it employs certain dubious strategies to persuade others. As a last illustration, consider the statement that "The church does not withdraw from the world. The church does not stand in self-righteous judgment on the world" (Kim, 46) which is obviously false, considering the amount of times the Bibles casts judgement onto others and promotes an "us versus them" mentality.

Work Cited

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