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이 글에서는 한국 구약학의 역사를 다섯 가지 이슈로 다룬다. 이 땅에서 출간된 최초의
성서학 원고인 양주삼의 「구신약전서총론」에서 시작하여 오늘에 이르는 한국 구약학
의 관심사를 방법론적으로, 장르별로, 주제별로 구별하여 살펴보고 있다. 그 기반 위에서
한국의 구약학이 앞으로 나아가야 할 방향이 어디인지를 진지하게 모색하고 있다.

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Retrospect and Prospect of Old Testament Studies in Korea¹⁾

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1. Lessons from the Past

Reviewing the trace of Old Testament Studies in Korea, its first argument began with the issue, who wrote the Pentateuch.²⁾ Yang Joo Sam, a Methodist pastor (born on 25th January, 1879) studied at Vanderbilt and afterwards

1) This paper is an updated form of presidential address, carried on Celebration of Jubilee Year of the Korean Society of Old Testament Studies, which was held on May 28th in Methodist Theological University. The address was based on my earlier writing "50 Years of Old Testament Studies in Korea" that was published in pages 47-92 of 50 Years of Theology Research (2003), The Korean Library of Scholarship, Volume 3, edited by Institute for Korean Culture of Ewha Women's University, Seoul, Korea. Original manuscript was written in Korean.

2) Cf., Kim Jeong Woo, "A History of Old Testament Studies in Korea during the 20th Century and Historical Criticism" (Korean), *Ministry and Theology*, 126 (December, 1999) 208-219; Yoo Dong Sik, "Korean Theology in 1970s" (Korean), *Theological Thought* 36 (March, 1982), 80-112; Moon Hee Suk, *The History of Old Testament Interpretation during 1900-1977 in the Korean Church* (Korean), (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society in Korean, 1978), 41-113.

graduated from the School of Theology at Yale in 1914, was the forerunner of this argument. Yang Joo Sam set out his teaching career at Hyupsung Seminary (currently Methodist Theological University) from 1916 after he returned home from America, and received honorary doctorate of divinity (D.D.) from Macon University of the U.S.A. in 1931 and Garret Theological Seminary in 1932. He was the one who wrote the first article on the Bible, written in Korean. His writings on the subject of "General Introduction to the Old and New Testament" were introduced to our country Korea on volume 1 through 4 of 「Shinhaksegye」 (Theology and the World) (1916), published by Hyupsung Seminary as a periodical.

The writing of "General Introduction to the Old and New Testament," written by Yang Joo Sam, is a richly informative account that might acquaint the reader with knowledge of when, where, by whom and how the Scripture was written. But it is ultimately a work of apologetics. The embarrassing literary findings of Yang Joo Sam had noted that "the Bible was not written and edited by one or two persons in one day, but it was recorded for 1500 years by about 49 writers" and they "translated and compiled the will of God in accordance with the literary and cultural conventions of their time."³⁾ He did not deny that the Pentateuch was written by Moses. But he commented cautiously that the Pentateuch we are reading today became available by post-Mosaic activity, which made responsible for the editing of the texts recorded by Moses fragmentarily. This approach found its classic expression in Yang Joo Sam's "General Introduction to the Old and New Testament," which can deserve the first critical interpretation of the Old Testament in Korea.

But the scene has changed drastically in the same period. In the articles published in 1920, W. C. Erdman, a Presbyterian missionary activated for the Korean Church, claimed that "we should take distance ourselves from what was called higher criticism." Erdman offered the skeptical understanding

3) Yang Joo Sam, "General Introduction to the Old and New Testaments" (Korean), *Shinhaksegye*, (Theology and the World), 1/1 (1916), 69-88; 1/2(1916), 61-75; 1/3 (1916), 43-68; 1/4(1916), 18-29.

of the substantial character of higher criticism through his contributions to 『*Shinhakjinam*』 (Theology and Word) published in 1918 by Pyeongyang Seminary (currently Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary) under the title of “Higher Criticism” and “Authenticity of Mosaic Pentateuch” (1920).⁴⁾ Eerdman’s discussions succeeded an earlier article, released in 1911 entitled 『The Decay of Higher Criticism』, which came out in *The Korea Mission Field* on May, 1911. But, unfortunately the writer of “The Decay of Higher Criticism” is unknown. Yet, the article made a big point of doubt as to the belief that the Scripture is inspired. It showed the caution against higher criticism, which has been widely conceded in Korean Church since its early stage. Eerdman was standing on such trend. He, therefore, went on to argue that Moses wrote the Pentateuch at the time of Exodus. To understand the ancient context of the Pentateuch, he provided his own account of Egyptian background of the text: Egyptian dialects, terminology, customs, and laws that required some sympathetic analogy between Egypt and Moses’ situation.

Yang Joo Sam and Eerdman are regarded to be good examples to represent the view points of Korean Churches on the Bible. They represent naturally the tension between two axes of interpreting the Scripture- i.e., it was written by human beings but it is the Word of God; it is the Word of God but it was human product. Early Korean Church presented two different answers to the same question of who wrote the Pentateuch. Yang Joo Sam of the Methodist Church took more liberal stance, while Eerdman of the Presbyterian Church took rather conservative position. Korean Church that started as biblical faith community was divided during its early stage into the liberal and conservative parties with regard to the question of the reliability of the biblical record.

2. Crucial Issue

Different views on the Bible generate different interpretations of the Scripture. Korean Church began to reflect on itself entering 1930’s to get out of the

4) *Shinhakjinam* (Theology and the Word), III/4 (1920), 423-431; VI/2 (1924), 13-40.

theological dominance by the Christian missionaries of the early era. It was the time when Korean Church was turning into 50 years of its history on the Korean peninsula. The growing presence of those who had studied theology in the States and Japan was a crucial factor in this development.

Kim Jae Joon was the most typical theologian in this regard. And on his opposite, Park Hyung Ryong stood his stance taking different view in its more conservative forms. According to the declaration of Kim Jae Joon, which was carried in volume 5 of 『Chosun Sinhakbo』 (The Bulletin of Korean Theology), published in 1948 (April 1948), the Bible is the divine revelation of God, but was recorded in the letters of human beings.⁵⁾ This understanding gave rise to recognition that the Bible is not to be called the Word of God. It was rather to be called that the Bible becomes the Word of God. The impact of Kim Jae Joon's understanding of the Bible was felt mainly in connection with the debate whether he was to emphasize the academic openness of interpreting the Bible or he was liberal to deny the verbal inspiration of the Scripture. Consequently, Korean Church experienced bitter sorrow that the Korean Presbyterian Church was after all split in 1947 into "the Presbyterian Church of Korea" and "the Christian Presbyterian Church of Korea."⁶⁾

This was perhaps especially obvious in the debate lingering on Abingdon Commentary that occurred in 1935. The Abingdon Commentary in One Volume, a Korean version of The Abingdon Bible Commentary (1930) which was published by Abingdon Publishing House of the United Methodist Church, was edited by Rev. Ryu Hyung Kee of the Korean Methodist Church and published by Shinsaengsa in 1934. This was a richly documented collection of data from the historical-critical approach to the Bible that might possibly support the questions of historical reliability in the biblical accounts. The translation of the commentary into Korean was made in cooperation with 53 Korean church leaders at the time from both the Methodist and the

5) Cited from the book, Lee Duk Joo and Cho Eee Je, *Confessions of Korean Christians* (Korean) (Seoul: Han DI, 1997), 192-198.

6) This is one of examples to understand Richard J. Coleman, *Issues of Theological Conflict: Evangelicals and Liberals* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972), 59-252.

Presbyterian Churches.

This work was encouraging in two points. First, Korean Church could publish the Bible commentary at the year of passing half a century in its history, even though it was a translated version. The publication of the commentary confirmed that biblical studies should exist as a discipline of the church, by the church and for the church. Second, the church leaders were come together beyond the denominations on the occasion of publishing the Commentary. They achieved ecumenical works for interpreting and publishing the Words of God. But the problem was that Abingdon Commentary in One Volume was the result of the growing appreciation of critical understanding of the Scripture. As a result, the Commentary was judged as a product of liberal theology by 24th General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church (1935). All the contributors from the Korean Presbyterian Church were also subjected to heresy trials.

This tension was found in the Korean Methodist Church as well. But in the Korean Methodism, biblical scholars embraced historical criticism and were not condemned by church authorities. Where the Presbyterian movement had celebrated belief as a virtue, the modern Methodist mentality regards critical mind as a necessary step in the interpreting of the biblical text. This tendency was most obvious in Prof. Kim In Young of Hyupsung Seminary. He said in his articles "Evolution of the Bible" (1927-1928) and "Legend and Criticism of the Pentateuch" (1929), contributed to 『*Sinhaksegye*』 (Theology and World), that the Pentateuch was not recorded by Moses but went through editorial process for a long time in various forms. He had referred to "the editing of Scripture" in this context. The Pentateuch was understood as an end result that "came to be completed around before or after the Babylonian exile in the history of Israel (around B.C. 400)".⁷⁾

However, Prof. Byun Hong Kyu, who taught the Old Testament in Hyupsung Seminary in succession to Kim In Young, showed in large part a

7) Kim In Young, "The Legend of the Pentateuch and Its Critical Understanding" (Korean), *Shinhasegye* XIV/4 (1929), 3-21, esp. 11-16, 18-21.

reaction against historical criticism and the relativism that it implied. In the article he wrote such as "Theological Thoughts of Moses" (1937), contributed to 『*Sinhaksegye*』 (Theology and World), Byun Hong Kyu emphasized that the Pentateuch was understood to be written by Moses.⁸⁾ Byun Hong Kyu was seen to reconcile his findings with traditional faith. That is to say that there were profound theological conflicts even among the Methodist Church. On the one hand, the historical criticism was affirmed as an ecumenical discipline in the field of biblical works; while Christian theology, at least in its more liberal forms, was thought to be an attempt to distance the Scripture from the reader. It was said that applying the Biblical Criticism to the Scripture reached an outcome which neglected the dignity of the Word of God. But such conflict did not lead to schism of churches like the Korean Presbyterian Church.

The field of critical interpretation of the Bible has been still subject to Korean Churches. Of course, the validity of historical criticism is now called into question by many Old Testament scholars in recent years. But the conflict still remains about whether the Bible should be regarded as the revelation of God or the Bible is to be thought as a book which contains the revelation of God. Conservative churches that comprise of the mainline churches in Korea take a firm belief that the Scripture is inspired in its historical accuracy. In light of this situation, we may ask what a hundred years of biblical criticism has achieved in Korea.

We now have a lot of new tendency that improves our critical works in traditional faith. The progress of this field as a whole can be characterized as a shift of interest from diachronic analysis to synchronic understanding.⁹⁾ The Korean Old Testament studies should share the fruit of this movement with Korean churches. All of Korean Churches, whether they belong to the

8) Byn Hong Gyu, "Theological Thought of Moses" (Korean), *Shinhaksegye* XXII/3 (1937), 25-26.

9) Jang Il Sun, "Synchronic Study of the Bible: Canonical Criticism of the Old Testament" (Korean), *Christian Thought*, (Nov. 1988), 127-141; "A Study of Structural Criticism of the Bible" (Korean), *Christian Thought* (Jan. 1991), 70-88; Kim Eee Gon, "The Method of Biblical Interpretation by B. S. Childs" (Korean), *Study of Theology* 22 (1990), 49-90; "Study of the Old Testament from Tradition Criticism" (Korean), *Theological Thought* 10 (1975), 638-668.

conservative or the liberal, have the common ground in Protestant faith: the Bible is affirmed as *sola fidei regula*. Cracks appear in the ethical values of the Bible and questions are raised about whether or not *sola fidei regula* is to be understood as *prima fidei regula*.¹⁰⁾ It is in light of this situation that the Korean Old Testament studies can give an explicit answer to the subject that has arisen in Korean Churches for a long time.

3. Text and Context

Interpretation takes place between text and context. Biblical interpretation also takes place between the gospel and context. Approaching 1960s, Korean theologians became to be awakened to the Korean context as a means of interpreting the gospel. The land of Korea, which was regained not only from Japanese occupation but from after the Korean War, made the Korean theologians realize that Spirit of Jesus Christ should be rooted into Korean Soul in every aspect of life including politics, economy, society, education and culture. Furthermore, the suffering for democratization that the Korean society had to go through from 1970s to 1980s forced to realize that the very place where the gospel is interpreted should be our land Korea.

The declaration by Kim Jae Joon, - "The context of our theology is our country Korea. Our mission is to establish the redeeming history of Christ in the Korean history and to transform the Korean society into the kingdom of heaven" - reveals such theological awakening in a more lucid form.¹¹⁾ In fact, it became clear that the theological movement which was primarily concerned with the social participation of church reached indigenized theology in 1960s and Minjung theology in 1970s and 1980s. They tried to interpret Jesus Christ existing in this land with the Korean circumstances. Establishment of the Korean Society of Old Testament Studies (June 1961) was an outcome to meet such requirements of the times.

Kim Jung Joon was the first chairman of the Society to have devoted himself

10) The word *sola fidei regula* is to be differed from the term *prima fidei regula*. Moon Hee Suk, *The History of Old Testament Interpretation*, 12.

11) Lee Duk Joo and Cho Eee Je, *Confessions of Korean Christians*, 195.

to compact the corner stone of the Korean Old Testament studies. Kim Jung Joon advocated, in his book on Faith and Theology of Israel (1967), that the subject of interpreting the Old Testament was to make us understand the Words of God, which was given to the Israelite long time ago, as equally valid for us today, who is living in this land. He showed us in detail how the Words of God, understood in terms of forms, traditions, and *Sitz-im-Leben*, could be realized in our history. He refused to regard the Old Testament as a theological literature that was not restricted by time and space. Rather, the Old Testament was thought to be decisively a product of concrete history and a cultural phenomenon.¹²⁾

In this regard, re-understanding the context for biblical interpretation was generally subservient to the issue of the relevance of Old Testament faith. The Korean Old Testament scholars in 1970s found hope out of the sufferings of God who underwent misery and alienation in the human history and confirmed the hope in the agony of God being with the struggle of human beings for liberation. Therefore, they were aware that God listened to the outcry of the distressed labor, farmer, refugee and the oppressed and was eager to participate in the suffering of the peoples who were in the various type of bondage. Accordingly, Christianity should be characterized by what Kim Jung Joon called "the priest of Han (resentment)," the one who tried to liberate the people from "Han" (resentment), suffering and oppression which the people of God had endured. Old Testament scholars of this land bravely confessed their biblical faith during the dark age of the Korean history under the oppression.

After 1960s and entering 1970s, the Korean Society of Old Testament Studies grew both in quality and quantity incomparably more than earlier.¹³⁾

12) Kim Jeong Joon, "The Main Issues of Old Testament Theology" (Korean), in *Theme and Method of Old Testament Theology* (Korean), *Collection of Mansoo Kim Jeong Joon's Works*, vol. 4 (Seoul: Institute of Korean Theology, 1989), 189-190. Most articles, written by Kim Jeong Joon and originally published in the book, *Faith and Theology of Israel* (Korean), were to be in print again in his *Collection of Works*, vol. 4, part 2 (pp. 169-382).

13) Cf., Min Young Jin, "Old Testament Theology in 1970s" (Korean), *Sinhaksasang* (Theological Thought) 38 (1982), 5-36. Min tried to understand what had been done in the Society of Old

Following the establishment of the Korean Society of Old Testament Studies (1961), Korea Association of Accredited Theological Schools (KAATS) (1965) and Korean Society of Christian Studies (1973) were built up and number of scholars who have worked in those organizations increased remarkably. From the time of establishing such organizations, Korea started to receive scholars with cheers, who had majored and achieved doctorate in the Old Testament at well-known overseas universities. They contributed to expand the horizon of Korean Old Testament studies. Most of the basic tools for Old Testament studies were introduced to Korean churches such as the Hebrew Bible, Biblical Hebrew, the Bible Dictionary, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, Commentary, Historical Geography, Introduction to the Old Testament, Biblical Criticism, History of Israel, Archeology, etc. Text books for educating theology students started to be translated or written and the literature for Old Testament studies began to come out in Korean language in full scale. Thanks to such efforts, the fruit of Old Testament studies in Korea were brought into Korean churches: the church does not interpret the Bible but the Bible does the church.

4. Limited Wholes of Salvation History

Understanding theologically, the big voice from the Korean Church that has emerged in biblical scholarship over the last several decades is the theology of salvation history. The methods of this movement are in no way unique and are undoubtedly varied. But the redemptive work of God has been recognized as a profoundly significant without any substantial differences. Korean Churches have been suggesting passionately that the redemptive work of God occupies a prominent place in the Scripture. It is not possible to distinguish sizeable disparity between the conservative and the liberal at this point. Such trend was revealed in 1980s in particular. The understanding that

Testament Studies in Korea. He collected, first of all, all the materials published in Korean during 1979s. Then he divided the materials into two categories, according to the substance of discussions: studies on the basic tools in interpreting the Old Testament and studies on the individual texts in the Old Testament.

the redemptive work of God was not conceived as an event in the past but as the event which is repeating here in the life of the people. Accordingly, the focus was on bringing the attempt to listen to what, how, and why the Bible is to be understood from the third world perspective to the center of attention.

Old Testament scholars in Korea often sought to understand the salvation history attested in the Bible as a framework of Korean Old Testament theology. This tendency was most obvious in the church: people were to be saved. The Old Testament was viewed from a distinctly Christian perspective. From the conservative point of view, the biblical history was affirmed as a history of salvation in which the redemption of God was admitted to be taken place within the interpretive framework of Christology and Soteriology. But the liberal theologians have great emphasis on the thought that the redemptive work of God is to be taken as paradigmatic, so that people today can be identified with the people of ancient Israel. Along with such understanding, they pursued theological contemplations to set up the relationship between the Old and New Testament in the theology of salvation history. They judged that the redemption of God was achieved on the Cross of Jesus Christ who is the nexus to link the Old and New Testaments.

It is not wrong to regard the Exodus event as a starting point of Israelite faith. It is right to say that confession of faith to the God of Exodus has become the backbone for Israelite to live as the people of God. But the problem is that the theology of salvation history taking its root deeply in the Exodus event has witnessed what Leo Perdue has called "the collapse of history."¹⁴ Salvation history in the Korean context has been excessively concentrated on history, human beings and events.

Now we can see the change in the character of biblical studies that is driven by the area of creation. But it is effective in other areas too. We are now capable of collecting various attempts in theology, i.e. on the horizon of

14) L. G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

eco-world created by God. We have a lot of new evidence that improves our understanding of life in the Old Testament. Themes and methods of Old Testament theology are diverse and broad. As Elmer Martens pointed out, "the multicolored landscape of Old Testament theology" should be revealed in Korea.¹⁵⁾ We have seen the changing face of Old Testament studies in Korea since 1990. New generation began to attain some prominence and women entered the field in increasing number. We hope that the Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies (first issued in 1996) published by the Korean Society of Old Testament Studies could be the place for Korean Old Testament scholars to inform Korean scholarship in the World.

5. Understanding the Word in Korea

Theology should be done in our mother tongue. It is absolutely necessary to have power over the knowledge of the original languages of the Bible in order to understand the Words of God correctly, completely and deeply. However, Korean theology should be practiced in our mother tongue Korean. Language is taken as the means experiencing the truth and at the same time a means expressing the truth. Needless to say, Koreans become to experience the reality through the language we call Korean. The reality of living God is well comprehended by mother tongue. Language itself provides us with the environments in which people can feel the divine reality. Mother tongue is functioned to become the path to communicate God. The Scripture written in our own language makes us listen to the "great things God did in our own words"(Acts 2: 11). Therefore, mother tongue creates environment that can never be realized by other languages.

In this regard, the Bible written in our language becomes main constituent that can not be replaced with anything in doing theology. This is the reason why the Bible translation should be taken as the first stage of biblical studies. As the theologian of the South America, Gustavo Gutierrez mentioned, "Drink

15) E. Martens, "The Multicolored Landscape of Old Testament Theology," in *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology, Sources For Biblical and Theological Study I* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 43-57.

from the own wells" can be experienced by Bible translation.¹⁶⁾ Taking this into account, 100th Anniversary of publishing the whole Korean Bible (old version), which will be held on next year 2011, should be an opportunity for Korean Old Testament scholars of this age to re-open new horizon for studying the Scripture. Truth of the Bible can be vigorously expressed, when the biblical faith is admitted, transmitted and described in mother tongue. The element that affects forming the cause of Christianity in Korea most decisively is our own language Korean. Koreans could have read the Bible in Korean since the beginning of Christianity here in Korea. We now study theology in our own words!

Everyone living in this land Korea understands Jesus Christ translated in our language Korean. It should not be neglected. Mother tongue is a way of representing literary, social, and/or cultural constructions. No objective interpretation can be possible. What we have to do from now on is driven by two respects. First, we should now devote ourselves more to interpreting the text of the Old Testament in the Korean context actively. Second, we should reveal our concern with the impact of Korean Peninsula as the text for biblical works. Then we can build up the Christian identity in the Korean culture.¹⁷⁾

We are now celebrating the year of Jubilee for the Korean Society of Old Testament Studies. But, if we would regard the articles about "General Introduction to the Old and New Testament," written by a Korean Yang Joo Sam (1916), as the beginning of Old Testament studies in Korea, history of studying the Old Testament here in Korea is now reaching 100 years. In what

16) G. Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

17) At this point, I would like to remind the suggestions made by Yim Tae Soo. Yim Tae Soo, "Retrospect and Prospect of Korean Old Testament Studies" (Korean), in *Society of Christian Studies in Korea, Collected Papers of Christian Theology in Korea* (Korean) 22 (2001), 99-117. Yim's discussion was not so much a review as a looking out over the studies of the Old Testament in Korea. Yim attempted to show seven tasks for studying the Old Testament in Korea in the future: Mapping the Korean Old Testament theology in the world, Making the theological movement alive in the Korean public, Establishing Korean-Asian-Oriental Theology, Theological exchange between Asia and Africa, Connecting the academic platform with pulpit, Implementing the voice of Old Testament Theology in Christian life, Using the canonical methodology for the biblical studies.

way can we develop one hundred years of Old Testament studies in Korea? We have to keep in mind that the place where the Korean scholars are standing upon is to be characterized as two: On the one hand, there is the Korean soil, which is socio-political and socio-economic and the faith community of Korean church, which is well grown up in its shape, on the other. The Words of the Old Testament do not remain as those bestowed upon them (the Israelite). Rather, they are to be heard as the ones granted to us here today (Korean society and Korean church). The Korean Old Testament Studies should listen to the groaning of Korean society in their academic forms. And at the same time, Korean Old Testament Studies should serve the Korean churches with their faithful ways. From that point, Old Testament studies in Korea will be living enterprise serving not only the Korean Church but also Korean Society. Then we will experience in our works that "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1: 14).

Old Testament Studies should not remain as the work only for the biblical scholars. It is time for us to shift the frame, curriculum, even the content of biblical studies. It is time for the Old Testament theologians not to remain as an academic scholarship, which stood on the tower of rationality and intellect. Old Testament scholars in Korea should come out to announce the reality of God that is revealed and witnessed by the Scripture here and today. Old Testament scholars today should not dare to analyze the Word of the Old Testament but to make the Word of the Old Testament incarnate in our country, in our people and in our culture. Then the Korean Old Testament scholars of today can taste abundantly the reward brought by "A Hermeneutic of Engagement."

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