

in God's image

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**Notice to all Subscribers/Members:**

We would like to sincerely apologize to all our subscribers and members for the delay in the issues for 2014 being published.

The relocation of AWRC to another country and consequent unforeseen hurdles have caused delays in printing, publishing and distribution.

We will intimate each subscriber about modes of payments soon. We are thankful to all Subscribers and Members for your patience with the delays.

**Until further notice please hold subscription cheques or transfers for subscription amounts.**

**Once our banking routes are sorted out we will inform subscribers/members.**

As a matter of policy, AWRC/IGI respects our contributors'/writers' use of English, provided it is proper and acceptable in Asia and worldwide.

As a matter of policy, from henceforth footnotes and references quoting IGI will use the form "*in God's image*" and not "*In God's Image*".

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**About the Cover Artist & Cover**

Monisha Miriam Ravikumar is a Christian artist and feminist who works as a game designer. She holds degrees in Fine Arts and Visual Communication, loves to travel and is trying to make the world a better place through her art and illustrations. The cover tries to capture the essence of 'feminist biblical interpretation' as the effort of wo/men to interpret scriptures/texts from the perspective of their journeys as women, using their struggles as their wisdom and lens and trying to be/come Subject-Selves without reference to society's proscriptions about what women should be.



## Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, commonly understood as “the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts”, has, in recent years evolved to include more than interpretation of written texts. Hermeneutics, as taught academically in seminaries, teaches certain “principles” of interpretation relating to how the bible or certain texts “have to be” interpreted and some of these principles tended to rely heavily on literal, divine inspiration of the biblical text that ought not to be questioned. In recent decades many “alternate readings”/“alternate interpretations” that do not rely on these conservative principles of interpretation have arisen. Some of these alternate readings owe their genesis to the differing backgrounds of marginalization of different groups of peoples in the world and the changing geo-political-economic contexts that exacerbate differences and punish the “other”/ “different”. Each school of alternate interpretation employs specific criteria to interpret a text or an issue in ways that create meaningful transformation in their individual and community lives. In this sense feminist biblical scholars and “lay” women who are feminist, use certain criteria to interpret not just texts but their very lives in ways that are creative, imaginative and transformative. Decades have passed since the genesis of feminist biblical scholarship, yet it has not become an accessible knowledge or popular knowledge that can aid in the transformation of the lives of women and men. IGI attempts to make that academic knowledge of feminist biblical interpretation accessible to the lay person in this issue that tries to both lay out the principles as well as use those principles to interpret texts. In this way a reader gets to understand the tools and also see how those tools of analysis can be used. In short we have tried to “do” feminist biblical hermeneutics instead of “theorise” about it.

While the term “feminist” is still a much maligned and misunderstood term in much of Asia as an aggressive, western ideology that breaks families and creates anarchy, there are a growing number of wo/men in Asia who own the label as their identity and commitment. For such people the term feminist is not just another one of the ‘isms’ that give academic and political mileage. It is a lived struggle, a call and commitment that is ever dynamic, open and evolving in the many contexts their journeys take them. It is a struggle to break out of the socialised self and journey towards a Subject-Self. It is a call to resist all systems that are death-dealing, hierarchical and destructive of equal, just, loving relationships. It is a conscious commitment to live out this resistance while also celebrating Self and other Selves on a similar journey committed to justice. It is an accountability to the least and marginalized that goes beyond tokenism to exercising creative and sustainable solidarity and involvement in each others’ struggles without resorting to binary and/or linear thinking that sees one struggle/cause as more important/deserving than another.

This issue tries to push the boundaries of feminist biblical hermeneutics (that is already an alternate stream of interpretation vis a vis the mainstream interpretative practices) by also adding “Critical” praxis to it. Being “critical” is not just an academic exercise but a conscious ongoing way of life, honed by exposure, experience, practice and an undying commitment to unlearning, deconstruction/reconstruction and reimagination; it is a willingness to transform one’s self and other selves that are committed to journeying for justice, and, together believe that “the ‘divine’ is the grace that happens in the struggle for justice” – Bringing all of this to bear in the interpretation of texts and life is a journey both painful and rewarding. It is a step of courage and enormous

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faith in the validity of one's own sense of authority as a genuine Subject-Self that does not seek validation from the systems and structures that crowd in on us – including so-called authority of scripture or the “word of god”.

This issue of IGI showcases for our readers the attempts of our authors to explicate and exercise critical feminist biblical hermeneutics that is strongly grounded in the authors' own experiences and journeys as Selves seeking transformation along with the communities they are part of. Bringing our lived realities as persons and interpreters to bear on the text interpreted gives the interpretation that much more flesh and life and meaning that can be truly transformative of our contexts. We hope our readers will find this issue of IGI both enlightening and transformative of the ways we read and interpret the bible and our lives.

This issue has been very long in the making. We would like to thank our subscribers, members and funders for your patience with the delays. Our sincere thanks go to the artists/illustrators who have helped put together the artwork for this issue or given us permission to use artwork from their collection. Their contributions make IGI more unique in its identity as a journal which embraces all forms of expressing theology. Artists whose works feature in this issue are: Silas Surya Prakash (pgs 27, 31, 35, 59 & 72); Keren Soruba Joseph (pgs 19 & 53); Jen-wen Wang (pgs 2, 12 & 63).

Without the kind assistance of Clare Law, Yong Ting Jin and Hisako Kinukawa this issue would not have seen the light of day. Each of them made time for IGI work amidst their own commitments. For their willingness to go the extra mile and their team spirit, IGI and AWRC are indebted.

*Jessica Richard*

