

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Women's experience

Human experience is the starting point of a cycle of interpretation of the world, society and even the Bible. The fact that women are biologically different from men is not a completely irrelevant factor. Women, through their bodies, have some distinctive experiences of the world that men do not have. For example, men have never experienced the pain and joy of childbirth. Rosemary Radford Ruether (1985a:113; see also 1993:12-16) finds "women's experiences such as these a paradigm of divine-human relationships". Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel (1991:ix) sees that "the difference between the sexes is governed not so much by the differences between their bodies, as by the different social relationships and insights that result from them, although sometimes, these are conditioned by the body". But that means that difference should not be reduced to the biological categories nor to eternal modes of being (ontological categories), but should include the historical experiences of women and men as they can be found today in analyses by social psychologists as well as in personal statements of women.

Some women's experiences have been created by social and cultural persuasion in a male dominant society. Letty Russell (1974:29; see in Russell & Clarkson 1996:257-258) says, "the domination of women by men is an ancient and persistent form of subjection of human being to a permanent status of inferiority because of sex". In such a society, women were treated as inferior and marginalized by male dominance. For example: in some cultures, menstruation and childbirth were interpreted by men and accepted by women as unclean or as pollution, so women were alienated from a positive understanding of their own bodily experience. Russell (1974:9; cf Firestone 1970:1-14; Foucault 1984a) realizes that "the oppression of women is the most universal form of exploitation, which supports and perpetuates other forms of exploitation in both church and society".

Women should now begin to use their experiences as a liberating empowerment from within the patriarchal cultural context. Women's experiences can be used to criticize androcentric interpretations, which define who and what women are. In the androcentric cultures of the biblical traditions, masculine characteristics are ascribed to God as a projection of male authority and superiority in society (Russell 1974:98). Women should begin to see this and to name their experiences. They should at last affirm their own bodies and their experiences as playing a good role for them. Then will they be able to free themselves from androcentric ideologies.

In some texts of the Bible, the woman of ancient Israel is portrayed as a class of property (Ex 20:19; Dt 5:21) and women of the early church were treated as inferior (1 Cor 11:3). A reading of the Bible provides different ways of talking about women, for example that women were created in the image of God (Gn 1:27), which means that women are valued in certain verses, but in other verses women were nameless and invisible. To illustrate the problem some evidence of the submissiveness of women is shown in this sample of biblical literature.

... If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days... But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks (Lv 12:2, 5).

The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire (Lv 21:9).

... the men of the city, base fellows, be set the house round about, beating on the door; and they said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him." And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren, do not act so wickedly...

here are my virgin daughter and his concubine;
let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do
with them what seems good to you; but against this
man do not do so vile a thing” (Jdg 19:22-24).

A certain woman threw an upper millstone upon
Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull. Then he
called hastily to the young man his armor-bearer,
and said to him, “Draw your sword and kill me,
lest they say of me, ‘A woman killed him’” (Jdg 9:53-54).

Now King David was old and advanced in years;
and although they covered him with clothes, he
could not get warm. Therefore his servants said
to him, “Let a young maiden be sought for my lord
the king... let her lie in your bosom, that my lord
the king may be warm.” So they sought for a beautiful
maiden throughout all the territory of Israel, and
found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the
king (I Ki 1:1-4).

A good wife...

.....

She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

She girds her loins with strength
and makes her arms strong.

She perceives that her merchandise is profitable (Pr 31:10, 16-18).

A continual dripping on a rainy day and a
contentious women are alike (Pr 27:15).

The lips of a loose woman drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;
But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
sharp as a two-edged sword (Pr 5:3-4).

The Lord has created a new thing on earth:
a woman protects [lit., encompasses] a man (Jr 31:22).

I will not punish your daughters
when they play the harlot,
nor your brides when they commit adultery;
for the men themselves go aside with harlot,
and sacrifice with cult prostitutes (Hs 4:14).

In the Old Testament, women are either heroines, for example Sarah, Deborah, Ruth, Esther, or villains, such as Jezebel, and Delilah. More often women are not mentioned at all. Women's names do not appear in the genealogies. Phyllis Bird (1974:41) points out that "the Old Testament is a 'Man's Book', where women appear for the most part simply as adjuncts of men, significant only in the context of men's activities". She continues, to say, "the Old Testament is a collection of writings by males from a society dominated by males".

The following New Testament texts are also examples of the androcentric biases of the male traditions.

"But I want you to understand that the head of every man
is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the
head of Christ is God" (I Cor 11:3).

Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered
dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or

prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head
it is the same as if her head were shaven (I Cor 11:4-5).

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should
keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted
to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says (I Cor 14:34-35).

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.
For the husband is the head of wife as Christ
So also wives should submit to their husbands in everything (Ep 5:22-24).

These passages demonstrate the submissiveness of women in biblical times and cultures. The Bible is male-centered and seems to take a serious view of men and their activities. This is evident in its transmission, translation and interpretation, so far. Throughout history, there were many tyrannical rulers who ruled for short or long periods but were eventually, overthrown. But the regime of sexism seems to be unending. Women have experienced the oppression of women as one of the oldest forms of oppression in human history. Ruether (1985a:113) expresses it as follows.

Women's experience explores the exposing of classical theology as a critical force, including its foundational tradition in Scripture, as shaped by male experience rather than human experience. Women's experience makes the androcentric bias of the original formulations and ongoing interpretations of the tradition visible, rather than hidden behind the mystifications of divine authority.

1.2 Korean women's experience

Korean women have experienced classism, sexism, and tribal conflicts. Korean women have had a triple burden. Classism is basically caused by the politics, the economics, and the history of Korea. Sexism mainly resulted from ethical and religious discrimination in Korea. Tribal conflicts occurred in the family system.

Korean women have had experiences of social oppression in the history of Korea. Korea was an extremely patriarchal society in the pre-modern era. Confucianism had a significant influence on Koreans, during the Lee dynasty, which lasted 500 years (1394-1910). Korean society was a men-centered society; "Man is heaven and woman is earth, so woman must follow man" (Han KY¹ 1991:67). Women did not have any chance to participate in political activities. Women's role was only to feed the family and care for their households. Also, the king was considered to be heaven and people earth. Korean politics obviously had different social levels: people who were high class were rich but the low class was very poor. Their social level was an inheritance from their parents. Women's positions were decided according to their husbands and husbands' family. Women who were in the lower classes were treated harshly. Korean women were continually taught obedience and endurance without complaining. Some sayings expressed Korean women's experience in the pre-modern era: women should be blind, even though they saw something; women should be deaf, even though they heard something; women should be mute, even though they had something to say. The philosophy of Confucianism led Korea to discriminate against women in its history. Politically, Korea was a monarchy during the 19th century, and during the 20th century was colonized by Japan, experienced the Korean Civil War and military dictatorship, until it eventually settled for democratic government.

During the Japanese colonialization, many Korean women were forced to serve Japanese armies as "comfort women". The Japanese took 200 thousand young women under the name of "comfort women" to the field of war. Fifty thousand or seventy thousand among them became prostitutes for Japanese soldiers. They were between 16 and 32 years old. This was nothing short of forced prostitution for serving the Japanese soldiers in the World War II. The Korean government found this to be a shameful loss of morality. The government hid this reality officially until 1992. In Korean history, Korea was often powerless. Korean women were powerless, voiceless, and invisible. Many of the comfort women were killed by the Japanese when the Japanese lost World War II. Some of these women remained in Japan. A small number of them returned to their

¹ Because of the fact that a great number of the Korean population has the same surnames, it is necessary to write the author's initial name with the surname.

birthplaces in Korea, but they were seen as sinners or shameful persons. They were exploited by Japanese colonialization and ignored by the Korean government.

As far as religion is concerned, shamanism was an indigenous religion in the pre-modern era. Buddhism was a national religion from the end of the 9th century to the 13th century, and Confucianism was a national religion in the Lee dynasty (from the 14th century up to 1910). Women were not treated as valuable in Buddhism or Confucianism. When Christianity came to Korea, women were shocked by the teachings of Christianity. Korean women became aware of their miserable situation in society and cultural customs (see Lee OJ & Lee HS 1989:15-19, 31). Christianity spread rapidly among the peasant class. Missionaries had easier access to these classes. For example, women stayed at home. When they went out, they had to cover their faces. Women did not have the opportunity to be educated. Different social levels resulted in different roles and attitudes. Some people belonged to royal families and others were slaves from their birth. The first Korean churches were built in the shape of a “V” to conform to cultural customs. One line of the “V” was for women and the other line for men. Or, alternatively, in a conventional rectangular building, there was a curtain between the seats for men and women, because men and women could not sit and talk together. People of different classes could not sit together either. Christianity had broken the barriers of social classes and changed the dominant thinking. Christianity was the “Good News of liberation” for the poor, slaves, and women. However, since the Korean church became institutionalized, the system once again became hierarchical. Korean women became invisible once again.

Today, more than 20% of the population in Korea is Christian and more than half the members in Korean churches are women. But most of the clergy consists of men and they have taught the Bible from a male-centered perspective. In the past, Korean women were taught biblical interpretations and teachings by male ministers who were obviously one-sidedly men-centered. Regardless of this, Christian women wished to be good believers so they tried to obey those instructions. Women in Korean culture should sacrifice themselves for the family, society, and nation. Likewise, the Korean church also demands of female Christians to sacrifice themselves for the church.

However, the situation for women in Korean society altered drastically during the 19th century to the 20th. One reason for this is the change from premodernism to

modernism to postmodernism. Ways of thinking have changed, for example all human beings are considered to be valuable and equal. Women could also obtain human rights. Another reason is economical changes. An agricultural society turned into a multi-industrial society, which allowed the country to break free from underdevelopment and become a developing nation. Through these changes, more people began to move away from male-centered ideologies. Another reason is feminist theology. Feminist theology offers a different approach to the religious understanding of women and men by exposing the cultural conditioning of religious belief (Isherwood & McEwan 2001:74). Nevertheless, women in Korea have been secondary politically, economically, socially, and religiously. Korean women have been taught subordination in society and in the church. Female Christians have been struggling to find their position as Christian women, who want to accept the Bible. Korean women belong to Korean society, so they have experienced Korea's history as witnesses, as actors, or as victims.

1.3 Problem Statement

1.3.1 Relevance of Study

Many things have continually changed throughout the last 100 years: Koreans' customs, lifestyle, thinking, manner, political structures, the economic system, educational methods, international relationships with other countries, and so on. Korean history can be discussed from the perspective of the pre-modern, modern, and postmodern eras.

Korea in the premodern era was a patriarchy. Korean patriarchy was institutionalized by the "kingship system" that was the politico-legal institution recognized by the Lee dynasty, and was supported spiritually by Confucianism since 1394. This authoritative power of kingship ruled the country politically, socially, and culturally. Since every policy was decided under the authoritative name of kings, no one was allowed to resist that power. Patriarchy remained as a norm of living, influencing thinking, morals, and even affecting various religions. To support the patriarchal system, the family system was fully utilized. The father had absolute power at home, wives and children were subordinated to him. The women's inferiority in society corresponds to the patriarchal

structure of society. "Patriarchy" literally means "rule of the father". Patriarchy is the sanctuary of male authority over female and over younger people. For five hundred years, male dominated societies have accepted patriarchy as a "natural order": women should serve men, and children should serve their parents, because they are the ones with the weaker mind who should serve the stronger. Here, subordination is linked with inferiority. The authority of men with regard to women is based on superiority. Patriarchy creates order, and controls the economy and politics in society.

In the traditional Korean society, women were largely confined to the home. From a young age, women were required to learn the Confucian virtues of subordination and endurance to prepare for their future roles as wife and mother. While being denied any opportunity to participate in the management of the large extended family, women played an important role, as they served to maintain the family line. Women were invisible, voiceless, nameless, and treated as secondary in the pre modern era. Women were not allowed to work in public places, even though they dedicated themselves to their families as beloved wives, respected mothers and hard workers. Women were unable to obtain any rights in the family and in society; they were invisible. Women were neither allowed to speak or be heard in society or in their family. Women did not have the right to express their feelings; they were voiceless. When a baby girl was born, the parents were not happy, because they needed men for agricultural labour. Parents did not give their daughters names with meaning. After marriage, women lost their names. They were either called somebody's wife, somebody's mother or somebody's family member. Nobody remembered women's names. And even women themselves did not want to be called by their names officially; women were nameless. Women were forbidden to study at any public educational institutions in the premodern era. They were required to learn only housework. They were marginalized from politics, economy, cultures and even religions. Women were victims. Because people were influenced by patriarchal ideologies and men-centered education, women were treated as secondary, whereas men were given priority in all cases. What were the Korean women's identities in the premodern era? Women were to be virgins and obedient to their parents before marriage. They identified themselves with obligations to be quiet and obedient to their husbands

after marriage, and they strove to be a good assistant, a good cook, a good cleaner and a hard worker at home.

For Korean women, the modern era is seen as the period in time when they started to work and to be educated, so they came to self-awareness and learned to express their opinions individually or as a group in the society. Generally speaking, the modern era was closely connected to the development of capitalism. The Korean dynasty started to change into capitalism, not by choice, but because of the diplomatic relations with some powerful countries, forced on Korea by Japan, during more or less the end of the 19th century. During this time Korea became a Japanese colony. This means that the Korean women's experiences were very different from that of the women of other countries. Many Korean women became prostitutes. Despite the Japanese colonization, Korean women faced the modern era and their lives were changing as Korea came out of the premodern era.

The situation began to improve, however, thanks to the education of women, followed by the opening of the country to the outside world. Educated Korean women engaged in the arts, teaching, and religious work, as well as the enlightenment of other women. The self-awakening of women led to the realization of their national consciousness and patriotism against the Japanese occupation. Women took part in the independence movement with no less vigour, determination and courage than men did. A movement of women's liberation calling for expanded rights also began to emerge. Women began to ask what their tasks were for their society, their class, and their country. They began to ask how they themselves understood women's positions and problems, moreover how women could work together to solve their problems positively. For the first time, a number of educated elite women were seen to be very important by ordinary Korean women. Those elite women challenged Korean men and women. They broke through traditional thinking on, for instance, marriage, female education, and female activity in the society. They were not accepted in the traditional society. For example, most of them could not marry because bridegrooms did not want to marry educated brides. Men worried that they could not control educated wives. They feared that those women wished to control their husbands, and did not respect them. There was another reason for the elite women not to have married. While they studied, they had missed the chance to

get married because it was popular to get married at an early age. The other reason was that they rejected traditional marriage because they did not want to be as slaves. The elite women pointed out what women's problems were and criticized Korean society. They showed a new direction for the improvement of women's lives. But most of the Korean women were still poor farmers and workers. The educated women started to speak and act for the poor agricultural women who were the majority. Korean women began to realize that they too had personal and national rights as did women of other countries. But they did not deal deeply with the women's classic problems, in terms of improvement of social positions. This meant that there were no changes for the better regarding the official position of women.

With the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948, women attained constitutional rights to equal education and job opportunities and to participate in public life. A growing number of parents came to believe that their daughters needed to be educated in various fields, as the work of the female population was needed for industrialization. Korean men and women concentrated on only one task, which was to develop industry, during the modern era. There was nothing - because everything had been destroyed in the Korean Civil War (1950-1953). The modern era gave the opportunity for many factories to be built by the Korean government. It was time that women went to work in order to contribute to the economic and industrial growth of the country. Many young women were employed in factories for the first time. They were happy to earn money. But despite their service to Korean industry and economy, women were discriminated against in terms of low wages, a poor working environment, long working hours and being treated as inferior compared to their male workers. During this era, people came to realize the importance of women's labour. It was an important time for women to rise from obscurity and to show their value. But women's voices were still weak. They still mostly endured their bad conditions just as they had endured the traditional structures of the premodern era.

It is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of the postmodern era because the modern era and the postmodern eras are closely linked. It is necessary to understand the phenomenon of postmodernism in Korea. The Korean feminist theologian Kim Ai-Young (1995:228) criticizes Cox's (1965) insistence that postmodernism can be explained only in terms of

the societies of the United States of America and other western countries. Cox (1965) argues that other countries do not experience postmodernity. Kim AY criticizes Cox for his American superiority. Cox says that postmodernity cannot be experienced before a country has passed through modernity. Postmodern thinking was introduced in Korea by American literature and literary theories, such as the construction, deconstruction of western postmodernism, which are the main theories and methods of western literary analysis. The Koreans did not study and discuss postmodernism much, but they accepted it. Korean society did not have enough experience and had not spent enough time on modernism itself. Nevertheless, the life-style of Korean society is not very different from that of North America or any other western countries, and there is evidence of postmodern trends in Korea. It means that Korean society has been affected by the postmodern popularization of western capitalism, whose motto is "pursuit of profits" and "only emphasizing convenience". Postmodernism connects with the economy. Taking over of Western ideas in Korea started with the disillusionment of a dull labour market. Korea accepted postmodernism as a social stream with the collapse of the international socialism. Postmodernism and postmodern theologies, which are spreading in the world, seem to favour America in establishing their power in the world. The American economic system and politics are deeply intertwined with the politics and economies of the world. It can be seen as the late monopolistic capitalism. These factors do not make much allowance for pluralism in the world, with the possible exception of cultural plurality. Even though people speak positively of a variety of lives, various rhythms, theories, sounds, colours and opinions, reality does not reflect this positivity. The world can succumb to a kind of fascism, dictated by the American politics and economical system. Postmodern theologies are attempting to explain many phenomena of postmodernism, but there are limitations.

Knowledge of the world has changed in the past decades. Korea is not yet completely free from the ideologies of the Cold War, because the two parts of Korea still exist. Korea needs to consider postmodernism; for whom postmodernism applies to; for what the advantages and disadvantages of postmodernism are in Korea.

One characteristic associated with postmodernity is deconstruction. Korean women need to re-evaluate personal and social values of Confucianism, which is men-centered,

by means of a method of deconstruction. Confucian ethics and views on the world have been deeply imprinted on all facets of Korean society. Also, Korean Christians are not completely free from Confucian thought. Christianity represents the western culture, which is individualistic. But East Asia, including Korea, has a Confucian culture, which emphasizes family and family ties. When Kim, Jung Ha (1996:349) draws Asian-American women's lives, says that "Confucianism indicates an apparent stability and coherence of Asian-American families". However, this does not come without high costs, which are paid by Asian-American women in particular. The notion of family is seen as the basis of all human relations. The authority of fathers, who are the heads of each family, is important for guarding the security and harmony of their families. It follows that male superiority and female subordination is necessary in such a system. The Confucian notion of family is the foundation of the Korean educational system, religious institutions, political structures, and even personal relations in Korean society. Thus, today, Korean women need to analyze and deconstruct patriarchal values, which uphold the system of inequality. Through analysis and deconstruction, Korean women will be able to not only improve their social position, but also change the structures of society from their roots. I will deal with an analysis of Korean women and their lives through Korean literature in chapter 5.

Korea's economy will be dealt in chapter 3. A series of successful economic development plans have helped Korea achieve remarkable economic growth and social transformation. Women have had increasingly greater opportunities to take part in economic activities. Export-orientated industries in particular have come to require a large female labour force. As of 1995, there were 8.2 million working women who accounted for 40.4 % of the total work force (Facts 1998:85). Despite this increase, the number of women holding high positions in administration and management, is still very small. Korean women, however, are actively engaged in a wide variety of fields including education, medicine, science, engineering, scholarship, arts, literature and sports. The number of famous females, business executives and university presidents has been increasing. Although only a handful in number, some women have proven their ability as leaders, for example as cabinet ministers. From these examples it is clear that Korean women can develop their potential and make a significant contribution to society.

The government realized that it must develop new policies for women, because of the increasingly important role of women and the changes in Korean society. By a presidential decree, the National Committee on Women's Policies was formed in 1983 with representatives of the concerned government ministries (Facts 1998:87). The Korean Women's Development Institute was established in the same year to make a comprehensive study of women's issues and link its findings with actual policies. The government established the Ministry of Political Affairs to handle women's matters in 1988 in compliance with the changing social environment. In the same year, 15 Female Welfare Bureaus with women directors were also established at the Provincial and City Divisions. Female chiefs in towns and counties assembled to deal with women's welfare issues (Facts 1998:94). In 1994, a special Committee on Women was established at the National Assembly as a permanent body to discuss and legislate women's affairs. In 1995, there were two women in the cabinet, serving as the Minister of Political Affairs and the Minister of Education (Facts 1998:94). The National Assembly would accept 30 female members in 2000, according to the proportional representation system. Women's roles in society have expanded to the highest decision-making levels. Suggestions by various women's organizations are reflected in policy decisions following the increase in the number of educated women as well as the social movement toward sexual equality.

Korean feminist theology began in Korea in the 1970's. The aim of Korean feminist theology was the establishment of human rights, and the resistance against political dictatorship between the 1960s and the 1970s. In the beginning of the 1980s, feminist theology blossomed in Korea. Some foreign feminist theological works (cf Ruether 1979, 1985b; Russell 1982; Tribble 1984; Schüssler Fiorenza 1981a) were translated into Korean and Korean women wrote many feminist books themselves (Lee OJ 1983, 1985, 1987, 1988; Kim YO 1988; Lee ES 1989, 1991; Lee HS 1992; Lee KS 1991; Lim HS 1991; Choi MJ 1987, 1990, 1991, 1995; Choi KS 1981; Chung HK 1990), sharing their own experiences. The following questions were addressed: How can women understand a male God (Ruether & Bianchi 1992)? What are the female characteristics of God (Moltmann-Wendel 1991)? What is the image of Jesus Christ from the perspective of the Korean women (Chung HK 1990)? What are the feminist theologians' opinions about

the Korean situation (Park SK 1983)? Feminist theology gave Korean women a wake-up call to become motivated and do something.

There is a specific theology called the "*Minjung* theology" in Korea. *Minjung* theology is an indigenous Korean theology (see Lee JH 1994:5, 159, 135-162; Choo CY 1983:73-79; Moon HS 1983:123-137; Ahn BM 1983:138-154; Suh KS 1983a:15-37, 1983b:38-46; Kim YB 1981:25-31). It emerged in the beginning of the 1970s. "*Minjung*" means "ordinary people". *Minjung* theologians explained that *Minjung* represents the isolated people: the poor, those who were politically oppressed and the marginalized in society. Jesus is the liberator from economical poverty, social discrimination, cultural prejudice and political oppression. Jesus represents the ordinary person (*Minjung*). Jesus tried to liberate people, but was eventually crucified. *Minjung* theology is in a way similar in purpose and aims to the liberation theology in Latin America and the Dalit theology in India. Just as a feminist theology is significant for women, so is *Minjung* theology for the ordinary citizens of Korea. Theologically, Korea has been developing *Minjung* theology and feminist theology. Nevertheless, *Minjung* theology is not concerned in the liberation of women from the patriarchal system. Korean women were alienated completely as marginal and, as a result, they suffered from dual oppression: the oppression in patriarchy and indifference to women of *Minjung* theology. Korean feminist theologians attempt to articulate their identity as Korean women and to find their own way of theologizing as feminist. Despite the differences in cultures and societies, women's oppression occurs everywhere in patriarchal societies, and is reinforced by patriarchal religion (Heine 1988:4). What can save women from destructive patterns of domination and violence that threaten women, all humans, and the planet itself? Sharma (1994:329) mentions that "women need to exorcise the androcentric model of humanity from their consciousness and replace it thoroughly and completely, once and for all, with an androgynous model of humanity".

The gendering of social life comes from patriarchal and androcentric ideologies. It should be concerned with the representation, rights, and status of women and men. Women fight against authoritative patriarchy because women think patriarchy made them shrink. Women are invisible, nameless, worthless, and inferior in patriarchy. Moreover, Korean women have been required to obey men. Lisa Isherwood and Dorothea McEwan

(2001:75) say, "faith is not an act of obedience without growth of one's own power". Women want to overcome the barriers of patriarchal ideologies in the contemporary world and in the church; because women may experience life communion with Jesus; because women may live in interaction with Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark. Through theology, I have discovered the interaction between women and Jesus. The Jesus movement is as inconceivable without Jesus, as it is also inconceivable without women disciples. Women were always following and serving, yet they were not always recognized at the center of activity. But invisibly, they became partners of Jesus. They were considered authentic models by Jesus and Jesus said that their names would be remembered wherever the gospel was proclaimed e g a woman broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head (Mk 14:9). Nevertheless, even now, women are called to create and to maintain equality, to share their experiences of following Jesus and serving others, and to challenge men to be transformed until they commit themselves to solidarity with the powerless, by following Jesus who always goes before them (see Kinukawa 1994:143).

It is important for women to share equal discipleship in church and society, and to let women witness the true liberation of the oppressed. Women should achieve human liberty, equality, and full citizenship in contemporary democratic societies. Women should participate, for their freedom, in the feminist discourse of postmodernity. Women should no longer feel inferior, but rather, realize what the sexual and moral differences between men and women in the new society are. Furthermore, male or female Christians want to understand human beings as a whole or the nature in Christianity. The "whole gospel for the whole world" should be seen through both female and male eyes, be understood with both male and female hearts, and be borne witness to by a new community of both women and men. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel (1991:40) says, "for too long we have heard only half the gospel, with the male half of humankind. It is important today to understand it completely in the fullness of the female and male creation of humankind and with the fullness of Spirit".

The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of the reality of Korean women and how they have created an identity for themselves. Korean women have partaken in the entire Korean history alongside Korean men, but women have also had their own

experiences. I aim to illustrate the importance of the issue of female visibility through Korean literature from a Korean woman's perspective. Women are valuable to God but are treated as secondary in the dominant ideologies of the society. A focus on the place of women in the church can increase the knowledge of the history of Korean Christian women in two important ways: first, women have improved their positions in the society but second, women still need to continually liberate themselves in the church. However, the Korean church has not overcome spiritual dualism and social negation of women. Women continually need to rediscover themselves as the people of a promise, and unfold the new creation from a theological perspective. Women will be able to rediscover the unique theological insight and profound social meaning of Paul's "neither male nor female" in Christ. It was neither social reality alone, nor spirituality alone, to which Paul gave new definition. To be "in Christ" was to be a part to the ushering in of an entirely new mode of human existence.

Images of Jesus will be discussed to explore the possibilities of authentic life before God for Korean women. Sussane Heine (1988:139) explains that "Jesus goes the way of loneliness, to the victims, the lost and to women". Jesus Christ, the man, was an alien in his society as he strove against the dominant thinking and customs. Jesus was involved for the sake of others. Jesus showed compassion, sympathy, solidarity, and hope. Heine (1988:139) expresses that "involvement stands against desperation, togetherness stands against loneliness, compassion is against grief, and sympathy, solidarity, and hope are against evil." Both men and women suffer and are victims, but women more so than men. Jesus showed compassion to the weak, to the poor, to the sick, to the lost, and to women.

The aim of this study is not only to criticize some texts and society, but also to look for women's potential and the potential of a reformative society. So far, Korean feminist theologians have not yet analyzed Korean society thoroughly, because they have focused only on women themselves. Therefore they were not concerned with existing problems which are related to oppressive structures. Korean feminist theologians did not yet analyze sexism and other oppressive structures in Korean society and the Korean churches. In this study, Korean women's problems and the situations which they face will be described. Then, the situations and the reasons for the problems will be analyzed, criticized, and ways looked for, of solving them. Korean women need to overcome

gender-motivated readings of the gendered texts. I wish to stimulate a debate concerning gender, voices, and authority in biblical literature and Korean literature, in order to transcend the more traditional interpretations.

1.3.2 Research Plan

Methods of Practical Theology, postmodernism, and feminist theology will be investigated in chapter 2. Characteristics of practical theology, postmodernism and feminist theology will be explored, too. Practical theology allows the methods of scientific and logical research. Postmodernism is understood as having three main characteristics described as “antifoundational, antitotalizing, and demystifying” (Adam 1995:5). Postmodernism refuses to posit any one premise as the privileged one. Postmodernism allows for variety, for example various starting points and various interpretations. The postmodern way of thinking is as useful for me in criticizing Korean society and church, as is the feminist critique. Isherwood and McEwan (2001:150) say that “many feminist theologians embrace postmodernism as a useful companion, since it questions all meta-narratives, as feminist have been doing for many centuries, and works in limited truth claims”. Feminist theology, deconstructive methods and feminist critique will be explored in chapter 2.

In chapter 3, I will review some aspects concerning Korean women including Korean history, politics, economics, education, and the religio-cultural background. The Korean gender system will also be discussed in chapter 3.

In chapter 4, I will explore the perspectives of fundamentalists’ and feminist theologians’ view on the Bible. The approach of the Korean church is similar to that of the fundamentalists, who regard the Bible as infallible. The meaning of gender and the social roles of women in the early Christian, the Greco-Roman, the late Roman periods and the time of the letters of Paul, will be discussed. Korean Christian women’s understanding of Jesus will be studied. From Korean women’s perspectives Jesus is seen as Savior, as suffering servant, as Lord, as liberator, as mother and woman, and as life-giver.

In chapter 5, some of Korean literature will be explored from a Korean woman’s perspective and a postmodern hermeneutical perspective in Korean literature. Patriarchal

ideologies will be criticized with the methods of feminist critique and deconstruction. Lezbeth Goodman (1996:vii) explains literature "as a body of writing that aims to be creative. Literature includes forms of writing which deliberately and creatively experiment with language in order to create images and ideas which engage the reader's imagination and interpretation". Gender is a social or cultural category, influenced by stereotypes of "female" and "male" behaviour that exist in people's attitudes and beliefs. Such beliefs are produced or constructed by cultures. Men-centered factors will be analyzed and women's possibilities will be explored in the stories and in the society of Korea. For analysis of the Korean literature, there are some questions: who are the main characters? Is the main actor male or female? What prejudice do the actors reveal/describe? Which characters are active and which are passive? Is the system in the story male-centered or female-centered? What possibilities do women have in the society of the story? How do the texts contribute to the oppression of women? To what extent do women participate in the liberation of women? What is women's position on their inner selves? What are women's evaluations of the society? What factors allow people to reform the society?