

Chapter 4

The Bible and Korean Christian Women

The aim of this chapter is to investigate how Korean Christian women understand the Bible. Their context is Korean churches which are fundamentalist in their approach, as well as the patriarchal ideology of Korean society. In this chapter, I endeavour to look critically at the phenomenon of fundamentalism. In the Korean churches Jesus is understood as the King and God, as suffering servant, as Savior, and as Lord. Korean churches have taught women to obey God and the king. This means in effect that Christian women need to obey men in Korean culture, and even in the Korean church. Women should endure their suffering as boldly as Jesus. Christian women, on the other hand, see Jesus as liberator, as mother and woman, and as life-giver. This chapter aims at empowering Korean Christian women to interpret the Bible as liberating and life-giving to them.

4.1 Understandings of the Bible

The Bible has religious authority. The Bible contains historical information and doctrinal data relevant to its foundational role in Christianity. Christians have been much affected by the text. James Barr (1980:52) points out that being a Christian is believing that there is a deity; it is believing in a particular God, the God who has manifested himself in a way that has some sort of unique and specific expression in the Bible. Since Christians understand their experiences partly in terms of these texts, it is very important that they be heard in appropriate ways, and misleading passages be challenged in the light of the Gospel. Theological interpretation prefers theological arguments on individual passages rather than the “women’s history” approach to the Bible suggested by the hegemony of historical study in modern biblical scholarship.

The androcentric bias of the Bible not only erases women’s presence in the past history of the community to a great extent, but also silences even the very questions about their absence (Ruether 1985a:113). Biblical texts are often not only contradictory but also sexist and racist. Some feminist reject the Bible and its authority because of such

reasons. Russell (1985:140-141) states that “no interpretation of authority that reinforces patriarchal structures of domination would be acceptable for feminist interpretation”. The Bible is understood as a “dangerous” book (cf Stanton 1898; Wright 1969). I realise that not everything the Bible says is equally helpful to each individual, especially to women of faith. Moreover, there are many cases of false interpretation and misuse of the Bible. Most Korean churches understand the Bible as “the Word of God”. Ernest Wright (1969:166-185) says that the Bible is especially dangerous if we call it “the Word of God” and think that divine right means that everything we read is right. Feminist approaches – criticism/deconstruction – try to liberate the Bible from patriarchy, which is the first step to theological consideration.

Questions of authority are ultimately understood in terms of the readers’ own religious, social, political, and economic background or context. It is important to make the context clear and invite others to share their own contexts and how these shape their views on authority. Schüssler Fiorenza (1985:135) sees the Bible as a structuring prototype of women-church rather than as a definite archetype; as an open-ended paradigm that sets experiences in motion and invites transformation. Russell (1985:138) confesses that “I myself have no intention of giving up the biblical basis of my theology, in spite of the patriarchal nature of the biblical texts”. Ruether (1985a:116-117) agrees that the “prophetic–messianic” message of continuing self-critique embodies a critical or liberating tradition in the Bible. The prevailing paradigm of authority is the dominant one in the Christian religion. The feminist paradigm on authority, however, is a shift to an interpretive framework that affects both religion and society. The feminist paradigm prevents feminist to accept authority as domination. Russell (1985:144) suggests authority of the feminist paradigm as partnership in biblical and theological truth. This means that people participate in the common task of creating an interdependent community of humanity and nature. Authority is exercised in community and tends to reinforce ideas of cooperation, with contributions from a wide diversity of people enriching the whole (Russell 1985:144). Difference is valued and respected. All humans are worthy as the New Creation in church and society.

Feminist provide new frameworks of authority. Ruether (1985a:111-124) depicts the interpretive key as God’s affirmation of the full humanity of women and all persons

seen in the prophetic witness of Scripture against injustice and dehumanization. Fiorenza's interpretive key is Jesus and the discipleship of equals (see Schüssler Fiorenza 1983). Russell's key is different from that of Ruether and Schüssler Fiorenza. Her key of interpretation is her own life's story: her own expectations of justice and liberty. Schüssler Fiorenza rejects Ruether's correlation between a biblical critical principle and a feminist critical principle as the key to understanding the biblical authority. Fiorenza's critical perspective is based on "the experience of women's struggle for liberation from patriarchal oppression". In the theory of prototype, authority exercised in community creates new possibilities because there are no unchanging archetypes as a basis for authority. From Fiorenza's prototype, the Bible can be understood from a synergetic perspective of authority in community. Bruce Birth (1982) shows that the perspective of authority in community no longer provides one external or one internal biblical key. Russell (1985:146) puts it as follows: "A de-absolutized Canon allows for the honoring of ancient witness to the degree that it reveals to us the basic truths of our faith, while at the same time honoring the power and authority of our own experience of God." The understanding of authority as partnership leads women such as myself to deem it unnecessary to avoid Scripture as a dangerous book of patriarchal ideas and structures. Scripture has given me the faith to be a Christian and the incentive to overcome patriarchal ideologies. Thus, I accept biblical authority and I will work in that category. According to James Barr (1980:55), "the Bible does not have the property of perfection, which belongs only to God himself."

4.1.1. Fundamentalist understanding of the Bible

A group of American Protestant lay people published a set of twelve books with the title *The fundamentals: A testimony of the truth during 1910-1915* (cf Marty & Appleby 1993a, 1993b, 1994; Sweet 1945:291-292; Riesebrodt 1990). These books, selling millions of copies, were given to several denominations of American Protestantism. It seemed to be interdenominational, which meant that there was no "fundamental creed". Stewart Grant Cole (1931:34), who was the pioneer historian of the movement, called it "the famous Five-Points statement of doctrine": the Deity of Christ, his virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, his physical resurrection, and his coming bodily

return to earth. They insisted upon universal Christian acceptance of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Despite its lack of a confessional basis, it provided the most important distinctive emphases of the movement of fundamentalism.

In the 1920s, fundamentalists in the United States formed their own denominations and had an impact on the nation's schools (cf Wuthnow & Lawson 1994:18-56). They organized campaigns against religious liberalism in churches and the teaching of evolution in schools (Ammerman 1994b:14). But while modern voices affected society, fundamentalists lost their crusades for institutional and rhetorical control. They concentrated on evangelism and missions, education and publishing. Nancy Ammerman (1994b:14) states that they maintained a vibrant subculture in the midst of the modern world, a way of life both very modern and defiantly anti-modern.

In the mid-1970s, fundamentalist preachers appeared on television in the United States (cf Marsden 1990:22-37). They seemed to change history rather than believe in an apocalyptic end to history. Thus, they involved themselves in political action in order to stimulate renewed public activism. They paid attention to the dynamic nature of the relationship between belief and culture. In order to change the world, fundamentalist doctrines and life-styles were transported into new cultures and new politics. In the mission field, the fundamentalists were born again to establish new beliefs and practices in a variety of different contexts. Dean M Kelley's (1977) book, *Why conservative churches are growing* shows that fundamentalist churches expand more than liberal or moderate churches. Because fundamentalist moral and doctrine are strict, such strictness is consistent with strong organization, zealous commitment, and bigger donations. Ammerman (1987) emphasizes that the sources of persistence in fundamentalism in the modern world lie in the social process. The community maintains fundamentalism with the experiences of the believer that provides order and legitimates moral discipline.

4.1.1.1 Phenomenon of fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is visible. The word "fundamentalist" was originally used in the early twentieth century to characterize a particular tendency within American Protestantism. Fundamentalism can be described as a heterogeneous miscellany of movements and sects.

Characteristic of fundamentalist thinking and attitudes is the following (see Cohen 1990; Jaroslav 1990; Williams P 1990:249-262; Williams R 1994:785-834):

- Fundamentalists emphasize the inerrancy of the Bible, which means that the Bible does not have any errors.
- Fundamentalists have a strong hostility to modern theology and to the methods, results and implications of the modern critical study of the Bible.
- Fundamentalists think of themselves as “true Christians”. They have an assurance that those who do not share their religious viewpoints are not really “true Christians” at all.

From these aspects, fundamentalism seems to be hostile, narrow, and sectarian. But fundamentalism is not defined clearly and simply in the complex society and religious movements. Dollar (1973:XV) is of the opinion that “historic fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes”. According to his view fundamentalism is one form of revivalist evangelicalism (see Hunter 1987). Fundamentalists would stand up to keep the faith. Patrick M Arnold sees modern fundamentalism as an aggressive and marginalized religious movement. Arnold (1990:174) explains it “as a reaction to the perceived threat of modernity, seeking to return its home religion and nation to traditional orthodox principles, values, and texts through the co-option of the central executive and legislative power of both the religion itself and the modern national state”. His definition shows fundamentalism as much more than a purely religious movement; rather, it involves social and political forces as well. Mortimer Ostow (1990:100) indicates “what the characteristic of fundamentalism is: it is not the text, but the way it is used, the significance and meaning that are assigned to it”. What qualities identify the fundamental community? Fundamentalism is far from homogeneous and is also not coextensive with the evangelical movement. Its tendency has been to split into quarreling sub-units, which contend with each other over their differing positions on religious and social issues, and frequently on the degree of

accommodation that they are willing to extend to the outside community and to the realities of modern life (Ostow 1990:100; cf Herbert 1957).

One of the characteristics of fundamentalism is zeal, which sometimes translates to constructive energy, sometimes to divisive militancy. Fundamentalists reject politics: the political state and political democracy. They reject science, especially the theories of evolution, because science contradicts Scripture in which they believe. They have a negative attitude toward the cognition of the historical development of theology. Thus, Ostow (1990:103; see Harding 1994:57-78) says that “fundamentalism is basically apocalyptic and messianic”. Fundamentalists do not tolerate others. The most well-known phenomenon is the apocalypse – basically, all fundamentalists report a revelation. The world will be destroyed, but a remnant of humanity will be saved to rebuild the world, which will be new, happy, perfect, and immortal. Fundamentalists see themselves as saved people. The people whom others call “fundamentalists” think of their position as the only truly Christian one. Theologically speaking they are more conservative than liberal and so is their interpretation of the Bible. It is necessary to discuss what the phenomenon of fundamentalism is and how it operates.

Barr’s (1977:11) sees the religious basis of fundamentalism not in the Bible but in a particular kind of religion. Fundamentalists believe that a particular experience arises from the Bible and it then controls the interpretation of the Bible. They insist on doctrinal conformity and have a non-historical understanding of Christianity. Historical change has no effect on them as “true Christians”. They keep the faith practices of the church in the time of the New Testament. George M Marsden (1990:25) explains their understanding of the Bible: for fundamentalists “the Bible is not only an infallible authority in matters of faith and practice, but it is also accurate in all its historical and scientific assertions”.

In their view the Bible is the essential source or textbook for their religion, therefore it is the centre of their religion. In the fundamentalists’ mind, the Bible functions in correlation to Christ. While Christ is the true Saviour, fundamentalists put the Bible in the place of Christ. Therefore, the Bible is the sacred reality for them. If someone has a Bible, he or she has the earthly essence of the church. Fundamentalists accept the Bible and the religious tradition without question. They want to protect the Bible against

modes of interpretation which can “damage” the Bible. They understanding the Bible as a symbol: Christ speaks through the Bible. The Bible is the authority. From this symbolic function of the Bible it follows that they believe in the exact words of the Bible. This means that the Bible has absolute authority. The traditional fundamentalist has often been a serious Bible-reader with an excellent knowledge at least of the verbal form of the text, and his or her devotion to it is often based on deep personal experience of help, encouragement and inspiration gained from certain parts of it (Barr 1977:38). In other words the Bible is central to their faith in Christ and their experience of salvation. Such a personal conversion leads to a strengthening of the fundamentalist convictions.

The Bible in fundamentalism is the central symbol of a personal and existential commitment. Fundamentalists interpret the Bible literally and non-literally in order to avoid imputing error to the Bible. Marty and Appleby (1991:818) point out that fundamentalists tend to depict the revealed truth as whole, unified, and undifferentiated. The dominant fundamentalist assertions about the Bible are that it is divinely inspired and the infallible. The Bible contains no error of any kind – not only theological error, but also no historical, geographical, or scientific errors. Fundamentalist interpretation is not literal in itself. They believe that the Bible is authoritative, inspired, infallible, and inerrant because the Bible itself attests to this. Fundamentalist ideas about the Bible are following:

- There cannot be a single error anywhere in the Bible, because the smallest error would totally destroy the inspiration of the whole. There is some flexibility concerning the possible minor errors, but no actual instance of an error is admitted.
- When fundamentalists use the critical approach to biblical literature, it becomes possible to understand the literature, while disregarding all possible errors. Although errors do become important in influencing the meaning of the text in many different ways, they are in themselves, a matter of trivial concern, to scholars and other elements of the critical operation.

4.1.1.2 Fundamentalism in Korea

Most of the Christian churches in Korea also believe that the Bible is literally the “Word of God”. They believe that the Bible has absolute authority and everything is said based on the foundation of the Bible. Most Korean Christians today still adhere to this belief, especially in the conservative denominations. They believe that there is no error in the Bible because it is the “Word of God”. If so, the Bible exercises absolute authority in almost every sphere related to their existence. Most of the lay people think that the Bible is an errorless holy book. Therefore, what the Bible says, should be believed and followed unconditionally without questioning. They believe that this is the duty of those who believe in Christ. For them the Bible provides the norm and contains the truth. On the grounds of this understanding the Bible, these people believe that the ethical contents of the Bible should be observed completely and that the religious and cultural expression of it are all true.

Such a fundamentalist understanding of the Bible in Korean churches were taught by missionaries. American missionaries came to Korea during 1900-1920. Barr points out that the book *The Fundamentals* was published in America, during the years 1910-1915. Fundamentalism emphasizes elements of traditional doctrine such as the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the deity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth and others (Barr 1977:2). Korean feminist theologian, K H Kim (1995:34) criticizes the missionaries’ stance that every letter in the Bible was inspired and that the Bible contains no errors whatsoever. This perspective on the Bible was a means to firmly establish patriarchal ideology in the Korean Christian tradition, which also affected the understanding of gender. Patriarchal aspects in the Bible were taken to be the irrefutable truth to be obeyed as the “Word of God”. This resulted in women being treated as secondary, both at home and at church. Throughout history a hierarchical structure prevailed in Korean churches, which had its origins in Confucianism. Christians have sometimes questioned biblical texts which include violence and discrimination. But in most cases church leaders have silenced their questions; therefore many questions remain unanswered in Korean churches today.

To criticize the understanding of the Bible in the Korean church causes a problem concerning the matter of biblical authority. The Bible has authority because its authority is built into the structure of Christian faith and the Christian religion (Barr 1980:52).

Biblical ideas of God and traditions about God are to be found in the Bible as a written primary source. Scripture is fundamental to the church of God, not because it is a book of true facts about God and about past events, but because it is built into the way in which salvation is achieved in itself (Ackermann & Bons-Storm 1998:53-54). This means that our involvement with the Bible is part of our general religious involvement with God, with the church, and with salvation (Ackermann & Bons-Storm 1998:54).

Barr (1980:54) points out that “biblical authority is part of a faith-attitude that is established by Christian faith in God”. The basis of the authority of the Bible lies in its efficacy in the faith-relation between man and God. Without the faith-relation, the authority of the Bible has no value. Faith is not about “accepting the contents of the Bible” or “believing the Bible”. Christian faith is not primarily faith in the Bible, but rather faith in God. According to Barr (1980:55), “the Bible is only the instrument or the expression of faith, rather than the object of faith”. Fundamentalists understand the Bible as the source of Christian faith itself.

Fundamentalist movements have been fruitful in doing evangelism in Korea. Fundamentalists are not open-minded about the authority of the truth, but rather takes an exclusive dogmatic position on the ultimate truth. Korean women who were Confucian were obligated to follow “the truth”. Fundamentalists, who came to Korea with Western superiority and military technology such as gunboats, firearms, and cannons, came into conflict with the Confucian heritage.

Jang Sang (1980:12), a Korean feminist theologian, points out some major problems in the Korean churches:

- Many denominations have remained separate for the sake of retaining their own points of view and power.
- Often, Christians and the churches are more interested in the economical growth of their church rather than spiritual growth.
- Theology has not developed much.

Jang Sang adds that it is mostly the female Christians, making up more than 60% of the Korean church population, who try to do something about these problems (see also Lee

H.S. 1992:179). In this context, Korean feminist theologians see their first task as overcoming the fundamentalist perspective on the Bible (see Kang NS 1995). They believe that this is the basic obstacle on the road to attaining equality between men and women.

I will now turn my attention to the position of women in the Korean churches. The first Mother's Union in Korea, established in Pyung Yang in 1898, supported many powerless women both in and outside of churches. Though women's efforts were recognized in Korean churches, they were still not allowed to attend Assemblies or church meetings where ministers discussed important matters. Women were always marginalized, yet their service was demanded to serve the church in any every possible way. In 1996 the ordination of women ministers and female elders were permitted in the Presbyterian denominations (the majority of Christian Koreans). This only happened 200 years after Christianity had first come to Korea. It may now seem that men and women have equal opportunity to serve the church. In reality, however, there is still much discrimination against women in people's thinking and in their social customs. Korean churches still tend to find it a problem that women preach from the "holy place": the altar. In the year 2000 the number of female ministers in the Presbyterian Church was only 145 – the same as is has been since 1996 (*KiDok KongBo* 2000:3). In other denominations the number of female ministers was even smaller. Regardless of the discouragement, the ordained women work in churches as ministers or assistant pastors, in schools as Christian educational teachers, and as missionaries in other countries. There were also 170 women who, after having completed the 3 years of preparatory courses, were not invited by any Christian organization or church to be ordained, because they were female (*KiDok Kong Bo* 2000:3). The female ministers in 2002 number 339 in the Presbyterian Church. The situation of female evangelists is even more serious. Their salaries are much lower than that of the males and they do not have the right to preach.

4.1.1.3 Criticism of fundamentalism

Barr (1977:74; see 1980:65-90) is of the opinion that "fundamentalists seem to use the personal loyalty of Christians towards Jesus as a lever to force them into fundamentalist positions on historical and literary matters". This leads to extreme distortions of the

Christian faith. Cox (1995:302) points out that the “fundamentals” are the non-negotiable bedrock beliefs of a religious tradition which has undergone cultural erosion or direct attack by secular forces in the modern age. Fundamentalists often treat fellow believers who do not agree with them more venomously than they do outsiders. Fundamentalists define inquisitors as heretics.

Even though fundamentalists insist that they are “traditional”, they also think of themselves as the “all modern by-products of religious crisis” of the twentieth century. Marty and Appleby (1991:826) find in their analysis that fundamentalists do not simply reaffirm the old doctrines; they subtly lift them from their original context, embellish and institutionalize them, and employ them as ideological weapons against a hostile world. Barr (1977:341) defines fundamentalism “as a highly self-enclosing ideology”.

As far as faith is concerned, fundamentalism emphasizes a personal faith in Christ which is made dependent on a rationalist proof of the inerrancy of the Bible. The promises of God are not considered trustworthy unless all statements in the Bible are “true” (Barr 1977:339). The essential connection between inspiration and inerrancy is formed by one link. If Scripture was inspired, it will necessarily be without errors, as far as historical facts are concerned.

Fundamentalists understand eschatology, the movement towards the future, as a movement in which God does new things within this present age. The tendency in evangelism has been to emphasize a totally new age. A new era is a form of a renewed impact of God’s will upon human beings. On the whole, things get worse rather than better. Apart from a glorious future completely disconnected from the present world, the realization of God’s will lies only in the past. Changing the world is making it worse.

Fundamentalism comes into confrontation with modernity and its characteristics of rationality, pluralism, the public/private dualism, and secularism. Fundamentalists feel hostile towards modern theology and a critical approach to the Bible, because they believe that their religious faith is the truth. Modern theology and biblical criticism would break the intellectual link with the Bible. Fundamentalism is an inclination to base both religious authority and the rejection of modernity upon a literal reading of Scriptural texts. The significance of Scripturalism is that it establishes very clear symbolic boundaries between good and evil, right and wrong (Hunter 1990:68). Fundamentalists

have the criteria with which to distinguish between the faithful and the unfaithful and infidel. From the clash with modernity two issues arise. Firstly the question: how do fundamentalists react to and overcome the crisis in which modern thinking has placed them? Modernity threatens the religious self-identity of the believers of fundamental religion and threatens the very survival of the faith of the orthodox. Christian fundamentalists concede that their frantic efforts to oppose modernity is their fatal flaw. Their prosaic view of the Bible and their cognitive conception of faith – epitomized by a shrill defense of Scriptural “inerrancy” – place fundamentalists squarely in the modern world. Cox (1995:303) sees fundamentalism not as a retrieval of the religious tradition at all, but a distortion of it. The irony is that fundamentalists attempt to fend off modernity by using the weapons of modernity. Secondly, the various “fundamentalisms” in the world today react in different ways or adopt modernity. They do, however, retain their original article: they differ from the classical and historical expressions of their traditions. In other words, truth has transformed itself. How then do fundamentalists define the moral boundaries in order to maintain the orthodox faith? Cox (1995:303) points out that “fundamentalists might seem to undermine their plausibility”. It is difficult for fundamentalists to maintain their absolute truth because of the transformation of absoluteness. Today’s world is open to religious diversity; even fundamentalists have different opinions. The emergence of an assortment of fundamentalisms over decades has led to inevitable discord between them rather than a new beginning for the spirit.

In the modern era, fundamentalism has been challenged by the issues of literary criticism: questions of authorship, unity of books, diversity of sources and dates. Fundamentalists have missed out on the original research because of their position on literary criticism. For example, they have difficulties with the relation to historical narrative and the quest for the “historical Jesus”. The question of the accuracy of the historical reporting in the Gospels brings a completely different perspective to the origin of Scripture. Fundamentalist understanding of faith is related to historical data, but faith cannot be built upon historical data and the authorship of books.

Feminist theologians criticize fundamentalism. Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:5) speaks from the rhetorical context of struggle over meaning and points out that the proliferation of historical-Jesus books for popular and scientific consumption by male-stream biblical

and theological studies functions as the reverse side of the fundamentalist and literal coin. According to Margaret Farelly (1985:41) Scripture is judged by feminist to be a source of faith for theology, ethics, and life, and it also functions to discern the meaning of specific texts and specific aspects of the biblical story. Jesus Christ is reduced to a single, definite discourse of meaning through the fundamentalist perspective (see Lee ES 1989, 1991). Jesus is studied as a factual and historical production. Just as fundamentalist readings, books on the historical-Jesus are concerned with authority. Fundamentalists assert Jesus not as theological revelatory positivism, but as historical positivism. Fundamentalists aim to create an “accurate”, reliable biography of Jesus (see Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:5).

4.1.2 Feminist theologians’ understandings of the Bible

There is a variety of contemporary feminist hermeneutics and hermeneutical problems which feminist confront. A choice needs to be made of how to reflect on the vast existing literature on the topic. Osiek (1997:960-965) discusses five possibilities within contemporary feminism: the rejectionist, revisionist, loyalist, sublimationist and liberationist alternative.

Rejectionist alternative

- Scholars reject the Bible and religious tradition as useless.
- Exponents of this approach are Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Mary Daly.
- Women leave the irredeemable Judeo-Christian legacy to form a new post-Christian faith which transcends its negative power.
- Scholars rejecting the redemption of Judaism and Christianity
- They reject the possibility of conversion
- The rejectionist alternative is a kind of extreme apocalyptic finalism which cannot yield to a dynamic conversion.
- It is not rooted in historical fact or the social present.

Revisionist alternative

- The patriarchal mould the Judeo-Christian tradition is historical but not theologically determined.
- The tradition has been male-dominated, androcentric and discriminatory because of social and historical factors.
- Tradition can be reformed.
- An exponent of this approach is the Old Testament theologian, Catherine Sakenfeld.
- Women's history is explored for neglected sources of information in the tradition.
- Historical sources are re-examined and re-interpreted to find a positive role of women.
- This approach provides a moderate voice against the situation.
- No direct frontal attack on the system is launched.
- This approach manifests a lack of political strategy in its efforts.

Loyalist alternative

- The Bible is the ultimate expression of God's authority.
- The Bible as the Word of God cannot be oppressive in its nature.
- Large numbers of intelligent American women belong here.
- Scholars need to reconcile with the blatant biblical messages of female submission.
- They accept the biblical authority and revelation.
- The problem is seen with narrow-minded interpreters rather than with the text itself.
- This approach is vulnerable in the way it stretches history and the literal meaning of texts.
- The political implications of divine revelation are accepted.

Sublimationist alternative

- Its basic premise is the otherness of femininity as manifested in female imagery and symbolism in human culture.
- Rosemary Radford Ruether is an exponent of this approach.
- Scholars use biblical symbolism and maternal imagery for glorification of the eternal femininity.

- Its tendency is exclusivist and separatist – there is little engagement with the socio-political dimension.
- The inclination is towards dogmatism on the question of female and social roles.

Liberationist alternative

- The premise is a radical reinterpretation of biblical liberation from patriarchal domination in order that all human persons can be partners and equals.
- Letty Russell started the movement, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rosemary Ruether developed it theoretically.
- The central message of the Bible is human liberation, which is the meaning of salvation.
- Scholars reinterpret the Bible within a vision of salvation and new creation.
- The aim is to lead transformation of the social order through structural conversion, both individually and communally.
- Ruether finds the biblical message of liberation in the prophetic tradition. Preaching conversion in an unjust society must be free from any kind of oppression. The hermeneutical dynamic came from biblical texts that are androcentric or patriarchal. Women need to deal freely with “feminist historical reconstruction”. Israel and Christian origins have pragmatic value, but they risk reinforcing a theologically unsatisfactory way of reading Scripture in historical and cultural contexts.
- Schüssler Fiorenza focuses on the texts of the New Testament which transcend androcentric-patriarchal structures, in order to express a new vision of redeemed humanity. The God of the Bible is a patriarchal God, but women believe in God who is not patriarchal. People need to understand the biblical God and it is necessary to criticize the Bible in order to know the true God. Schüssler Fiorenza (see 1985:125-136) understands the Bible in a movement from the “mythic archetype” to the “historical prototype” in order to find the true meaning of the Bible. The “mythic archetype” means to accept the Bible without any critical views and to accept the Bible as the Word of God. The Bible of the “mythic archetype” is the timeless, unchangeable, absolute truth. The biblical understanding of the “historical prototype” is a critical evaluation of the Bible. Sexual/sexist texts of the Bible are not the Words

of God, but they are meanings illustrating male ideologies and cultures. It must be freed from the literal meaning.

- This approach takes a partisan position on revelation.
- The criterion of revelation is narrow in its historical approach to biblical literature.

The five alternatives represent different way of understanding the Bible and have different premises, hermeneutical principles and weaknesses.

4.2 The social roles of women in the Bible and early Christianity

4.2.1 Fundamentalist view of society and culture

The Fundamentalist view of society and culture is explained by Martin Riesebrodt (1990:11) who says that “fundamentalism is primarily a radical patriarchy”. The view of fundamentalist Christians on social and political matters is mostly conservative and connected. The Bible is an example of such connectedness: the image of God in man, the economic laws of the Old Testament, the social criticism of the prophets, the solidarity of Jesus for the poor, and the primitive communism of the early church. American fundamentalism has commonly been strongly aligned with extreme political conservatism during the World War II (Barr 1977:109). Christianity is understood to give complete sanction to the capitalist system and socialist Christian. The evangelical message of fundamentalism however, does not accept capitalist society and its business ideology. Fundamentalists are often accused of socialism and communism. Moreover, the fundamentalist understanding of the gospel and the biblical message challenges all human security. Fundamentalists criticize government intervention in social arrangements, the welfare state, mildly reformist attitudes, higher criticism of the Bible, modern theology, radicalism, liberalism, and socialism, which are all alike, seen as forms of communism masquerading under another name. According to this understanding being a socialist Christian is inconceivable (Barr 1977:109).

The expectation that an ideal society that will supersede the current imperfect society yields utopianism (Ostow 1990:105). The world is a painful reality and is affected by fundamentalists. They see a world filled with immorality, violence, corruption and sin. The experience of conversion is called “rebirth” and a person then becomes a “reborn Christian”. Christ was crucified, then resurrected. In the same way salvation can be understood as a rebirth.

It is ironical that, even though the fundamentalist religion reject capitalistic systems, fundamentalist Christians support the United States uncritically (Pinnock 1990:38-55; Ginsberg 1993:2-21). A Christian country such as the United States is perceived as being ruled by Christian values, using military force against the enemies of God, and enforcing God’s will through laws and policies. Nancy Ammerman (1994a:158) points out that “fundamentalists can usually be assured of legal protection and a certain level of community acceptance that is not automatically afforded a new movement”. When religion becomes the ideological guarantor of the rightness of the existing social order, the claim of the evangelical gospel to be a radical questioning on the inner bases of human self-certainty is suddenly reversed (Barr 1977:110). Such a reversal or contradiction can be seen in several analogous phenomena and it is not accidental in conservative evangelism. Conservative evangelism fits well with nationalistic feeling. An example is the church with a strongly Protestant background in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales which supports the nationalistic trend.

The political involvement and social concern of fundamentalists is seen as an individual matter, because the individual takes political and social decisions as a single unit. Fundamentalists are not accustomed to working in a society in which a multitude of different voices are heard. Moreover, the theological convictions of fundamentalists lie in their personal faith, acceptance and repentance. The gospel is effective only through individual responsibility. Fundamentalists do not accept a social gospel. Liberalism, modernism and biblical criticism agree that the function of a social gospel is very important. Fundamentalists emphasize devotion, not as Christians with a social responsibility, but as individuals. The fundamentalist theory is that the dedicated Christian, through personal involvement in industry or in society, does help to bring about social change. If people themselves have been changed through the true gospel,

then they in turn will change society. It is the two sides of the same coin: one is a personal gospel and the other is a social gospel.

In the late twentieth century, patriarchal structures of family and absolute distinctions between male and female roles were challenged by social changes. Feminism, bureaucratic structures, social morals and modern depersonalization have replaced patriarchal structure. Fundamentalists drew upon modern organizational methods and structures; they also benefited from the support of colonial powers and later took advantage of the openness of secular democracies (Marty & Appleby 1991:828). The creation of a fundamentalist movement is a dynamic social process in which the raw materials of culture and discontent are shaped by the particular ideological and social resources of the movement itself. Fundamentalist social movements link the past and the future, or so they claim. They are dedicated to a renewed future for the sacred texts and authority. Nancy Ammerman (1994a:158) points out that “fundamentalist movements are likely to establish leadership structures that are strictly hierarchical in form”.

Economic imperatives force women into the work place. Powerful feminist and homosexual movements challenge fundamentalist intellectuality and philosophy. Martin Riesebrodt (1990:11) analyzed fundamentalist ideologies in terms of their posited ideal social order as patriarchal structures. The ideal family is the patriarchal family where the father is responsible for the public sphere (economy, politics) and the women for the private sphere (home, children). The economic ideal includes family enterprise and a religious integration of “capital” and “labour” instead of institutionalized class-conflict, “big business” and “big labor” (Riesebrodt 1990:11-15).

Fundamentalist women position themselves as follows:

- Women involved in Islam and Christian fundamentalist movements wish to be recognized as morally upright members of their religion, seriously engaged in addressing contemporary social programs (Hardacre 1993:141)
- Many women fundamentalists recognize that many men are weak and passive husbands. Family members seek female leadership. They agree that both parents take responsibility for their children’s spiritual development, not only one.

- Women fundamentalists discover and explore alternative values and ways of life. They realize that their society is unequal as far as the sexes are concerned.
- These women idealize obedience and submissiveness. They receive little support for the development of alternatives.
- Many women find that modernity presents them with difficult choices to make about things they were raised to believe inevitable (Hardacre 1993:143). Through revolutionary changes, women have to choose marriage, support themselves and take control of their fertility. Since marriage is seen as holy women are to sacrifice themselves by which they will earn their salvation.

Fundamentalism remains marginal in the different societies and plays sectarian, oppositionist roles. For fundamentalists, it is valuable to note that the majority of the people in the world take part in the social order, and are commonly involved in secular ideologies or various religious programs. As contemporary fundamentalist movements aim to achieve a sound religious reformation throughout the world, religious communities may well have a future that may even stabilize the urban society, globally.

4.2.2 Gender meaning and roles

The system of gender has been influenced by political, economical and cultural aspects. Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:10) regards gender as a cultural category, which is a primary issue and part of the order of things. Men and women had to perform their cultural roles according to their social status. Even in modernity the genders are seen as representing and legitimating the social-political order. Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:10) points out that “the ancients did not need the facts of sexual difference to support their claim that women were inferior to men and therefore subordinate beings”. Here, I will analyze different gender roles within different contexts: gender roles in Greco-Roman culture; Judaism; the Jesus tradition; the letters of Paul; and in the Early Church. The problem of gender inculturation (see Niebuhr 1951) may be the most complex to analyze in the Jesus tradition which was influenced by the Greco-Roman world, because the sources are not consistent.

- **Gender roles in the Greco-Roman world**

In the first century Greco-Roman culture made a definite distinction between the roles of males and females in society. The different roles are described by Ross Kraemer (1988:29-30):

Market-places and council-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action – all these are suitable to men both in war and peace. The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens as their boundary, and the outer by those who have reached full womanhood.

According to this distinction, men were associated with the public sphere and women with the private sphere such as the home. The value of honour and shame were pivotal to maintaining traditional Mediterranean societies. Women from elite families, who were for instance the wives of Roman emperors and leaders, influenced politics. An example in the Bible is the book of Acts (25:23) where Bernice the sister of Herod Agrippa II, participates with her brother and the Roman governor in the interrogation of a Roman citizen (Stegemann & Ekkehard 1999:368). Women were involved in politics as advisors of their husbands and sons. Some women had jobs outside the household, for example, as market women, agricultural labourers. Women also participated in the cult and at banquets. However, women's activities in the cult were restricted to subordinate functions and marginal roles in Rome and Greece. Stegemann & Ekkehard (1999:373) explain that mostly women's role was to remain in the house, for they were the repositories of male honor.

Male deities ruled the Olympic family while powerful goddesses guided creativity and fertility. With such ultimate gender definitions the human roles were clear. Men are the ultimate authorities and make the ultimate, public decisions. Women create cultural values and future generations. They do that privately. Women danced, played music, while men officiated at religious sacrificial rites and controlled political activity. Women were not officially allowed to attend meals. They cooked and served. Luise Schottruff

(1993:80-87) explains that “the role of women who were slaves changed during the late republic and early empire of the Roman world in 195 B C E”. Women were then free to act in public, to own property and to be educated (Snyder 1999:177).

- **Gender roles in Judaism**

God the Creator was one God and definitely masculine according to Israelite tradition. Jesus as male was the image of God. Traditional thinking about women was that they were still in the thrall of Eve’s birth pains and submission to their husbands. Elizabeth A Clark (1983:17) points out that “marriage by definition placed women in an inferior role: sexual functioning in itself made women subordinated”. Women were only valuable on account of their sexual function in the ancient era. The priesthood with its sacramental and public teaching offices was closed to women.

Women were subordinate to male authority. Although there were no female hierarchical leaders in Israel, there were women leaders such as Miriam and Deborah, and women heroes such as Judith, Jael, Tamar, Rahab, and Esther (see Niditch 1991:25-45). Men and women shared religious activities in the synagogue. Judaism at the time of the New Testament was more flexible, because it had adopted a more liberal Roman attitude (cf Hengel 1989). Two major roles of women are seen in Judaism in the first century: devout followers (Ac 13:50) or in the role of leaders in a synagogue (Ac 9:36). Much of the biblical evidence is not conclusive as to women’s roles. Though Lydia (Ac 16:14) was not explicitly called a leading citizen or a wealthy donor, she did invite Paul to her home, where most probably the first house church in Philippi assembled (Snyder 1999:180).

- **Gender roles in the Jesus tradition**

Generally, a woman’s place was at home; men worked in public places in the society. Women could not attend political meetings and judicial proceedings and could not speak in public. Stegemann & Ekkehard (1999:366) point out that the gender-specific character of the exclusion of women from the public realm of “municipal administration” is confirmed by the following insight: the basic free access of all men to the political self-governance of the city was graduated socially and legally. The social level was strictly in

order from free male, freed man, then slave. Women's social position generally prohibited access to politics. The significant role of women in the Early Church, however, is shown in the Gospels and in Acts. Attitudes toward women in the New Testament reflect both theologically and socially, a first-century Jewish religious and cultural cast. Parvey (1974:118; cf Hensman 1985) points out that "the Early Church embodied theologically and socially different attitudes toward women as a consequence of Jesus' coming". Jesus had a liberated attitude towards women. The parables of Jesus and stories about Jesus' life reflect his relationship with women (see Moltmann-Wendel 1982) and the social status of women in the worship, teaching, and missionary life of the church. In Acts women from all social levels were drawn to the first century churches (Parvey 1974:146). In worship, teaching, institutional and missionary life the Spirit, indeed, was poured out on both "sons and daughters". Women had a role of leadership. Margaret MacDonald (1996:29) discusses early Christian women by means of pagan critique. She mentions that church women could be accused of being too frequently absent from the home, remiss in domestic affairs and ultimately of being sexually immoral. The honor and shame syndrome distinguished the roles within female private space and male public space in early Christianity.

Women in the Jewish tradition do not generally appear to have been treated well, except in Luke 8:1-3 (women on Jesus' mission trips) and Mark 15:40-41 (the women at the crucifixion). Women clearly played an important role as witnesses of the crucifixion and of the empty tomb in the Jesus movement. The Jesus tradition does not have the Jewish sense of female uncleanness. Jesus cured a woman who was bleeding (Mk 5:34); Jesus raised a young maiden from death (Mk 5:41).

• **Gender roles in the letters of Paul**

In Paul's letters, women are not only functionaries, but also speak in public and interpret the faith tradition (Snyder 1999:182). Women led the gathered community in prayer and interpreted the faith to them in the Corinthian Church (I Cor 11:2-16) and the Church at Cenchreae (Rm 16:1-2). Women, such as Prisca, appear as leaders in house churches which were made available by women.

Prisca and Junia were committed to the work of spreading the gospel message. Schüssler Fiorenza (1983:173) says that “missionaries took their wives around as Christian sisters rather than spouses, to be their fellow-ministers in relation to housewives, through whom the Lord’s teaching penetrated into the women’s quarters without scandal”. Despite the activities of some women in the public place, the dominant cultural ideal of women was for them to stay at home. Paul, devoted to establishing a community set apart from the world while leaving every possible door open to win the unbeliever (cf I Cor 8:10; 14:22-25), certainly was aware of the evangelizing potential of household relationships (MacDonald 1996:217). This potential is suggested indirectly by his mention of household conversions (I Cor 1:14-16; 16:15-18; cf Ac 16:32-33; 18:8) and explicitly by his treatment of mixed marriage (I Cor 7:12-16).

According to Paul’s letters the Early Church gathered in houses. It is clear that early Christians were building a household-based movement that would be depicted as suspiciously female-oriented by the pagan critics of the second century (MacDonald 1996:30). The Early Church can be seen as a house church. House churches can be found in Ephesians 5:21-6:9. House churches also had a public dimension. Some women, such as Paul’s co-workers, had leadership roles (Phlp 4:2-3). They spread the Gospel actively. The lives of early Christian women differed from one another in many ways due to personal factors related to particular geographic location and wealth.

Paul’s theology of equality in Christ provided a vehicle for building a new religious and social basis for women-men relationships (Parvey 1974:146). However, dualism was still prevalent in the Early Church. Men were seen as belonging to this world and doing the work of church, whereas women belonged to the next world and acted in the church only as hidden helpers and servants to men (Parvey 1974:146). Men are of this world, but women are of the Spirit. This idea provided the impetus to maintain the status-quo on ethical and social level by the subordinating women, while they were emphasizing women’s spiritual equality before God. Women have been precluded from receiving or developing full responsibility and equal roles in the life of the church.

In Paul’s letters, the married woman is charged with the care of her husband and family and the virgin is seen as sacred and pure; therefore Paul’s advice is for women to keep their virginity so as to receive spiritual privileges. Schüssler Fiorenza (1983:225-

226) wonders how Paul could have made such a theological point when he had Prisca as his friend and knew other missionary couples (Prisca and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia, possibly also Philologus and Julia as well as Nereus and his sister) who were living examples of the opposite. Women in early Christianity often rejected marriage in order to keep their bodies pure as a bride of Christ. It is fitting that the symbol of the female body is expressed as a corporate identity in early Christianity. By doing so they broke with cultural expectations. These women followed Jesus who liberated them to their full potential. Jesus had them from traditional patriarchal ideology. The liberation of women led to conversion. Married Christian women were characterized as “discreet and modest wives”. According to Clark (1990:20-22) early Christianity offered only two innovations to the marital ethics of late ancient, pagan society: a single standard of sexual morality and the condemnation of divorce and remarriage.

Paul was envisioning the new interdependence of men and women in Christ on a theological level. Paul makes a fundamental breakthrough in making new images possible for women. On the cultural and social level, however, he clearly identifies himself as a first-century Israelite teacher for whom custom has authority and a validity of their own (Parvey 1974:128).

- **Gender roles in the early church**

Church order called for the subordination of citizens to the emperor, of wives to husbands, of children to parents, and of slaves to masters (Col 3:18; Eph 5:21-6:9; I Pt 2:11-3:12; I Tm 2:8-15; 5:1-2; 6:1-2; Tt 2:1-10; 3:1). Church leaders adopted the order to maintain the authority of the church. Female leadership stressed the independence of women and rejected social authority and social order (see Heine 1987). Inculturation of the Jesus tradition regarding language, social structure, architecture, food, and calendar – all could occur because the faith community lived in relative peace (Snyder 1999:188; cf Martey 1994; Niebubr 1974). However, gender issues did not fare well. As churches became bigger and more institutionalized female leadership was no longer acceptable. The church preferred to follow the old order. Therefore, women participated freely in a private family life and in the local faith community, but their public role did not change much in the Jesus tradition. The impact of culture can be seen as the reason for this.

Also, male authors wrote down the Jesus tradition from a male perspective. In the second to early fourth centuries a new class of Christian literature rose.

In the second and third centuries, Gnosticism swept the Mediterranean world. It promised the “elect” salvation from the evils of this present life (see Ruether & Clarkson 1996:127-128). During this period, the Apocryphal Acts, which was the origin of the canonical Acts, came into being. Gnosticism advocated that God’s creation, including human bodies, were good since it was the Creator who gave humans sex organs and told the first couple to “reproduce and multiply” (Gn 1:28). They believed that sexual intercourse and childbearing were not to be pronounced as evil.

The fourth century brought new possibilities for women’s public lives. Christian women became good models for piety and mentors for others. Many Christian women obtained wealth, and were socially respected because of the sacrifices they made. Although women were not to be priests or public teachers officially, some of the Early Christian women were outstanding in their knowledge of Scriptures. One sect in the second century allowed women high leadership positions, even sacramental ones. Charismatic movements pleaded for a larger role for women because they believed that the Holy Spirit inspired women as well as men. Kraemer (1988:239; see Witherington 1990) wrote that in later times “early Christians unashamedly gave deaconesses the special responsibility of infiltrating pagan households to minister to their women. Women’s ministry and leadership were shown even in the early Christianity.” Karen Jo Torjesen (1993:113; see Schottroff 1995) did research on women’s leadership in the Early Church. A woman who adopted leadership roles in Greco-Roman society, was always vulnerable to being “attacked for abandoning women’s social space, the household, and for forsaking the womanly virtue of chastity, which meant keeping her sexual presence far from the public eye” (Torjesen 1993:113).

Unmarried women in early Christianity acquired an independence, which produced conflict with society; but married women remained in conformity to society, confined within the patriarchal family (MacDonald 1996:183). Widows are portrayed as not merely passive recipients of community charity. They were actively involved in ministerial roles. Therefore, the church tended to protect widows (cf Ac 6:1; I Tm 5:16). The Early Church distinguished between the real widows who were role models for

believers and the younger widows who were disloyal. The church supported the needs of the “real widows”. A woman with a dishonorable past, could sometimes serve as a model of piety. MacDonald (1996:229) explains that unmarried women who found refuge in the church could be called upon to exhibit the virtues of the ideal wife. Acceptance in the group for those who had faith was not made impossible on the basis of an immoral past. More than respectable appearances and virtuous backgrounds, married church women had to cultivate an attitude of single-hearted loyalty to husbands and to Christ in order to remain untainted by the immoral world (Eph 5:21-33).

In the Early Church, marriage practices between believers and nonbelievers became clear. Non-Christians propagated endogamy, which encouraged marriage between people who adhered to the same religion. Paul says, if any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him (I Cor 7:12-13). However, Christians were strongly encouraged to marry only “in the Lord” (cf I Cor 7:39). The pure bride was a symbol of the holy and unblemished church over against the nonbelievers’ evil world (Eph 5:25-27; cf Eph 5:1, 4:17). The relationship of Christian couples was infused with religious significance. It was likened with the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:32). The husband is as Christ and the wife is as the Church in Ephesians 5:21-33. Hosea’s metaphor of marriage describes the relationship between God and Israel. This idea also appears in the household codes of Greco-Roman culture. The household codes in the New Testament. The interactions between the pairs of relationships are in the household: wives/husbands, children/parents and slaves/masters (Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 5:21-6:9; I Pt 2:13-3:17; I Tm 2:8-15; 3:4; 6:1-2; Tt 2:1-10, 3:1). They reflect order and submission according to Greco-Roman ideals. MacDonald (1996:231) points out that the comparison in Ephesians of marriage to the relationship between Christ and the Church is in keeping with the tendency to depict household relationships as a reflection of a wider social reality in the Early Church. The unblemished bride became the perfect image of the Christian church to convey to the public. The purity and submissiveness of the Christian wife challenged the nonbelievers’ immorality. The household traditions in Ephesians and the ideal Christian marriage are viewed as a reflection of the love of Christ for the Church.

Wives are to love the Lord and to be satisfied with their husbands in flesh and spirit, and husbands are to love their wives as the Lord loved the church. However, Elizabeth Johnson (1992:341) has different ideas about Ephesians 5:21-33. She reads the adoption of the household code as a response to perilous relations with outsiders and concludes that this development had unfortunate consequences for women. "By subordinating the interests of the women in the congregation to the interests of the church's public image, the other apparently operates more from fear than from faith" (Johnson 1992:341).

The husband/Christ and wife/church comparisons reveal similarities with the Mediterranean idea of male and female roles. Women were to be submissive to authority structures of the home and remained oppressed by cultural systems. The teachings of hierarchical marriage caught women in oppressive relationships yet again. Nevertheless, the traditional Christian wife was empowered in her role as mediator between the church and the world. Margaret MacDonald (1996:242) explains it as follows:

Woman is more than simply a "static" symbol of family stability; through her housework she transforms matter into a culturally accepted substance and maintains it in this state. For example, through her cooking, food becomes suitable to eat. A woman keeps dirt from penetrating the house. She prevents family matters from becoming gossip. Moreover, concerns about what comes in and what goes out from the house parallels concern for maintenance of the woman's body. These attitudes reflect a larger preoccupation with the identity of the family.

The Christian wife who spent much of her time caring for children and managing her household (I Tm 5:14) should not be viewed simply as a participant in hierarchical marriage arrangements. The Christian wife was attempting to build a harmonious home and to contribute to the harmony of the church as the bride of Christ. Women were not to act in a self-motivated manner, but had the task of quieting down the hostile reactions of the outside world. Christian women were to act as mediators between the private and the public spaces in early Christianity. The reality of women's lives in the Early Church was shaped by the complex interchange between concrete historical events and the symbols

which were active in both church and society. Christian women of the Early Church should not be written off as submissive conformists to society on account of the patriarchal texts that witnessed to their lives. Christian women were actively involved in the church and thereby challenged the world.

4.3 Images of Jesus in the view of Korean Women

People retain many different images of Jesus from Scripture, spirituality, theology, literature, art and film. It is not only religion but also cultural productions that are permeated with images of Jesus. Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:58; cf Ruether 1996:95-110; Heyward I 1984) observes that the Jesus women have assimilated through sermons, Bible studies, hymns, literature, pictures, and movies correlates with cultural religious values of gender, race, class and ethnicity. In other words, how Korean women see Jesus bespeaks the values that both Korean women and hegemonic Korean culture consider important. According to Marcus Borg (1994:194-195) the images of Jesus correlate with the images of Christian life:

Given this correlation, the question is not so much whether images of Jesus ought to have theological significance at the very practical immediate level of Christian understanding, devotion, and piety. Our choice is to let that significance be largely unrecognized, unconscious, and unchallenged or to be conscious and intentional about that relationship. In short, because historical scholarship about Jesus affects our image of Jesus and thus our image of the Christian life, it matters.

Korean Christian women desire to discover Jesus for themselves. H K Chung (1990:53-73) distinguishes two categories of images Korean women have of Jesus - the traditional and the new emerging image. Western missionaries taught Koreans the traditional images of Jesus for their own benefit. The traditional images are based on Western theology and androcentric interpretation. Therefore, Korean women are seeking new images (Ahn BM 1993:163-172; Chung HK 1993:223-246; cf Song CS 1979), which can express both the old and new meanings of Jesus images.

4.3.1 Traditional reflections

4.3.1.1 Jesus as the King and God

Christian imagination, worship, and hymnody are that of 'KINGAFAP'- the King – God – Almighty – Father – All – Powerful – Protector (Brian Wren 1991:119, cf Moltmann 1981). These kinds of expressions can be found in abundance in Christian prayer and liturgy. God is worshiped as the powerful king and majesty, who rules by word of command and stabilizes the cosmic order. *He* is the Creator, a merciful Lord, and Father, who is Almighty and All-powerful. The Almighty God has only one Son, Jesus Christ. Since evil enemies have invaded the Father's kingly realm of creation, the crown prince obediently surrenders his royal power and privileges and, at his Father's command, becomes human (Schüssler Fiorenza 1994:107). Even though the royal prince is killed due to sin and evil, he is soon after lifted up to the glorious throne of his kingly Father. Then the only son Jesus, who is Christ, rules with KINGAFAP. This is a Christian myth, which claims the authority of orthodoxy. A similar image of the imperial Christ can be found in the Hebrew Messianism and in Greek philosophy. The Israelite messiah is described as a warrior-king who would overthrow enemy empires. Ruether (1981:49) believes that the imperial Christology triumphs in the fourth century as a sacramental vision of patriarchal, hierarchic, and Euro-centered imperial control.

Feminist studies have revealed that androcentric language and culture not only place elite *Man* in the center of historical scientific discourses, but also relegates women to the margins or silently passes them over (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:11). Hence, women belong to "the disappeared" in history. Since Jesus is seen as a great charismatic leader and heroic or divine man, he reinforces the ideological power of androcentrism and the immasculation of women (cf Tambasco 1991). The discourse of Jesus is later changed to be described as the victory of the Messiah as the protector of the oppressed.

4.3.1.2 Jesus as the Saviour

The term of salvation is often used in the Bible. When people were cured from bad diseases; when people overcame difficult conditions; when Jesus took away people's sins

and declared them to be “forgiven”; when a dead boy was risen; when evil spirits were driven out from people on Jesus’ command; when a tax collector repented; that was “salvation”. When people moved out of their suffering, it was believed that Jesus had saved them.

A Korean theologian J Y Lee links Jesus Christ with Oriental thinking. Lee (1979:92-94) regards sin as “nothing but humanity’s desire to be, rather than to become; it is our unwillingness to change”. He explains that the sin is the desire and to overcome this desire, means salvation. Salvation is to follow the ways of change without resignation. Jesus says, “I am the Way” and he shows people how to change. Lee explains “the way of change” in relation with the oriental thinking. In Oriental philosophy, two factors affect reality – *Yin* and *Yang* (Lee JY 1979:92). *Yin* originally came from the image of “shadow” and *Yang* from “brightness”. *Yin* came to signify female, receptiveness, passivity, coldness, while *Yang* represents male creativity, activity, and warmth. However, they are not “bad” or “good”. *Yin* and *Yang* are not in conflict but are complementary opposites. Together they represent wholeness rather than partiality. These two have different functions. If man is *Yang*, woman is *Yin*. Men and women need to cooperate and contribute to one another. *Yin* alone, in itself, is incomplete, and so is *Yang* on its own. *Yang* cannot exist without *Yin* just as *Yin* presupposes the necessity of *Yang* (Lee JY 1976:34). *Yin* and *Yang*, both create perfect wholeness and completion, if they are together in harmony. Anton Wessels (1990:156; see Lee JY 1976:34-35) states that *Yin-Yang* thinking contributes to the co-existence of Christianity with other religions in a creative process of “becoming”. The opinion of Lee (1976:34) is that “Jesus is *Yang* and Christians are *Yin*”. It is *Yang*’s function to act and to initiate, and *Yin*’s is to respond and to follow. When Christians respond to Jesus’ creative actions, Christians themselves become active and creatively involved through their response. Lee explains the Christian experience, paradoxically. In a sense, the way of change by Jesus is also a paradox, just as it is in the *Yin-Yang* thinking. Salvation is in harmony between the change and the changing, or between the creator and the creation as is the harmony of *Yin* and *Yang* (Lee JY 1979:94-95).

Joanne Carlson Brown (1989:2) points to a negative factor in Christianity. Christianity has been the primary force in shaping women’s acceptance of abuse.

Christianity becomes an abusive theology that glorifies suffering. According to Brown, the message is further complicated by the theology that says “Christ suffered in obedience to his Father’s will”. Brown (1989:2) claims: “‘Divine child abuse’ is paraded as salvation and the child who suffers without even raising a voice is landed as the hope of the world.” Jesus’ suffering is redemptive, as Jesus’ image is of the Saviour of the world on the cross. The implication is that, if one suffers for others, one will save the world. Brown points out that self-sacrifice and obedience are the definitions of a faithful identity in the whole of Judeo-Christian tradition. People endure pain, humiliation and violation because of the promise of resurrection. There is much deceit in modern society when the predominant image or theology of the culture is that of “divine child abuse”.

4.3.1.3 Jesus as a suffering servant

Ruether explores “gender and sin” in her article, “Christian understandings of human nature and gender”. Ruether (1996:99) says that “all classical traditions agree in stressing woman’s priority in sin, and its consequence being female subjugation”. It means that women’s suffering is natural through painful childbearing and subjugation to their husbands. Women can get salvation through their suffering in male-centered classical teachings (cf Consuelo del Prado 1989:140-141; Heyward 1989).

For a reasonably long time, the most prevailing image of Jesus in Korean churches was that of “suffering servant”. Korean Christian women seemed to feel most comfortable with this image. Jesus is defined as “the prophetic Messiah”, whose role is that of a “suffering servant”, the one who “offers himself as ransom for many”. In this image women view suffering as being good and the status of a servant as being the status of Christ himself. This is the reason why they have accepted the debasement of their role in life, even though they were being dehumanized and often hurt physically as well as emotionally. Sacrificing for their family and community was their lot. Images of Jesus as the suffering servant turning into a “triumphant king” and “authoritative high priest” served to support a patriarchal religious consciousness in the church and in theology. Jung Ha Kim, a Korean-American feminist theologian, has experienced the suffering of an immigrant Korean woman in America. She writes about what another Korean-American Christian minister said to a suffering woman. Kim (1996:352) relates his

advice to the woman that “suffering from domestic violence provided her with a good opportunity to contemplate and to identify with how much Christ suffered on the cross. By bearing the cross for the whole family, she was actually working out her own salvation and will be rewarded hundreds-fold in the life to come after her death”. The key message of the minister is “endure and be faithful unto death”. Kim (1996:351) criticizes traditional Korean culture that places the blame on the wife when she is abused. The idea is that, when a man is dissatisfied enough, he is justified in hitting his wife. The assumption is that personal and familial shame and blame has its roots in women’s selfishness. Traditional Korean society demands of women their unconditional endurance of pain and suffering; their faithfulness unto death; their silent suffering as a noble spiritual calling.

Recently however, Korean women have met Jesus through their own experience. They are discovering that Jesus is compassionate towards silenced Korean women in his solidarity with all oppressed people. This Jesus becomes to Korean women their new lover, comrade, and fellow suffering servant, since they are familiar with suffering and obedience in the family and society. Jesus suffered for others as Korean women suffer for their families and community. As Jesus’ suffering was salvific, Korean women are beginning to view their own suffering as being redemptive. As Jesus’ suffering for others was life giving, so is Korean women’s suffering is seen as a source of empowerment for themselves. A Hong Kong feminist theologian, Kwok Pui-lan (1984:230; cf Lee KH 1992:106-120) says that “it is the very person on the cross that suffers like us, who was rendered as a no-body that illuminates the tragic human existence and speaks to countless women in Asia... We see Jesus as the God who takes the human form and suffers and weeps with us”.

Through the aid of missionaries, Korean women are beginning to break away from the christological mould by which they were influenced. Western colonialism and neo-colonialism not only brought Christianity into Asia (Korea included), but also opium and guns. Death and love are connected in mission history. In the name of mission or in the name of democracy, there is evidence of many contradictory personal and political experiences. Jesus actually identified himself with the oppressed because he was compassionate. He took responsibility for all he taught and carried it out to action.

Korean women are learning to distinguish between the suffering imposed by an oppressor and the suffering for justice and human dignity.

Bonhoeffer (1967:178-179) identified with Jesus as a Martyr. His own experience of suffering was as a victim of Nazi repression and as a martyr-witness of God's helpless love in the political conditions of his time. Throughout his suffering and weakness he believed in the God of the Bible. Bonhoeffer (1967:196) expresses it as follows: "God (Jesus) lets himself be pushed out of the world and on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. Matthew 8:17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering." He asks the question: who is Jesus Christ for us today? Bonhoeffer (1967:178) gives the answer that "the God of the Christian faith is the God who suffers in Jesus Christ". This means that when Jesus suffers, God too, suffers. He suggests that a Christian should share in the suffering of God.

4.3.1.4 Jesus as Lord

Traditionally, patriarchal culture based on Confucianism in the Korean context has been the dominant power: women should obey the men in their lives. The Korean women's husband was her lord. Korean women have been enforced to such belief by the dominant male stereotype.

Western colonialism used images of Jesus as Lord to justify political and economical domination. Missionaries taught that Jesus was the ruler of the whole universe in much the same way as their imperial "lord" and "masters", and that western colonialists were "subjects" of Jesus as Koreans were the subjects of foreign powers. Therefore, to be Christian meant to obey Jesus and the western power that brought the religion to Korea. This kind of thinking is quite common in Asia. Philippine female theologians demonstrate that the lordship ideology of colonial Christianity domesticated the vibrant pre-colonial Philippine women's self-understanding and power in the community (cf Honclada 1985:13-19; cf Pope-Levison & Levison 1992:55-88). Philippine women changed their active image of themselves into one of passive submission and obedience as a result of colonialism.

However, Letty Russell (see 1974:104-130) is of the opinion that Jesus' lordship is more about his service and mutuality with the intent of liberation. Ruether (1995:116-137) believes that there are many possibilities for Jesus to have lordship over other people, instead of emphasizing Jesus as a unique "Lord". Ruether cites Mary of Magdala. S K Park (1983:51) illustrates that the lordship of Christ is the exact opposite of patriarchal lordship. Christ frees Asian women from false authority and encourages them to obey only God, not men. The lordship of Jesus is an indication of the power which liberates people. The power and authority of Jesus' lordship is totally different from patriarchal lordship or colonial lordship. All authority and power "should return to its origin", which is God, says Park. The lordship in this world should be turned around to serve the salvation of human beings and promote the righteousness, justice and the providence of God. Therefore, the lordship of Jesus destroys patriarchal domination and the false authority and power of this world, returning it all to God.

4.3.2 New emerging images of Jesus

New emerging images of Jesus came from women's experiences. Pieris Aloysius (1988:128; see Ovey NM 1993:9-24; Seiichi Yagi 1993:25-45) says that "Asian theology is a way of sensing and doing things as the Asian style". It means that Koreans need to find images of Jesus in the Korean style. However, people's perspectives repeatedly seem to coordinate with changing politics, economy and cultural ideologies. As these factors have changed it is interesting to explore how the images of Jesus have changed in Korea. People see reflections of changing perspectives in the faith, the piety, as well as the theological conceptions. Such images also emanated from the Korean women's movement. Three categories will be explored: that of Jesus as Liberator, Jesus as Mother and Woman, and Jesus as Worker and Grain.

4.3.2.1 Jesus as Liberator

Jesus was the charismatic male leader of male and female followers. Historically he was not a political revolutionary and had nothing whatsoever to do with the zealots, a militant movement of his time. Nevertheless, Pieris (1988:111) says, "Jesus has new reality from Romans' religious experience and knowledge. Jesus is Christ or Messiah for the Jews.

Jesus is liberator or black Christ for Africans (cf Oduyoye 1995; Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1993; Okure 1990; Pitt 1990:29-35; Gordon 2001; Wilmore & Cone 1979). Jesus is the priest of '*han (weeping)*' for Koreans". Jesus' image is that of someone concerned with politics in Korean *minjung* theology. Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:12) observes that Jesus, who was executed by the Romans for sedition, had become a peasant leader and social religious reformer.

Jesus' image as liberator is common in Latin America (cf Pope-Levison & Levison 1992:26-54; Arthur McGovern 1992:77-78). People need to see Jesus as liberator (see Heyward 1984). Their concern is to discover the political dimensions of Jesus' historical actions. Levison (in Pope-Levison & Levison 1992:31) states that, "they want to understand the relevance of the historical Jesus for their own Latin American context". The passion for liberation creates the image of Jesus as liberator. This image is prevalent especially in socio-historical and political contexts characterized by domination and oppression. Anton Wessels (1990:75; cf Melancton 1987:20-29) views "the christology of Jesus as liberator in opposition to a christology which supports the whole process of colonization and domination". Gutierrez (1983:13) sees "the nucleus of the biblical message in the relationship between God and the poor. Jesus Christ is precisely God become poor". Jesus, who is recognized as the Son of his Father, led an unfortunate life in the form of a human being. He was born in a manger, which alludes to social poverty. Jesus' public life was with the poor. His messages about heaven, which appeared to be a threat to the rich, were eminently suitable to the poor. The kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed was about justice and liberation to the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. The proclamation of the kingdom, this struggle for justice, eventually led to his death (Gutierrez 1983:14). In effect, Jesus' life and death bring people to the realization that justice is only possible in God's love and kingdom. From the perspective of the poor, Jesus is understood as a liberator. Jesus is the God of the poor (cf Pieterse 2001) and the God of the Bible, but Jesus is not the God of the masters. The implications are as follows:

The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me,
for Yahweh has anointed me.

He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;
to proclaim liberty to captives,
freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favor from Yahweh,
a day of vengeance for our God (Is 61:1-2)

God has taken the side of the poor. The rich are considered blasphemous because they manipulate and speak of God in order to better oppress the poor.

Listen, my dear brothers: it was those who are poor according to the world that God chose, to be rich in faith and to be the heirs to the kingdom which he promised to those who love him. In spite of this, you have no respect for anybody who is poor. Isn't it always the rich who are against you? Isn't it always their doing when you are dragged before the court? Aren't they the ones who insult the honorable name to which you have been dedicated? (Ja 2:5-7)

Gutierrez (1973:11) defines three levels of liberation: liberation in the economic/political sphere, liberation from dehumanization and liberation from sin. Jesus is seen as the one who liberates from each of these oppressions (see Pope-Levison & Levison 1992:35). The liberation of Jesus Christ is not theoretical but practical. Liberation extends to the whole of Jesus' life, to everything he did and said during his public ministry in the concrete historical situation of the first century. This places a strong accent on the "imitation" of Jesus. Jesus was not the only person sent to be crucified. Many women and men suffered the same form of death in the Roman Empire. For example, political renegades, seditious provincials and rebellious slaves were killed through crucifixion. Jesus was charged with a "political crime". A placard on which his the proclamation of his crime, "the King of the Jews", was announced, was attached to the cross. Politically speaking he certainly looked like a liberator. He was treated as such.

Jesus was also seen as a charismatic preacher. He debated with religious leaders, re-interpreted the laws of Moses, threatened to destroy and replace the temple and even attempted to overthrow the government in Jerusalem. He worked many miracles and preached in a new manner. He was treated as a Davidic Messiah of Israel; actually he was a religious liberator.

The significance of Jesus manifests in the reconciliation and redemption of many Christians. In addition, the significance of Jesus' salvation is the well-being brought to people and creation. This means that Jesus is the liberator. Salvation is connected with Jesus as the Saviour, but moreover, the significance of Jesus is for the good of the social and political situation of oppression and poverty. Latin American theologians of liberation as well as African and Asian theologians, consistently point out the inseparable connection between "redemption" and "liberation" (Gutierrez 1990:184).

Three different understandings of salvation can be traced:

- Missionaries taught Christianity. Salvation to them meant liberation from sin.
- A second perspective is liberation as being freed from oppressive political, social and economical conditions.
- The understanding of salvation which comes from Africa is described by Malcolm McVeigh (1980:60) as liberation from the subject forces of evil which cause sickness, misfortune and in the daily tragedies of life. Jesus was concerned about the forgiveness of sins, but also about the healing of diseases and the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, to whom he brought good news (McVeigh 1980:60).

Black feminist theologian Jacquelyn Grant (1989:66) points out that "the white feminist theologians focus on white female experiences". She emphasizes that black women are quiet about sexism and about their survival on account of having been through the oppression of slavery. White feminist theologians on the other hand, are interested in the lady-hood of the Victorian era in the Western world (Grant 1989:66). Grant claims that black women had believed Jesus to be with them when they were suffering and therefore Jesus had given his divine nature to them. Because Jesus had also suffered in his time, he gave them the strength to overcome their sufferings. This brought

black people to believe that Jesus is a political Messiah for the weak (cf Wilmore & Cone 1979) – Jesus is a liberator. In the same way, Asian Christians depict Jesus with an Asian face (Sugirtharajah 1993:i-viii, 3-8, 127-130, 258-264).

Jesus Christ is portrayed as a liberator in Korea on account of the historical situation (Ahn BM 1993:163-172). Women have experienced colonialism, neo-colonialism, poverty and military dictatorship. Therefore, they sought liberation. Pauline Hensman (1985:116), who is a feminist from Sri Lanka, describes Jesus as one who “came with good news to the poor, oppressed and downtrodden” and through whom “humankind was released from servitude and alienation by those who dominated and oppressed them”. Korean *minjung* theologians and feminist theologians also agree that Jesus came primarily for the poor and the oppressed. There are many stories of Jesus as a liberator in the Korean church. In the beginning of the Korean church (see Yang HH 1997:136-168), Jeon San Duck, who was the first baptized woman in west-northern Korea, had served her mother-in-law and tolerated her husband who had a concubine before accepting Jesus into her life. She tried not to hear, nor see, nor speak even though she had eyes, ears, and mouth. It is actually the duty of a woman in patriarchal society to not complain about her life. Jeon San Duck did, however, hold a grudge at having to spend her life in the irrational patriarchy. She saw Christianity as an opportunity for Korean women. Women, at that time, were isolated in every way. Jeon wanted to know more about Christianity, so she walked to the San Jung Hyun church, 48 km from her house. She decided to attend church regularly, after having met missionary W J Hall. Two years later in 1895, she was baptized. Despite the persecution by her husband and her mother-in-law, she built nine churches and some girls’ schools in north-western Korea before her death in 1932. She had experienced great change after accepting Jesus into her life. Jeon San Duck testified: “after I have come to know Jesus, I am an independent woman. Jesus was a liberator” (in Yang HH 1997:141).

The first girls’ school built by missionaries, was the E-wha school. Lee Kyung Suk (1991:141) was the first Korean woman who was employed there as a teacher. She had been widowed and had known a bitter life in Korea. After her conversion she, too, became a new person. Other widows had no hope. Her hope was in Jesus. Choi Naomi was the first missionary aboard. She was treated badly by her husband and her husband’s

family because of her inability to fall pregnant. She was liberated by Jesus. An evangelist, Joo Lullu (see Lee OJ & Lee HS 1989:141) tells dramatic story. Lullu was the daughter of a shaman. She was very poor. After her marriage, she was shocked by the ill-treatment she received from her husband's family. The shock was so great that she became mentally ill. Soon, she started to believe that God liberate from her miserable life in her husband's household. She accepted Jesus and became an evangelist. Although women were unable to find independence or freedom in Confucianism or Shamanism, they saw hope and light in Christianity in which men and women were equal. Only through Christianity were women finally able to be liberated from male authority. They realized they could be themselves, moving away from traditional sexism and instead be considered valuable.

4.3.2.2 Jesus as Mother and Woman

Some women portray Jesus as "mother". The role of Jesus as a mother is generally seen in three reasons:

- Jesus' death on the cross is understood in the same sense as a mother's parity.
- Jesus' love is seen as equal to a mother's love towards her children.
- The blood and body of Christ in Holy Communion is seen as a mother nurturing her baby.

When women are suffering, Jesus also feels with them and weeps for them. There are some verses in the Bible that depict Jesus as a "woman". "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killed the prophets. How often would I have gathered thy children together, even a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not" (Mt 23:37). Jesus cried out for Jerusalem, with a sorrow so deep, Matthew had to use a "feminine metaphor" in an attempt to describe the strong sentiment he felt. Jesus' character sometimes reveals a mother's mind – gentle, kind, loving and compassionate. As a mother handles her baby gently and wears a smile when she is able to satisfy the baby's needs, Jesus does the same for the people.

Women were not trivial to the Early Christianity. If they were it would have been impossible to understand why Luke wrote Infancy Narrative of Jesus, or why the woman of the Apocalypse was so important to the vision, or why the dignity of women in marriage was so important to the Pauline tradition. Somehow, God is always made manifest in the lives of real women as they lead a life of faith and holiness. The ancient understanding of God as the life-giver of all things, is renewed in the preaching of the gospel, especially in the writings of John and Paul. Jesus too, is understood as a life-giver.

Anselm, who was an archbishop of the 12th century (1033-1109), called Jesus "mother". He said, "You are a mother of all mothers. You are a mother who has experienced death for the sake of giving your children lives" (see Ahn SY 1992b:51). Julian of Norwich (1961, 1978), who was inspired by Anselm and who was probably the first "feminist theologian" to do so, also called Jesus "mother". Norwich (1978:295-297) stated: "As truly as God is our Father, so truly is God our Mother". She further says that, "a human mother would nurse her baby to suck. Our lovely mother, Jesus, gave us his body through holy communions. His body was and is an important food for all sincere lives" (Norwich 1978:296-298). Julian of Norwich's image of Jesus, our Mother, is one way to express the "incarnation" as the continuing birth-giving element of the Word (Wilson-Kastner 1983:96).

An experiment can be conducted when Jesus is seen as having a female feature: being our "mother in heaven". Many women had such unhappy experiences with their physical father, that they find it difficult to build a relationship of trust with a male parental figure. Jesus as a mother figure would help them to do this. Nonetheless, many women also have difficult relationships with their mothers. Their mothers have insulted, threatened and punished them instead of loving, caring for and encouraging them. Such mothers were the authority of whom children were afraid. They would then get on much better with their fathers if they experienced acceptance from them. Child-bearing is stereotypically connected with loving, caring, overseeing, clothing, feeding, managing the household and chores. These tasks are seen as "typically" feminine. Justice, law, anger, punishment and power are regarded as "typically" masculine. Women with bad experiences of their fathers may be helped by the image of Jesus as mother. Likewise,

the father trait of Jesus can also be of help. Heine (1988:31) suggests that if one reflects on the terrifying variety of possibilities of violence between parents and children, then the “disembodied” and transcendent concept of Jesus’ image becomes the “wholly other” to relate with her/himself.

Kwok Pui-lan (1984) wrote an essay about the idea that “God weeps with our pain”. Jesus weeps because of our suffering in the same way a mother weeps for her children when they are in pain. The image of Jesus as a mother destroys the patriarchal and hierarchical way of thinking and creates a delicate relationship between all of humankind. S K Park (1983:51) sees Jesus as a female figure. Jesus is seen to have a male physical form but becomes a female symbol to the oppressed, because he is able to identify with those who are at the height of pain and suffering. On a symbolic level, women think of Jesus as the “Woman Messiah” who is a liberator of the oppressed (Park SK 1983:51; see also James Cone 1975). Christ should be liberated from the patriarchal church, where women are oppressed. Therefore, they claim that Jesus allows females their freedom.

Another female image of Jesus emerges from shamanism, an indigenous Korean religion. H K Chung (1990:64) explains that “shamanism is the only religion among the various Korean religious traditions, where women have been the center all throughout its development”. Shaman role is to solve “*han*” which means grief, bitterness, broken-heartedness and the raw energy for the struggle towards liberation. Chung sees Jesus as a priest of “*han*” for *minjung* women, for the sufferers, for the poor, and for working women. Salvation and redemption means for *minjung* women to remove their accumulated “*han*”. When Christ is seen as a priest of “*han*”, Korean women are able to accept him more readily. Most of the priests of “*han*” have been women in the past. Their understanding of Jesus as a priest of “*han*” does not reduce Jesus’ divinity, but helps them to enter into him more fully with dedication and thus allows the experience of the liberation.

Rita Gross (1977:1147) asserts that “the female image of Jesus is connected between religious experience and female experiences such as menstruation and childbirth”. Gross (see 1977:1147-1181) understands female experiences as a creative power. Gabriel Dietrich (1985) also makes a connection between women’s menstruation and Jesus’ shedding of blood on the cross. Women’s monthly bleeding has been treated as

“unclean” in androcentric texts. But without this bleeding there is no birth and no life. Jesus also bled on the cross and through it he was able to offer life to men and women. Gabriele Dietrich (1985:78) says that “women’s menstruation is a holy Eucharist through which the renewal of life becomes possible; Jesus joins women in his life-giving bleeding”.

Feminist theologian Rita Nakashima Brock (1988:50-53) who works in the United States, made a sculpture of a female Christ, naming it “*Christa*”. This female Christ sculpture hangs on the cross in the St. John’s Cathedral in New York. The name “*Christa*” is engraved onto the top of the cross. She is not to be understood as factual, but as a metaphor. There is a great correspondence between the suffering of the crucifixion and the suffering of women in real life. Traditional meanings of Jesus Christ have kept women at a distance. But when women see the *Christa* on the cross, they can relate more with that figure than with a male Jesus. Rita Brock sees her Christology as taking shape within a *Christa* community rather than from the “same old” Jesus. In her christology Jesus is the redeemer of the *Christa* community. According to her, the traditional Christology was distorted to make the Nazarene Jesus into a male hero, which separated him from the God-Kingdom. Thus, the *Christa* community works as a metaphor to create a new recognition of Christ and the faith community. In opposing theory, Brock (1988:52) sees the male-centered interpretation of christology: the church as a bride and Jesus as the groom; the bride obeys him. Jesus can only be the Christ because of his maleness. It was because of this community where the real meaning of Jesus was lost, that Rita Brock felt the need to develop a new community, the “*Christa* community”. According to her, Jesus is a redeemer who himself has attained wholeness as a human being. Only Jesus can therefore restore people’s lives; heal broken relationships, wounded minds and an overpowering feeling of meaninglessness. Rita Brock focuses on the study of the Gospel of Mark. She tries to rediscover the meaning of the Jesus community from the restored interpretation of patriarchy.

The man Jesus takes the place of women, as they are: the sick, the well to do, the highly placed, prostitutes, housewives, girls and children. This representation of Jesus does not set conditions, but seeks the broken hearted. Mary Magdalene longs to be healed. Johanna feels unfulfilled in spite of the money and prestige of her husband. The

great sinner wants to be able to live without contempt. Martha begins to understand that housework cannot be everything. Jesus the man holds the power to alter their situations.

4.3.2.3 Jesus as Life-giver

The insight that women are made in the image of God, is often disregarded. The most obvious image of woman is that of a life-giver. The picture runs far beyond that of the simple child-bearer. Women bring life not only to children, but also to men. The power extends to giving instruction, at least by example; ultimately, it extends to a sanctifying power that gives the life of faith to husbands. The initial insight was stated in Genesis 2-3. Man is incomplete without woman; he needs her to find some sort of answer to the riddle of who he, himself is. Woman may also be a mystery, but she is the Lady Wisdom. As the later Christian tradition expressed it, Mary became the Mother of God. Women become the life-giver, not just the child-bearer but also the Christ-bearer and that reveals to us all that we are truly sons and daughters of God.

Hisako Kinukawa, a Japanese feminist theologian, identifies with the life of Jesus as an outcast of society. She uses the term “outcasts” in its widest sense. Kinukawa (1994:140) depicts the outcasts in Mark’s gospel as:

- those who are considered a threat to the “integrity” of the elect in society
- those who have no means of demanding their right to live in society, and
- those who are marginalized and afflicted.

To have solidarity with someone premises an interrelational involvement of human lives, in terms of reciprocal life-communion. Kinukawa (1994:140) sees Jesus as a “life-giver”, which has social implications. Jesus had threatened the authorities of the social order which is sustained by patriarchy, hierarchy and monarchy. Jesus also rejected the temple-centered religion and state. A typical example of an outcast is the poor widow, who gave the offering of two coins (Mk 12:41-44). The widow represents those who are rejected by the temple-centered religion. Her life spoke boldly in silence but Jesus in his perceptiveness responded to her. Jesus said that she committed her whole life to God. The “life-giving” Jesus restored the marginalized to fullness of life.

Kinukawa (1994:141) says that “as long as women were considered to be men’s property, women had to suffer from unequal rights”. Inequality is much in evidence in patriarchal power structures. Therefore, Kinukawa (1994:141) emphasizes that the woman who dared to initiate an encounter with Jesus, out of desperation, sparked his consciousness for being a suffering servant, which in turn made Jesus become truly Jesus Christ.