

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

In the first chapter I described women's and specifically Korean women's experience. In Korea, the family system has been patriarchal and the political system classist (see chapter 3, section 3.2). The economical system has evolved from a pre-modern aristocratic to an industrialized bureaucracy (see chapter 3, section 3.3). The social system has been influenced by capitalism and is still steeped in Confucianism (see chapter 3, section 3.4.2.2). Confucianism is a system of male hierarchy (Tu Wei-ming 1991:765). Within this system Korean women did not have an identity of their own. They were isolated in their homes and were expected to be subservient. Christian women continued to live their lives within such a value system. In Korean churches, women would obey the words of the minister as though they were the Word of God, which has absolute authority.

Women in Korea have been rendered voiceless by a male-dominated society. They did not have a way of effectively expressing themselves either politically, economically, or religiously. In the modern Korean bureaucratic society being highborn is valued, along with a prominent position in society, having power, being educated, and having much money. People evaluate others according to these norms. Because of societal structures women have been unable to attain what is highly valued by society and they have been without political or economic power. This study has shown that Korean women experience violence on many levels in their lives. In this regard Thistlethwaite (1985:104) states that physical violence is not the only form of abuse. Verbal intimidation, economic deprivation, and deliberate humiliation also characterize the violent relationship." In order to better understand the lives and experience of Korean women the following factors relevant to the formation of their context were described and analyzed (chapter 3; chapter 5, section 5.2):

- the myth of Korean origin;
- political and historical developments;

- economic developments;
- the religio-cultural background;
- the influence of and expression by means of Korean literature.

Methodology was discussed in chapter 2. The aim of the study was to develop an interdisciplinary method by means of which the historical situation of the Korean society could be explained not only in theological, but also in sociological terms. This engaged hermeneutical approach concurs with the wisdom of Richard Rorty (1982: xiii):

There is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not our appeal to such a criterion, no rigorous argumentation that is not obedience to our own conventions.

According to Nietzsche (1964:104), “man arrives at a ‘sense for truth’ only because he is unconscious of the origins of truth, that is, that man himself is the creator of truth. If he could ever ‘get out of the prison walls of this faith’ his self-consciousness would be destroyed at once.” In *Beyond good and evil* (1964), Nietzsche extends his discussion of truth to include women (Hekman 1990:27). Hekman (1990:28) says, “Nietzsche is one of the first critics of modernism to reveal that the ‘deconstruction’ of western rationality necessarily entails the rejection of the masculine definition of ‘truth’”. From a postmodern perspective, I analyzed the *kyriarchal* relations of domination and fundamentalism in Korean churches (see chapter 4, section 4-1). Using postmodern ideas as startingpoint, the cultural-religious values in Korea and the social position of Korean women were explored by means of Korean literature (see chapter 5, section 5-2).

Feminist deconstructive approaches and feminist critique were used to explain how female sexuality has been constituted in Korean society (see chapter 5). An attempt was made to recover an authentic female sexuality from the distortions of patriarchal thought. This issue was explored by means of certain biblical passages (esp Pr 31:10-31; see chapter 5, section 5.1).



My findings are both positive and negative. On the negative side it has become clear that there are no immediate answers to time-conditioned problems of present-day Korean women. The Bible does not give a direct answer to the questions concerning women's issues, such as for example equal payment for equal work. Prejudice against women in the church can easily be legitimated by quoting texts out of their contexts. Often Bible translations concerning women or female participation in for instance the Jesus movement have been exposed as inaccurate and biased. Women still have only a small chance of an attaining an official position in the church. Married women are still solely responsible for serving their husbands and feeding their families. Their proper place is still considered to be the home. If married women do succeed in obtaining responsible positions in the broader society, their burdens and work load are doubled – as housewives and as contributing members of society. The dominant socio-cultural narrative concerning women is still prevalent in church and society, in spite of many developments toward a postmodern world. Christian women often still believe themselves to be small people. They also believe, however, that God uses small people in God's history.

The positive findings are that the Bible does still have something constructive to say to women who are willing to face the challenges of present times with wisdom and with faith in the value of their female perspective, and to seek theological meanings for political and social problems. Song, Choan-Seng (1982:14) points out that "women in many parts of the world are searching for a new image of woman in the human community dominated for centuries by patriarchal systems and male-centered social structures." Positive insights, positive thinking, a positive perspective, and positive actions can provide a strong momentum toward the liberation of Korean women. Awkward biblical passages can be challenged by critical theological interpretation without denying what is being said or the patriarchal context in which it was said. The force of *kyriarchal* passages can be relativised and minimized by seeing them in the light of Jesus' vision. Such an engaged hermeneutics helps us to see the difference between the law (or tradition) and the Gospel.

Male-centered patriarchal culture has brought violence, victimization, and domination over women and nature; it has brought violence in the form of colonialism, capitalism, militarism, and nuclear weapons. In response to this, and following in the footsteps of

Jesus, female culture should endeavour to bring love, equality, justice, peace, and care for others to the societies of this world. If the androcentric culture is related with oppression, the female culture should relate with the struggle of the oppressed for liberation and self-realization. If patriarchal theology discriminated against women, then feminist theology should help to transform male-dominant relationships to partnership and participation. Female culture and theology should, therefore, be people-oriented rather than authority-centered, and life-giving rather than death-dealing. If the Korean church truly wants to be the community of Jesus Christ, which lives in love as one body, seeking the reign of God, then the practice of classism, sexism, and racism in the church should not be permitted. Instead, the community should be a living witness to a fellowship of sharing, cooperation and peace among all.

The scene of God's creation can be reimagined. God said, "Let there be woman" (Fisher 1979); and there was woman. And God saw that the woman was good. God called the woman female, and God blessed her. It is beautiful that God recognized woman in herself. What women need to achieve are:

- To realize that they are a precious creation by God.
- To find and develop the roles of their potential.
- To be able to express their experienced officially and no longer feel ashamed of themselves as women.
- To open their eyes and see the poor and the oppressed, those who are the subject of social and political change.
- To speak women's experiences and narratives for those women who do not yet have the courage to speak.

My finding on account of this study is that there is a need to deal with the following issues: women should criticize authoritarian culture and distinguish the liberating and enslaving aspects of such a culture. Korean women need to extend the expression of their experiences in many ways: through the arts, music, architecture, drama, and so on. Women need to help to resolve cultural and ethnic conflicts actively, which are classism, sexism, and racism. Women need to participate in social issues in a positive way.



Doing theology as a liberated Christian woman within the realities of today, means being faced by many challenges: women need to discern the core of the Gospel of Jesus. Jesus' lifestyle was free. His instruction was very different from the dominant teachings. Korean Christian women also need to be free from men-centered instruction. Women need to develop a spirituality in order to obtain inner liberation to heal the social, political, economical, and religious damages done. Women' experience could contribute to the change and renewal of Christian theology and Christian churches. Then women could participate in human relations of truth, love, justice and peace. Korean Christian women should be empowered to also interpret the Bible. Androcentric and patriarchal interpretation of the Bible is not helpful for women anymore. Korean Christian women no longer relate to the dominant socio-cultural narratives of the Bible. Women hope to find new, liberating and life-giving ways of interpreting of the Bible. Korean women need to do theology for women's liberation and for the transformation of society and Christian churches. Women should contribute their wisdom and love freely by joining counseling, pastoral and discipleship actions of the church.