

VI. BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about the Biblical understanding of women's leadership. The title compels us to seriously reflect upon the meaning of the bible. However, the Bible is a most difficult book to understand because we have to hear God through the written words. We often find it hard to get into the heart of the writer or speaker through the written language. We can save or kill a person by the spoken or written words. Because, as Jones said, "Language conceals as well as reveals." Reading the Words of God through translated languages is worse. Translating one language to another often alters the original meaning. Jones would claim that "All interpretations are historically and culturally conditioned. Every translation is an interpretation. When a manuscript is translated from an original language into a target language, compromise the meaning of the original words must be made. Thus, objective or neutral readings are illusory since all interpretations are inherently biased." ¹

There are different approaches in interpreting the Bible: One approach is believing every word in the Bible is God's word so it is without error or contradiction. We call this "literalism" or "inerrancy." In our culture, many Americans who believe in the Bible assume it is the inerrant Word of God should be interpreted literally,² thus making literalism the only interpretive option. The following five basic principles are used to justify literalism or inerrancy: 1) Because God authored these writings, the scriptures are divinely inspired and therefore sacred. 2) Since God is the author, an identity exists between the divine voice and the Bible. 3) When we read it as a seamless literary unit (single genre) the Bible narrates a single, continuous coherent story of salvation history. 4) Because God accurately and coherently speaks in all parts of the text, what God says in one place in the text relates to and reinforces what God says in other places in the text. Thus, passages can and should be used to proof-text one another. The above four principles are believed to confirm the Bible is a direct revelation from God and so the biblical text and the divine voice are identical. This model of biblical interpretation undeniably and unambiguously links the unique status of the Bible with a literal interpretation. Because God can speak only the truth, the Bible's truth can be interpreted only literally. ³

The other approach is a claim that the Bible did not drop out heaven in a fully written form. The Bible was written several thousand years ago by many different authors using many different sources, in

¹ Paul H. Jones. *Reading the Bible Critically, Not Literally*. A Primer (Salem, OR: Westar Institute's Fourth R Magazine, Nov-Dec, 2012), 13.

² Ibid., 11.

³ Ibid., 12.

many different times and different contexts, reflecting different values and social, political and economic realities of the Israelites in the ancient times. The Biblical stories were handed down orally first until finally recorded. The recording took place many years after the fact; for example, the story of Abraham was written some 900 years after his life. And Gospels were also written 40- 60 -80 years after the death of Jesus. Scholars in this second model use historical, cultural, contextual and textual analysis to determine when, why, how, by whom and for whom the messages were written, what it means to the first hearers, and to the first century readers, and to the contemporary readers. We call this approach "higher criticism." Jones employs this criticism, which use textual, source, form, redaction, and literary criticism⁴

Scholars in the high criticism point out the fact that the Bible is full of contradictions. The same God who says in one place, "You shall not kill" (Ex 20:13), in another place orders Israel to "slay the Amalekites, every man, woman and child"(I Sam 15:3). The God who says, "My name shall be great among the gentiles" (Mal 1:11) and "Every valley shall be exalted" (Is 40:4), is also pictured as allowing the heads of the Edomite children to be "dashed against the rocks" (Ps 137:9). The Bible that says, "There is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28), also says, " Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate (I Cor 14:34)." Literalism doesn't answer to these contradictions. Therefore, we will be confused unless we choose one passage and discard the other. Then we end up disobeying God's command.

Therefore, scholars of higher criticism critique literalism with the following six observations:

First, a literal reading needs an original biblical manuscript - a definitive text with definitive words. This, however, does not exist. We possess only late copies of copies, that vary tremendously in quality. **Second**, a literal interpretation requires a reading from the original language. If we have no original manuscript and we read from a translated version of an imprecise text, literalism is impossible to defend. **Third**, Discrepancies and contradictions in the Bible can neither be reconciled nor rationalized.⁵ **Fourth**, a literal reading necessitates selectivity; because of contradictory passages

⁴ Ibid., 13-15 (All readers must engage the text *critically*. attempt to minimize their pre-established agendas and maximize the meaning of the text on its own terms. Since there is no meaning without context, readers of the Bible must always attempt to understand its original historical and cultural context before determining its relevance today. Historical study of the Bible is imperative since it affirms the historical particularity of revelation, the historical incarnation of biblical figures, and the historical embodiment of the biblical writers. A text without an explicit context leaves the door wide open for making the text say whatever the reader wants. Eisegesis- reading our prejudices into the text prevails. Sacred scripture deserves a better hermeneutic. The goal of historical criticism is to uncover the text's meaning in its original historical context. By understanding the text's origins (author, date, place, occasion, context) and sources (if any), as well as the meaning of the text itself, historical criticism seeks to understand what the biblical authors meant when they wrote to their audiences. Only after the reader answers the question, "What did the text mean then?" can she justifiably take up the subsequent question, "What does it mean now?"

⁵ Ibid., 12. (Although 5,700 manuscripts of the Greek Second Testament and 10,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate have been catalogued, scholars estimate that there are between 200,000 and 400,000 variants or differences in the manuscripts. New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman, a specialist in textual criticism, concludes that "we can't say what the words *mean*, if we don't know what the words *were*.)

present in the Bible literalism makes choices and compromises.⁶ **Fifth**, a literal reading assumes a fixed canon. But there is none. Because there is no definitive way by which humans can tell which books are inspired scripture and which are not, multiple Christian canons exist.⁷ **The final observation** is that both Judaism and Christianity are literary religions. Without stories and scriptures, these traditions would not exist. However, language conceals as well as reveals. Although words are the vehicles by which humans give expression to their inner worlds and outer experiences, language inadequately captures, let alone conveys, these meanings. There is usually something left unsaid, as well as something misspoken. Because the mystery and ambiguity of human language permeates all speech, religious communities and their canons are also affected. For the above six reasons, a literal reading of the Bible is an exercise in self-sabotage. Moreover, the theological consequences are disastrous. The inerrant principles of the divine oracle model treat the book as if it were God- the sin of Bibliolatry.⁸

In the Western world, this Bible has also left a trail of pain, horror, blood and death. Biblical words have been used not only to kill, but even to justify that killing. This book has been relentlessly employed by the fundamentalist to oppress others who have been, according to them, defined as somehow subhuman. Literal believers of the Bible have not refrained from using the cruelest form of torture on those whom they interpret to be the enemies of God in these "sacred" scriptures. The Bible has been quoted throughout Western history to justify the violence done to racial minorities, women, Jews and homosexual. It is not difficult to document the terror enacted by believers in the name of the Bible.⁹ Therefore, as Spong claims, the "Literalism becomes destructive to truth."¹⁰

It is interesting to note that the church abandoned some sin, prejudice, and misleading appeals long ago. For instance, in the Bible Lot's daughters committed incest with their father to have heirs (Gen 19: 30-38). For the same purpose, Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, committed incest with Judah, her father-in-law (Gen 38:1-26) for the cause of cultural demand for women to give birth to heirs. Today, people don't commit incest to obtain an heir. Such behavior would be condemned as a crime. The barren parents rather go childless or adopt a child. The church and society have abandoned this cultural practice. Thus the literal interpreters lose ground of their inerrancy. Therefore arguments must state what part of Scripture of

⁶ Ibid., 12 (For example, if parents executed their rebellious children according to the directive of Deuteronomy 21:18-21, none of us would be alive! The litany of problematic texts is endless. Since no one takes the *entire* Bible literally, those who claim that they do, do not apply the principle uniformly).

⁷ Ibid. (Today, all Christian churches accept the thirty-nine book Jewish canon for the Old First Testament. However, the Roman Catholic Church has seven more books in the Old Testament, and the Orthodox tradition includes eleven additional books. Since most Protestant churches admire the 1611 King James Bible, they only recognize the traditional 66 (39 + 27) books, while the Catholic canon has 73 (46 + 27) and the Orthodox has 77 (50 + 27). Consequently, there is no fixed Christian canon).

⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹ John Shelby Spong. *The Sin of the Scripture* (NY: HarperOne; HarperCollins, 2005), 4 (A museum display that premiered in Florence in 1983, and later traveled to the San Diego Museum of Man in 2003, featured the instruments used on heretics by Christians during the Inquisition. They include stretching machines designed literally to pull a person apart, iron collars with spikes to penetrate the throat, and instruments that were used to impale the victims).

¹⁰ John Shelby Spong. *Born of a Woman* (NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 11-12.

tradition is being upheld while other parts are abandoned." ¹¹

The Bible was written in a patriarchal male culture by males for males. Patriarchy and God have been so deeply and uncritically linked to gender by the all-male church hierarchy that men have little understood how this alliance has been used to determine women's status.¹² Thus, through Christianity male bias has spread throughout the Western world. Whenever the bias was questioned at any time in history, the response was that God had willed it, for this is what the Bible taught.¹³ For centuries sexual attitudes, sexual taboos, and sexual practices have been used by dominant groups in society to keep others subordinate. Those who possess power define those who are powerless and then impose their own definition on the ones defined.¹⁴

The church throughout its history has perceived a God who rejects whatever the church rejects. Whatever the church did not understand, it excluded. For centuries women were not actually members of the church but only "auxiliaries." Others whose ethnicity or economic status caused them to be thought of as "foreigners" were allowed to serve only in subservient roles,¹⁵

In understanding the women's leadership in the Bible, both perspectives - literalistic and higher criticism - will be presented. Then, it will be the decision of the readers how they would understand some of the biblical biases on women. They will be able to discern whether the discrimination against women is God's will or human will, patriarchal intention in particular. Authors of this book hope it is better late than never. Readers might be able to discern the true intention and heart of God toward the God-created men and women. In this chapter, we will look very closely at the creation stories and Paul's letters that were used to support a gender hierarchy in church. We will also examine Jesus' view of gender relations, his relationship with women while he was doing his ministry on earth and see how far from or close to Jesus the church's hierarchical model is.

¹¹ John Shelby Spong. *Living in Sin* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 25.

¹² Spong. *Born of a Woman*, 1.

¹³ Spong. *Living in Sin*, 120.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 38. (In South Carolina, in the early years of the twentieth century, many leaders of the Christian Church debated whether a black man was human enough to be ordained and commissioned to serve as a bishop. Left-handed people were called "the devil's children" by church leaders. Mental illness made people different and, therefore, feared and rejected. Divorced persons who remarried also were not welcome at the church's altars, for the failure to keep one's marriage vows was thought to be an almost unforgivable sin. In incident after incident, on issue after issue, throughout the history of the church the prejudice has been the attitude of the church)

A. WOMEN IN CREATION STORIES

INTRODUCTION

Each of the major aspects of tradition that come together in the Torah (the Jewish name for the first five books of the Old Testament) is unique, describing the values of its time and place, and reflective of the social, political, and economic realities that produced it. To quote the Torah without being aware of these primary textual distinctions is to presume that every verse is objective and equally important.¹⁶

Scholars believed that several sources were used to write the Bible; the primal strand of biblical material is known as the Yahwist narrative, because it refers to God by name Yahweh. It was a court history written to serve the best interests of the royal tradition of hierarchical authority, leadership.¹⁷ The second narrative that ante-dates the Bible is known as the Elohist document, because it refers to God by the name Elohim.¹⁸ The Elohist writer believed that God had made a covenant with the whole nation, not just with the leadership. The Elohist tradition is not only one source of the democratic process that vests power in the people who elect, but also of the sense of congregationalism that marks Protestant Christianity today.¹⁹ Spong observes:

In the year 721 B.C.E., when the city of Samaria fell to the army of the Assyrians, the people of the north were dispersed into exile, never to reassemble as a nation. Some escaped to southern kingdom, Judah. In this process two documents, the Yahwist and the Elohist, were merged and are identified as the Yahwist-Elohist document. Though dissimilar, both versions appear in the blended story, and the contradiction is ignored by those who claim inerrancy for the "Word". In time of king Josiah, a new book of the law written by Moses was found (II Kings 22). It was given the name "the second law," or in Greek the *deutero-nomos*. We call it the book of Deuteronomy.²⁰ After reading the book, Josiah

¹⁶ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷ Ibid., 99. **Yahwist narrative** portrayed a God who would speak and deal only with those anointed leaders of God's choice. Moses was God's political instrument, and Aaron, Moses' brother, was the divinely designated priestly leader. On God's behalf these leaders mediated God's demands and God's invitation to the people to enter a covenant. The God Yahweh did not communicate directly with the people. Priestly leadership in this period of Hebrew history was derived from political leadership, and political leadership was derived directly from God. The historians in David's court who wrote the Yahwist narrative were quite sure that no authority rivaled the authority of God's chosen political leader. To rebel against the king or the royal family was tantamount to rebelling against God. This was the Jerusalem point of view, as expressed in the initial strand of pre-biblical material. **The Elohist document** is usually dated around 750 B.C.E. and was composed as a sacred history of Israel in the northern kingdom around the capital of Samaria. This was the incipient beginning of the "priesthood of all believers" of a tradition that refuses to accept the unrepresentative decision and excessive claims of an ecclesiastical or political hierarchy. Since the northern kingdom viewed the patriarch Joseph as its primary ancestor, he was portrayed in their folklore as Jacob's favorite child. The Elohist document was a social and political narrative designed to extol the ancestors of the ones writing the story and to develop a sense of history in the long, distinguished, and sometimes perilous sacred saga of the people of the north.

¹⁸ Ibid., 100. The northern kingdom had separated from Judah when its people had successfully rebelled against the royal house of David in the closing years of the tenth century B.C.E. Jeroboam, a brilliant military leader had demanded certain reforms of the young king Rehoboam, grandson of King David and Bathsheba (I King 12: 3-5). When these reforms were not forthcoming, he led a revolution that ended with a division of the once united realm into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Jeroboam was installed as king in the northern kingdom. In time the city of Samaria was built, to be the new capital to rival Jerusalem (I King 16:24). Jeroboam was empowered by the people in his challenge to the divinely appointed royal authority. In the northern kingdom, since the people chose and empowered the king, he was constitutional monarch who either pleased the people or ran the risk of being overthrown. The story of the northern kingdom's history rose out of this experience and was informed by the new set of social values, and varied widely from the account of Yahwist writer. The people remembered the events at Sinai somewhat differently from the way Judah recollected them.

¹⁹ Ibid., 100.

²⁰ Ibid., 102.

went through reform and produced Yahwist-Elohist-Deuteronomic account. This was the narrative that some thirty-five years later the Jews took with them into exile in Babylon in 586 B.C.E. Under the driving leadership of Ezekiel and a group of priests, the Jewishness of these exiled people was made indelible on their bodies by mandatory circumcision, and in their hearts and minds through strict observance of the law and cultic practices of their tradition. A massive rewriting of the Jewish sacred story was undertaken by a school of priests.²¹ It was this rewritten, theologically conservative, rigidly legal version of Judah's sacred history that Ezra and Nehemiah carried back with them when they came to rebuild Jerusalem in the fifth century, B.C.E. It was also this rewriting that guaranteed Jewish survival as an identifiable people in history. In seven great stanzas, the priestly writers added as an introductory chapter to their sacred story what is now the first and most familiar creation story. The narrative was designed primarily to raise the Sabbath to prominence and to bind it in Jewish observance as a mark of identity.²²

In the biblical morality at the time, the woman was the property of the man. Lot, called righteous, by the Bible, offered his virgin daughters to the angry mob in the city of Sodom (Gen. 19:8). Who will step forward to support that part of "biblical morality"? In the biblical morality, the wife was listed after a man's house and before a man's ox, as a possession not to be coveted by another man (Ex. 20:17). Moralists who quote the seventh commandment prohibiting adultery (Ex. 20:14) fail to realize that polygamy was the style of marriage when that commandment was given. Indeed, three hundred years after the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, says the Bible (I King 11:3). What does adultery mean when one man possesses one thousand women? In its literal context the seventh commandment really enjoined one man from violating the woman who was the property of another man.²³

In the Ten Commandments murder is wrong, stealing is wrong, bearing false witness is wrong, adultery is wrong. What the Bible really says is that these things are wrong for a Jew to do a Jew, but a close reading of the text will reveal that when Jews dealt with their enemies, then lying, killing, stealing, and raping were all acceptable forms of tribal behavior. In war the common pattern was to kill the men, claim the booty, and kidnap the women for sexual sport and servitude. In the Exodus account of the confrontation²⁴ between Moses and Pharaoh, Moses delighted in hearing false witness, promising the Pharaoh that the Hebrews would only go a day's journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to their God (Ex. 5:1ff.). Neither Moses nor Pharaoh really believed that story. When the escape from Egypt did occur, the Hebrews robbed the Egyptians blind and they did it gleefully (Ex. 12:36). When they were on the other side of the Red Sea, they rejoiced to see the Egyptians dead on the shore (Ex. 14:30). You shall not

²¹ Ibid., 103. (No experience shaped the religious life of the Jewish people more profoundly than the exile. Their nation was defeated by the armies of Babylon, their people were marched off into exile, and their concept of God was both expanded and narrowed almost simultaneously. It was the priestly writers who added the cultic commentary to the familiar Elohist version of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, so that reasons were given for refraining from idolatry, obeying parents, and observing the Sabbath, and by which coveting was more thoroughly defined... This priestly influence extended into the years of Jesus, when effective political and religious leadership in Jerusalem was merged into a single office and vested in the high priest.

²² Ibid., 104.

²³ Spong. *Born of a Woman*, 9.

²⁴ Spong. *Living in Sin*, 114.

bear false witness! You shall not steal! You shall not kill! Not applicable, the Hebrews would assert, except in intra-Jewish relationships.²⁵

In the Bible there are conflicting accounts of creation, conflicting versions of the Ten Commandments, conflicting understanding of who Jesus is and was, conflicting details what happened on the first Easter, conflicting views on the meaning of Pentecost, and even on when, or if, the end of the world will come. Despite the fact that these conflicts and alternatives are present in Scripture, there are still some who insist that the Bible is inerrant and that its texts can be quoted to define and support a wide variety of moral activities.²⁶

From where did the female bias in particular originate? Anthropologists and mythologists, such as Joseph Campbell, suggest;

There was a time in human history when the feminine was the analogy by which God was defined. The fertility cults of prehistory were dedicated to the Earth Mother, who was seen as the source and sustainer of tribal life. In time the male deity who lived beyond the sky and who impregnated the passive Mother Earth with the rain of his divine semen replaced her. This powerful sky deity was modeled after the tribal chief, whose strength led the tribe both in battle and in the hunt; this is how the earth goddess was shifted to the sky god. In early human history, woman generally did not grow to be as large as the man and her ability to run and to compete in various test of strength, upon which the survival of the tribe dependent, were obviously limited. She was thus determined to be something of a second-class human being. The vulnerability of the childbirth process and the necessary dependency the woman exhibited in the later stages of pregnancy and while nursing helped cast her in the role of "the weaker sex. Therefore, in earlier male-dominated societies women were treated almost as "prisoners of war." They had few rights. Their freedom was curtailed, both by social pressure and by male power.²⁷

Such a position of women was handed down to Hebrew tribal patriarchal culture and to major world religion in almost every society and also to Judeo-Christian heritage, through which these evils have entered most of us in the Western world. In fact, most religions have a pro-male, anti-female bias.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., 115.

²⁶ Ibid., 112.

²⁷ Spong. *The Sin of the Scripture*, 72-73.

²⁸ Ibid., 71 (Plato, in *The Republic*, recorded Socrates as saying, "Do you know anything at all practiced among mankind in which the male sex is not far better than the female?" Xenophon stated, "The ideal woman should see as little as possible, hear as little as possible and ask as little as possible." In *the Sacred text of the Hindus*, we learn, "It is the highest duty of a woman to immolate herself after her husband's death." In another part of Hindu tradition, we read, "Women are to be debarred from being competent students of Vedas." The Hindu law of Manu state, "In childhood a female is subject to her father. In youth, a female is subject to her husband. When her lord is dead, she shall be subject to her sons. A woman must never be independent." In *Buddhism* one is reborn a woman because of one's fad kama. Buddhist prayer include: "I pray that I may be reborn as a male in a future existence." *Jewish men* are taught, in a book of Jewish prayers, to say, "Blessed be the God who has not created men a heathen, a slave or a woman." Talmudic writers added: "It would be better to burn the words of Torah than to entrust them to a woman." In the Muslim Quran (Koran) we learn that the woman is regarded as "half a man" and that "forgetfulness overcomes the woman. "They are inherently weaker in rational judgment)."

Background of the Creation Story (Gen 1-2)

It is a popular notion among many scholars that there are two creation stories in the Book of Genesis: 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-25. Those who believe in the inerrancy theory claim that both creation stories were written by Moses and Gen 2:4b-25 is just an extension of Gen 1:1-2:4a, not a separate version of creation. Therefore, fundamentalists believe, the creation story must not be critiqued, and we must believe in every word as it is written. However, progressive scholars who employ historical, cultural and textual criticism claim that the two creation stories were written at two different periods of time using two different sources, and therefore, two different sets of intention and purpose and two different historical and theological points of view. Von Rad of Germany, Walter Brueggemann of the U.S.A. and Chung Choon Kim of Korea, all of whom are the renowned Old Testament scholars (males), belong to this progressive school of thought.

Other scholars claim the first creation story came from a P source (Priestly) and the second story from a J source (Jehovah). The first creation story was recorded circa 586 BC when Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity, the second circa 950 BC in the era of Solomon's reign. Since there is such a huge time gap between the two stories, their motifs, historical backgrounds, story structures, expressions, emphases and theological insights are different.²⁹

The background of the first creation story dates from when the Priestly writers were suffering in Babylonian exile. They wanted to communicate to the next generation that Israel's God was superior over their contemporary local Babylonian gods. In the context of exile, Israel faced a twofold crisis that invited Israel to despair and, as a result, they abandoned confidence in Yahweh. Behind the visible authority of the Babylon Empire is the legitimating power of the Babylonian gods who guaranteed the regime and appeared to be stronger than the counter power of Israel's own God. In the face of that challenge, Israel's despairing doubt is countered by the witness of faith that asserts that Yahweh is stronger than the Babylonian gods. It is testimony to Yahweh's work as Creator that counters the ostensive power of Babylon. Thus the Priestly writer used the creation faith to witness to Yahweh God, who is the only exclusive God who created the world and who will also liberate them from their sufferings, and thus dismisses the claims of the other gods and raises Israel's self-esteem and pride from despair to hope. Another intent of the first creation story could have been to teach Israel about God's creation of the Sabbath and urge them to keep it in the life of exile.³⁰

The second creation story is dated 950 BC, during Solomon's reign. Viewing it from political,

²⁹ Chung Choon Kim, *Study on the Book of Law and Prophets* (Seoul: Han Kuk Theological Institute Pub, 1988), 41.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22-27, 42.

economic, cultural standpoints, it was an unprecedented golden time. For the J writer, the Solomon era was the time when Israel exercised power as the strongest sovereign nation in the region of Canaan and throughout the entire medieval world. The J writer uncovers the roots of the citizen's rage at Solomon's collusion with oppressors, with his wealth and extravagance, with the waste of national resources (1 King 4:22-23), and with forced labor and excessive taxation. The J writer also points to the resulting human rebellion that challenged God's sovereign power.³¹

Although the Solomon era in which the J writer lived was a golden era in Israel history enjoying unprecedented prosperity and well-being, Kim presents the loss of the Garden of Eden due to human sins of arrogance, unfaithfulness, treachery, selfishness, greed, hunger for power, fame and luxury, applying theological criticism to that era. For Solomon, the national construction, economic revival, stable livelihood, strong army system, and national security appeared to be "*good for food, delight to the eyes, and possibility for everything.*" But in fact, it was Solomon's own sovereignty that reached to God's sovereign power. Biblical scholars interpret the J writer as being confident the Garden of Eden built by Solomon will be ruined and his almighty power equivalent to God's power will perish.³² Therefore, men's predominance over women was not the central theme of the creation story. Instead it indicts the human sin of challenging God's sovereign authority.³³ Keeping this context of the creation stories in mind, we present the following five major texts that frequently have been quoted in the debate over women's leadership in the church.

Issue 1: Gen. 2:7 and 2: 22 states, "*then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being... And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*"

Those who claim inerrancy of the Bible pick out **the order** of the creation story and claim that God creates first man (2:7) and last woman (2:22); first means superior and last means inferior or subordinate. Therefore, she is not equal to man and must be subject to man. Careful readers of this text will discover that in the first creation story of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, God created human beings in God's own image *lastly* after creating all others – the world, animals and plants – and God blessed them, charging them to tend to the world. However, in the second creation story of Gen. 2:4b-25, God created a human being *first* from the dust of the earth and then God created a woman from the rib of this human being. If we read the text in the light of historical, cultural, an textual criticism a counter- argument is possible:

³¹ Ibid., 46.

³² Ibid., 61

³³ Ibid., 46.

Regarding the claim that the order of creation determines superiority or inferiority, “Calvin finds little reason to defend it and admits the weakness of the argument of priority, since John the Baptist preceded Christ yet was of lesser dignity.”³⁴ If we use the order of creation as the measure of superiority or inferiority, we will run into trouble. For example, in the first creation story, a human being is created after animals and plants. Does this mean that humans are inferior to animals and plants?

According to Oo Jung Lee, a Greek language scholar, the Hebrew word “Adam”, translated in English Bible a “man”, neither means a male gender nor the name of a male. “Adam” simply means “a human being” whose gender is not yet determined. Although the Korean Bible too interprets “Adam” as a male, there isn’t an independent word yet to differentiate male from female gender. It is simply a term that includes both male and female. It only appears in Gen. 2:23 in the event that God created a woman from the human being. This is the first time God uses the Hebrew word, “ish” – a male gender for Adam, a human being. In other words, male and female gender were created and named at the same time. Therefore, male gender as a man was not created prior to female gender, a woman, but the two genders came to exist at the same time.³⁵ Therefore, the claim that woman is inferior to man cannot hold.

Issue 2. Gen. 2:21-22 states, “*So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*”

Some scholars claim that woman came out of man’s (human being’s) rib, dependent upon him for life. Taken out of man (human being) (2:23), woman has a derivative, not an autonomous, existence. Therefore, woman is not equal to man and must be dominated by and subject to man. Adam was made by God. She was taken out of his (human being) body. She was kin to him in a way that the animals were not, but she was to be subservient, obedient and aware of her second class status.³⁶

This argument places emphasis on the material out of which humans were created. In other words, woman came from man’s (human being) rib and man is superior to woman. If the material God used in creation of human beings determines superiority or inferiority, how about the Adam who came from the dust of the earth? Is Adam inferior to the dust because that is the material Adam was created from? Can we also argue that a rib is better and stronger than the dust, and therefore, man is inferior to woman? Roop, a Genesis commentator, asserts the statement that woman was made from material taken “from the man” does not imply that the woman is “lower than” the man. The phrase “from the man” describes a close

³⁴ Jane Dempsey Douglas, *Women Freedom & Calvin* (Commentary, I Tim.) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 57.

³⁵ Oo Jung Lee, *Theology for Women* (Seoul: Han Kuk Theological Institute pub, 1985), 156.

³⁶ Spong. *The Sin of the Scripture*, 77.

relationship between the man and woman. In a similar relationship, *adam* is formed out of material taken *from the ground* (2:7). The story of the creation of human community is followed by statements of mutuality and intimacy, not of structure and hierarchy.³⁷

According to the argument above presented by Prof. Lee, Adam is not a gender. It means "human being." There was not yet a man from whom God created Adam. Another counter argument is that man [rather a human being] did not play any role in creating the woman. He [this human being] neither participated nor watched the creation of the woman. He wasn't counseled about the creation of the woman. According to Tribble, the creature (ha adam) [human being] was totally passive throughout the episode (of creating the woman) because God caused him [this human being] to fall into deep sleep while God "performed the surgery" of taking out one of his [the human being's] ribs and created a new and unique life, the woman.³⁸ As Prof. Lee claims, when God created woman the male gender was also given.

Just like the man, woman too received her life directly from God. Man and woman were created equally from the natural source – dust and rib. Rib only means solidarity and equality. Therefore, can the material itself that was being used by God for the creation dare judge who is superior or inferior? In short, the creation texts had never intended to mean one is superior and the other is inferior, or nor that woman was to be subject to man.

Issue 3. Gen 2:18-23 states;

18 Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner...' 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.'*"

Some scholars interpret this text to mean woman is created for the sake of man; a helpmate to cure his loneliness. Therefore, woman is not equal to man and she should be subject to man. Her chief role in life was to be the male's helpmeet, to bring him pleasure, to relieve his need for sex and companionship.³⁹ Many fundamentalists believe this is how the first woman was created: She, like the animals, was made by God, but she, like the animals, was also subject to Adam. He named her, as he had named all of the animals. She did not share his status, his glory or his divine image.⁴⁰

³⁷ Eugene F. Roop, *Genesis* in Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 323-324.

³⁸ Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 96.

³⁹ Spong. *The Sin of the Scripture*, 77.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

However, according to some other scholars, in this text, the Hebrew word “ezer,” translated as a “helper/partner” in English was used 20 times in the Old Testament to describe God’s help for Israel in times of her trouble and crises. It is not the kind of help from the subordinate or an assistant or a helpmate but positive, active, personal and indispensable help just as one God offered for Israel. The word, “companion” in Hebrew means a pair that fits right for each other, a partnership bearing an equality and mutuality.⁴¹ Roop, a commentator, states that nothing in the phrase *helper fit for him* suggests priority given to the man. Elsewhere the word “helper”(ezer) describes God as “helper” (Ps. 121: 1-2). In fact the use of the term in synonymous lines of Hebrew poetry has suggested to some that the word here means “power” (Deut. 33:29; Ps. 115:9-11).⁴²

Trible also agrees by saying that the Hebrew word *ezer*, rendered here as “companion,” traditionally has been translated “helper”, a totally misleading translation because the English word *helper* suggests an assistant, a subordinate, indeed, an inferior, while the Hebrew word *ezer* carries no such connotation. To the contrary, in the Hebrew Scriptures this word often describes God as the superior who creates and saves Israel. So it does in our story with connotation of superiority to specify identity, mutuality, and equality. According to Yahweh God, what the earth creature needs is a companion, one who is neither subordinate nor superior; one who alleviates isolation through identity.⁴³

Other Old Testament scholars assert that when the text uses the term “helper or companion,” the intention of the J writer was not to name the woman as subordinate helper, but to say that without her, the human being will be alone. And Adam [human being] alone cannot perform the perfect role as true human being. He used the term “helper” in the sense that man and woman needs each other to make complete human beings. Man alone cannot be the real image of human being. This is not to emphasize man’s superiority but to emphasize that only two together can become real human beings, and therefore, they are created for each other. This then doesn’t lead to discrimination or subordination.⁴⁴ Some single males or females or gays and lesbians might not appreciate this argument. They might claim that each human being, male or female is an independent autonomous person who has his or her own identity, dignity and right according to God's original creation.

Issue 4. Gen. 2:23 states,

²³Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.

⁴¹ Hyun Joo Bai. *Ordination of Women is Biblical* in the Collection of Women’s Ordination Source (Seoul: Clergy Women’s Association of the Korean Presbyterian Church, 1992), 60.

⁴² Roop. *Genesis*, 323.

⁴³ Tribble, *God and Sexuality*, 90.

⁴⁴ Kim CC. *Law and Prophets*, 771.

Some scholars understand this text means that since "this one shall be called Woman (ishshah), for out of Man (ish) this one was taken", and man names woman; man has power over her. However, some other biblical scholars claim that "woman" was not a name for someone. "*This one shall be called Woman*" does not mean that man gave the woman a name but means that he found or discovered her as his partner/companion. Man and woman are just equal sexes. *Woman* is simply a common noun and not a proper noun. It just means a gender but not a certain person. Adam is recognizing sexuality in words woman ('ishshah) and man ('ish). This recognition is not a commanding behavior claiming man's power. Neither partner holds any authority on the other partner.⁴⁵

Issue 5. Gen. 3:6: ⁶ *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.*

Some interpret this text to mean that woman committed sin first, so she is a worse sinner than the man, i.e. she is not equal to man and must be dominated by man. It was through the subhuman woman that evil entered the goodness of God's creation and subverted it. So the woman is to blame for sin. However, Spong, a male biblical scholar asserts:

It was men who undoubtedly framed these legends and eventually recorded them, since women in that society had no access to the power to explain God or to the ability to write. Women thus neither influenced cultural assumptions directly nor shaped primal decisions about the nature of anything nor were they engaged in any decision-making processes. So it should come as no surprise that when this male-written and male-shaped biblical narrative seeks to explain how evil entered into God's good creation, it does so by declaring it to be the fault of that subhuman creature created by God to be the man's helpmeet. Her name was Eve. In a man's world women have been blamed for many things from that day to this. If a man rapes a woman, it is because she has tempted him with provocatively appealing dress. If a man abuse a woman, it is because she irritated him. If a man divorces a woman, it is because she became one with whom he found it no longer tolerable to live. If a woman is competent at playing the man's game, she is put down with the suggestion that at best she is a hussy and at worst a bitch. These assumptions continue the pattern established in this story told about the Garden of Eden. Eve is the reason for the man's downfall. She was responsible for the introduction of evil into the world. It is a wonderful story, but it is just that: a story. It is the narrative through which our ancestors tried to capture the "truth" of their existence.⁴⁶

Calvin rejects decisively the argument that Adam was blameless and that only Eve sinned.⁴⁷ Triple and Lee also assert, "The man was with her. Yet throughout this scene [of creation] the man has remained silent; he does not speak for obedience. His presence is passive and bland. He follows his woman without question or comment. She gives fruit to him, 'and-he-ate.' The story does not present him as reluctant or

⁴⁵ Lee. *OJ. Theology for Women*, 158.

⁴⁶ Spong. *The Sin of the Scripture*, 87.

⁴⁷ Douglas, *Women and Calvin*. 57.

hesitating. He does not theologize; he does not contemplate. The man is passive, brutish, and inept.” Women committed sin by initiating eating the forbidden fruit and man also committed the same crime by eating it with the woman without questioning, as if he also didn’t remember God’s command directly given to him not to eat it. They are accomplices and played the same role in committing sin. This counter argument exposes the injustice of patriarchal interpretation of the texts.⁴⁸

By stressing man’s voluntary participation in the sin, the counter argument overturns the traditional interpretation that a certain gender, the woman, is weak to temptation and seducer of the man. In reality it only emphasizes humanity’s weakness and sinful nature.⁴⁹ Spong agrees:

In this way, according to this dominant biblical narrative, the sexes, male and female, came into being. Theirs was to be the relationship of the superior to the inferior, of the lordly male to the submissive female, of the master to the servant. No one could argue with this order since this story taught all who read it that this was God's very purpose. To argue was to violate or to subvert God's plan. One *relates* to this ultimate truth. One does not try to *change* it. So it was that the religious system called Christianity, which grew out of the Jewish womb that birthed this story, carried with it this God-given definition of female inferiority and installed it in our civilization as one of its unchallenged suppositions. Women were taught that they fulfilled their purpose by accepting this divinely imposed understanding. If they rebelled, the superior men in their lives could punish them, divorce them, and even kill them without any fear of any other authority. Women were defined as less intelligent than men and therefore, incapable of being educated, entering the professions or voting.⁵⁰

We pointed out that the above five texts have not mentioned that God created woman inferior. The assertion that God created woman lower than man is only a patriarchal interpretation and neither the intent of these texts nor God's will. Moreover, the fact that God created man and woman equally in God's own image and bless them equally to *have dominion over every creeping thing upon the earth* (Gen. 1:28) displays **equality** between man and woman. **Equality** was rather God's original intention. We must begin to understand the creation story correctly, that was previously interpreted to mean inequality between man and woman, and begin to treat each other according to God's original intention of equality. God’s gracious goodness in creating and blessing man and woman equally must be restored.

⁴⁸ Tribble, *God and Sexuality*. 113. OJ Lee. *Theology for Women*, 161.

⁴⁹ Jung Sook Lee. *Human Rights of Clergy Women: Study on Asian Women*. Asian Women’s Study Institute, Sook Myung Women’s University, 2003), vol. 42, 4.

⁵⁰ Spong. *The Sin of the Scripture*, 78.

B. ST. PAUL AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

Next to Jesus, Paul is the most important person in the New Testament because thirteen of its twenty-seven documents are attributed to him. More than half of Acts is about him.⁵¹ Therefore, Paul is well known to most Christians. But few Christians seem to realize that Paul lived, wrote, and died before any Gospel had been composed.⁵² Paul wrote from approximately 47 to 64 C.E. His early letters were midway between the life of Jesus and the First Gospel. His last letters were midway between the life of Jesus and the fourth Gospel.⁵³ Borg writes, "The first thing written about Jesus and early Christianity were in the letters of Paul and not in the gospels,"⁵⁴ and that first document in the chronological New Testament [in order in which they were written] is Paul's letter to a Christ-community in Thessalonica. It was written around the year 50.⁵⁵ Spong reports that contemporary scholarship has now divided the Pauline corpus into authentic and pseudo-Pauline writings.⁵⁶

Paul's writings and sayings are frequently and widely used and quoted by Christian churches. Especially many Korean churches seem heavily rely on certain passages of Paul's letters to oppose women's ordination as elders and ministers.

We now will examine the following major passages that became an issue on the women's leadership in the church. On these texts, scholarly interpretation goes in multiple directions. We will present three scholarly positions regarding women's leadership issue. The first position represents the hierarchical view of gender relations. The second position argues that meaning of these texts should be confined to a local context. The last position claims that some of these texts are an interpolation (insertion by later copyists). Finally we will present corpus of Pauline principle of equality of women and men in the church to promote better understanding of Paul's ideals on gender relations.

⁵¹ Marcus J. Borg, *Evolution of the Word* (N.Y.: HarperCollins Publisher, 2012), 19.

⁵² Spong, *Living in Sin*, 107 (The Damascus road narrative was written by the author of Acts more than thirty years after Paul's death).

⁵³ Spong, *Born of a Woman*, 29.

⁵⁴ Borg, *Evolution of the Word*, vii.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁶ Spong, *Living in Sin*, 107 (Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, and Philemon are now considered genuinely Pauline. Ephesians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews are no longer attributed to Paul. But they still claimed apostolic authorship for post-apostolic works).

1. Issue One: 1 Cor. 14: 34-35

³⁴women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says.³⁵If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

This is a well-known and frequently quoted text in opposing women's ordination in Korean Churches.

a) Hierarchical Gender Relations.

In this position, a focus is placed on a hierarchical language of the head: “the husband is the head of his wife,” and on woman’s being created for the sake of man. Therefore, Paul was said to believe that man and woman are not equal; and women’s leadership in the church is inconceivable. Those who take this view read “women’s silence in church” as God's everlasting Word to the Corinthians and all churches in history. Thus, Paul is read as a socially conservative who laid down the eternal rule on gender inequality. On the basis of such a belief, women's ordination has been denied particularly in many Korean churches.

b) Localized, Contextual Advice

Those who take this position think that Paul addresses a specific local problem in the Corinthian church. So it is not a universal, moral, ethical principle that applies to all churches in history. Calvin also affirms, "Paul’s advice of women’s silence is to be understood with a specific condition and context, not through the principle of God’s law. Paul is dealing with external governing or organization to preserve decorum and avoid disorder."⁵⁷

What is then a local problem addressed in this situation and what is Paul’s advice to it? Fiorenza claims,

There were many women followers of mystery religions such as goddess of Dionysus or Isis. These women radically expressed feelings of their liberation from social restraints of society, loosening down their long hair, falling into an ecstatic mystical experience as likely in cultic worship services. Some of these women could be part of the Corinthian church, acting like what they did in the mystery cult. Perhaps these women thought that they could freely exercise their freedom and equality in a common worship service. For example, they spoke in tongues without a sense of check and balance. But from Paul’s perspective, spiritual gifts are to be exercised carefully for the glory of God, edifying the community (1 Cor 12:7). So what Paul is saying here is not women’s gifts per se but the irresponsible use of gifts only for their mystical, ecstatic pleasures at the expense of the decent, orderly worship service. Therefore, what Paul prohibited was not women’s active participation in worship service but specific acts of worship behavior that could disrupt the orderly worship. In this situation, decency and order in worship service are more important than individual

⁵⁷ Douglas, *Women & Calvin*, 53.

spiritual experience. Paul did not want the Corinthian community to be seen by outsiders as disorderly or irrational. Thus, Paul's intention was to maintain a newly emerging Christian community against an unnecessary misunderstanding by society.⁵⁸

Lee agrees that it may be implausible to think that Paul asked women's silence, because he actually allowed women's free participation in praying and prophesying in the worship service (1 Cor 11:5). Therefore, Paul's advice of women's silence should be understood in a specific cultural context where some disorderly behaviors were an issue.⁵⁹ Thurston too agrees, "1 Cor 14:34-36 cannot be applied to all Christian churches in history."⁶⁰

c) Interpolation (insertion) by Later Copyists or Editors

Crossan claims,

The problem here is not with an inauthentic Pauline letter like 1 or 2 Timothy or Titus, but with an insertion from that later tradition into an original, earlier authentic letter of Paul. In the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible this statement appears in parentheses. Those parentheses emphasize manuscript problems in the earliest textual transmission. First, the passage is not at its present location but at the end of the chapter in some manuscripts. Second, those verses are given as a separate paragraph in all Greek manuscripts. Third, that section was deemed problematic very early, and this is the most important argument for its later insertion into Paul's original text. We can see Corinthian 14:33b-36 is a post-Pauline insertion that female leadership was crudely denigrated in order to establish exclusive male control of the Christian assemblies.⁶¹

According to Thurston a possible reasoning is that later editors inserted this part of women's silence to cement a hierarchical, patriarchal household church.⁶² Walker, Jr., too claims it as an interpolation by stating that the sentiments expressed in the verses appear to be at odds with Paul's view as expressed elsewhere (Gal. 3:28) in his letters. Even the immediate context in chapter 14 apparently assumes that women are included among those who speak in church. Note the "all" in verses 5, 23, 24, and 31 and the "each one" of verse 26).⁶³ Thurston also claims that these verses (14:34-36) are reminiscent of I Tim 2:11-12: "*Let a woman learn in silence, in all submissiveness. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have*

⁵⁸ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 232 (In a worship service at this time, it was not advisable for a wife to ask other woman's husband questions or to point out her husband's error at the worship service)

⁵⁹ Lee, OJ, *Theology for Women*, 146-147.

⁶⁰ Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament* (New York: Crossroads Pub), 32.

⁶¹ John Dominic Crossan, & Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 119.

⁶² Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 46 (Interestingly, there is a similar passage about women's silence in 1 Tim 2:11-15, one of Pastoral Letters (1-2 Tim, Titus). Scholars believe that these pastoral letters were written not by Paul but by later followers of Paul. Actually, Paul's view of women elsewhere in his own letters, such as Gal 3:28 and 1 Cor 11:11, is very consistent: Men and women are equal, participating in the church equally. In this view, Paul is rescued by interpolation theory).

⁶³ Walker, Jr., *Interpolations in the Letters of Paul*, in the Fourth R, a magazine published by the Westar, (2010), 20 (What is more important is that the verses contradict not only Paul's avowed egalitarianism as articulated in Gal 3:27-28 – in Christ, there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female – but also his surprisingly even-handed and egalitarian discussion of sex, marriage, and divorce in I Corinthians 7 and the very positive and non-discriminatory manner in which he speaks of various women with whom he has been associated in the work of the church. The verses also contradict 1 Cor 11:4-5, which speaks explicitly of *both men and women* praying and prophesying (presumably in church).

authority over a man, but to be in silence.”

Because I Timothy is widely regarded as pseudonymous (written in Paul’s name by someone else), this suggests that the sentiment expressed in I Cor 14:34-35 reflects the view of post-Pauline Christians who were troubled by women's leadership role in the church.⁶⁴

2. Issue Two: I Timothy 2:11-12: *Let a woman learn in silence with full submission.¹²I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.*

a) Hierarchical Gender Relations

In this text female leadership in church is absolutely forbidden. Women are not allowed to teach or instruct men. Women are to remain silent. Many contemporary churches that are involved in the hierarchical interpretation would claim that the church must practice exactly as it says and oppose to ordain women as ministers or elders because the Bible says so.

b) Localized, Contextual Advice

Before we examine the text, it's important to establish some ground rules on how we will read: First, the whole Scripture must be considered in the interpretation of any given passage. We must read and work through other passages pertaining to our understanding of male and female. Second, we must distinguish between passages that describe events or practices at the time, and those that clearly teach principles designed for universal and timeless application. Third, we must read the passage within its original cultural, social and historical setting.⁶⁵

Commentator Zehr claims,

Some of the women in Ephesus were apparently attracted by unhealthy teaching, and Paul seeks to correct the situation.⁶⁶ In the larger social and cultural setting of the Roman world women in some circles claimed a bold new freedom. These "liberated" women exercised significant social, financial, and sexual freedom.⁶⁷ The newly liberated women in Ephesus also appeared with a specially braided hairstyle, gold, pearls, and expensive clothing. In contrast, Christian women are

⁶⁴ Walker, Jr., *Interpolations*, 21(The verb translated “be subordinate” appears a number of times in the Pauline letters, but it almost always refers to subordination to God, to Christ, to God’s law, to God’s righteousness, or to “futility”; apart from I Cor. 14:34, it refers to subordination to humans at only three places, the first of which is regarded by some as part of a non-Pauline interpolation: Rom 13:1, 5 (governing authorities), I Cor 14:32 (prophets), and I Cor 16:16 (Christian leaders), . . . all of this strongly suggests that the verses 34-35 were composed by someone other than Paul). He adds that although Clement of Alexandria (who died around 215 CE) cites I Cor 14: 6, 9, 10, 13, 20 discusses the behavior of women in church, he does not refer to I Cor 14:34-35, and the earliest extant citation of these verse is apparently by Tertullian (around 160-240 CE). This suggests that the verses may not originally have been a part of Paul’s Corinthian letter.

⁶⁵ Gary W. Demarest, *The Communicator’s Commentary on Timothy* (Waco, TX. Word Inc, 1984), 176.

⁶⁶ Paul M. Zehr, *Believers Church Bible Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus* (Scottsdale, PA. Herald Pres, 2010), 61 (The sinful teaching that Paul addresses here includes forbidding marriage, advocating abstinence from certain foods, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place (I Tim 4:3-; 2 Tim 2:18). It has affected both men and women who *deviated from or renounced the faith, missed the mark, or wandered away* from the goal of Paul’s instruction (I Tim 1:4-6; 4:1; 6:21; 2 Tim 1:15; 4:4).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

to appear in more culturally acceptable clothing so that the Christian message itself is not misinterpreted by the large society.⁶⁸ In Corinth, the Temple of Aphrodite, and in Ephesus, the Temple of Diana, had hundreds or thousands of sacred prostitutes. Prostitution was regarded as a form of worship to some of the gods.⁶⁹ These women may have been practicing wrong teaching in a wrong way.

Therefore, Paul in verse 12 corrects the abuse of power and teaching privilege in the worship setting at Ephesus.⁷⁰ Paul is neither excluding women from teaching in the church nor excluding women from teaching men in the church. There is no universal prohibition of women teaching and preaching in this text. Given the Ephesian context of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, Paul is correcting a situation that was detrimental to the gospel. Therefore, his teaching characterizes the nature of the teaching rather than the role of women in church leadership in general.⁷¹

Interpreting 1 Timothy 2:9-15 within the larger biblical context leads to the conclusion that Paul is dealing with a local situation in the church at Ephesus. 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is not a universal prohibition against women teaching men, nor is it a reason to exclude women from pastoral ministry. Instead, it is a limited and particular restriction on the guidelines for women's involvement in the Ephesian Church. Paul does not want the gospel hindered or the church brought into disrespect by unacceptable behavior on the part of some women who follow deviant teaching or are not socially acceptable in the Greco-Roman setting at Ephesus. Read this way, 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is not normative for church today in any direct, straightforward way. Apparently the second-century church did not understand it as a timeless prohibition of women's ministry.⁷²

c) Pseudo/post-Pauline writing

Before the nineteenth century, scholars tended to assume Pauline authorship. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most scholars held that someone else had written these letters in Paul's name (pseudonymous). Pseudonymity was practiced widely in the ancient world.⁷³ Scholars who believe that Paul wrote these epistles date them in the last two or three years of his life. Other scholars believe they were written by an unnamed writer after Paul's death, date it toward the end of the first century, and that the letters speak to the post-Pauline church as it faced new issues in its development within the Greco-

⁶⁸ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁹ Demarest, *Commentary on Timothy*, 178.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁷¹ Ibid., 66.

⁷² Ibid., 73.

⁷³ Ibid., 325 (Almost every Jewish apocalypse was written under the name of a famous person from long ago, some hero of the faith who would give the writing authority. Pseudonymity might be acceptable if the content of the writing was in keeping with Christian truth. Pseudonymity, is an act of writing in someone else's name).

Roman world.⁷⁴

According to Spong, contemporary scholarship has divided the Pauline corpus into authentic and pseudo-Pauline writings. I and II Timothy are among the pseudo/post-Pauline writings. These are no longer attributed to Paul but they still claimed apostolic authorship for post-apostolic works.⁷⁵

Another reason why pseudonymity is claimed by scholars is that the common Pauline terminology of justification by faith, the cross, and the body of Christ is missing in Timothy and Titus, which are prominent in the authentic Paul's letters. The differences in terminology have led some scholars to conclude that Paul did not write these letters. Paul also used different secretaries for his writings.⁷⁶

Yet another scholar claims that we have no basis for relegating women to subservient roles in the church on the basis of the whole of Scripture. To take the Bible seriously we begin with creation of male and female, *both* in the image of God. It must also mean that we honor the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to all believers. To restrict the recognition of such gifts on the basis of sexuality is hardly consistent with Paul's classic statement, "*There is neither male nor female; for you are one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3:28).⁷⁷ Therefore, if it is a post-Pauline writing, some pseudonymous author who had a trouble with Paul's egalitarian principle must have inserted it in to teach church to oppose women's leadership.

Crossan concludes this argument well by claiming, "Those pseudo-Pauline, post-Pauline, and anti-Pauline inequalities negate Pauline equality. He [Paul] only said what Christianity has never been able to follow, that *within it* all are equal and this is to be its witness and challenge to the world outside."⁷⁸

3. Issue Three: 1 Cor. 11:3-12

Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ.⁴ Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head,⁵ but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head.⁸ Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man.⁹ Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.¹⁰ For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority*

⁷⁴ Zehr, *Commentary on Timothy & Titus*, 22.

⁷⁵ Spong, *Living in Sin*, 107. (The writing of the books included in the Hebrew Bible range in time from 920 B.C.E. to 135 B.C.E. The time span for the Christian Bible begins with Paul's letters in 49 C.E. and concludes with II Peter sometime before 150 C.E. Can any verse from any book be quoted out of its context and with any integrity be applied to an issue being debated in the world some nineteen hundred years later? Yet, that is the way Christians have used the Bible, again and again. Even on subjects as basic to Christians' theology as our understanding of who Jesus is or what happened on the first Easter, there is great confusion in the biblical texts themselves. Since we know these books not to be apostolic, their argument will not suffice today. When pseudo-Paul writes in II Timothy that "all scripture is inspired by God" (II Tim. 3:16), a text much beloved by fundamentalists, it does not occur to today's reader that when that verse was written the author was referring to the Hebrew Scriptures. At that moment in history no Christian writing had obtained the status of Scripture, and the New Testament itself had not yet come into being.

⁷⁶ Zehr, *Commentary on Timothy & Titus*, 18.

⁷⁷ Demarest, *Commentary on Timothy*, 181.

⁷⁸ John Dominic Crossan & Jonathan L. Reed., *In Search of Paul* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), xiii.

on her head, because of the angels.¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman.¹² For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.

a) Hierarchical Gender Relations

For those who believe in a hierarchical gender model, a focus is placed on a hierarchical language of the *head*: “the husband is the *head* of his wife” and on woman’s being created for the sake of man. Therefore, Paul was said to believe that man and woman are not equal; and women’s leadership in the church would be inconceivable.⁷⁹

b) Localized, Contextual Advice

Calvin points out that 1 Cor 11 (“women’s head-covering and the husband’s being head of his wife”) does not cohere with Gal 3:28 (“equality between men and women”). Paul’s advice (head-covering) in 1 Cor 11 is not a universal truth that applies to all churches in history; rather, it should be understood as a specific advice that addresses a specific, historical problem.⁸⁰

The specific local problem, addressed by Paul, has to do with unruly behaviors of women, as we saw before. In this view, Paul makes it sure that worship service should be conducted orderly. The aim of the Christian community is to proclaim the gospel and to build a strong community. The loosening of hair was considered unholy and unclean in Jewish Christian communities.⁸¹ Paul’s view of women is very different from society. First, in Pauline churches women prophesy and participate in worship service. The only problem for women is certain behavior at worship service.⁸²

c) Interpolation (insertion) by Later Copyists or Editors

Interpolation can also be applied to 1 Cor 11:2-16. In this view, Paul consistently affirms equality between men and women throughout his letters. That is why many scholars believe that these verses could be a voice of later Christians after Paul.⁸³ Crossan also thinks that these texts were inserted by later editors or copyists who wanted to secure a hierarchical structure of the church. As time went by, the Christian churches became larger and Paul's radical theology of equality was replaced by a conservative, reactionary theology, which did not allow gender equality and equal participation of its members, men and women.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Ibid., 75.

⁸⁰ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 22, 34, 35, 36, 39.

⁸¹ Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 227, 232, 233 (For instance, “the person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean’” (Lev 13:45).

⁸² Lee, OJ., *Theology for Women*, 142-144; Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 113-114.

⁸³ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 43.

⁸⁴ Crossan & Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 75.

While literal readers find inequality of women in vs. 3-10, others find in the same text (vs. 11-12) Paul's equality principle: In Paul's theology men and women are equal at home and in the church alike; there is no distinction between men's role and women's role in the church. In Christian communities nobody can exercise his or her power over others. Nobody is superior to others, but all are equal.⁸⁵

It appears that the pseudo Pauline writer didn't seem to care about contradiction but left a room for the literal readers to choose the negative part of women's leadership instead of reading the whole text in relation to the local context of the time.

Thus far we examined three positions on the interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35, I Tim. 2: 11-12 and 1 Cor 11:3-12. Many Korean churches have been choosing the position of a hierarchical gender model ignoring the option of interpolation and contextual interpretation. It is obvious that these texts have been literally read, interpreted and practiced entirely ignoring Paul's egalitarian principles. Now we are going to look closely into genuine Pauline ideal of gender relations.

4. The Principle of Gender Equality in Pauline Theology

a. Equal in the Family

When he talks about marriage and ascetic abstentions and permissible marriage and preferable celibacy in I Corinthians 7, there is consistent equality of female with male or male with female throughout Paul's discussion in Corinthian 7. Whatever he says of one spouse, he then says of the other: the wife does this, the husband does the same; the husband does that, the wife does the same. What is wrong for one is wrong for the other. What is right for one is right for the other: As far as we can see from 1 Corinthians 7, Paul ultra-deliberately and over-emphatically treats female and male alike.⁸⁶

b. Equality in the Assembly (I Cor. 11: 3-12)

³But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ.⁴ Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head,⁵ but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved.⁶ For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil.⁷ For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man.⁸ Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man.⁹ Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.¹⁰ For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels.*

⁸⁵ Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 110.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

This section (vs. 3-10) in Corinthian text seems to silence women within the Christian assembly, which would certainly exalt men over women with regard to their ecclesiastical status. Crossan and Reed would argue,

On the one hand, if you focus only on the women, it is plausible to argue that Paul is subordinating women to men. On the other, if we focus only on the men and realize Roman males normally covered their heads for worship, as with the statue of Augustus as a priest at sacrifice, it is plausible to argue that Paul is opposing pagan religious practice. In the text, Paul also takes for granted that both women and men pray and prophesy in liturgical assembly. That is not the issue of this text. Its problem concerns the proper head covering for each of them in that situation. But why was that so important an issue? At Corinth, presumably as a defiant challenge to inequality and a dramatic statement of equality, men and women had *reversed* modes of head covering in prayer, so that men worshiped with covered heads and women with uncovered heads. In other words, *Paul was confronted with a negation not just of gender hierarchy, but of gender difference*. Of course, women and men were equal “in the Lord” and from God,” but there should be no denial of ordinary dress code or standard head covering.⁸⁷ The *difference* between women and men, however that was customarily and socially signified, must be maintained, even while *hierarchy* or subordination was negated. The text is not about hierarchical inequality, but about differential equality. Paul presumes equality between women and men in the assembly, but demands that they follow the socially accepted dress codes of their time and place. Difference, yes. Hierarchy, no.⁸⁸

¹¹*Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman.*¹²*For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.*

It is, however, important to note that v. 11-12 supports Paul's assertion of equality between men and women. No passage can say better than this that no one is superior to anyone else; there is no ground on which man can degrade women as inferior. Men and women are absolutely equal in the Lord because men and women equally come from God, created by God and belong to God together. Therefore, there is equality between men and women to be leaders of the assembly/the church.

c. Equality in the Apostolate (Rom 16: 1-15)

Paul's letter to Romans concludes in 16:1-15 with mention of twenty-nine named individuals. Of those persons two are pagan householders some of whose present or freed slaves are Christians (16:10-11). That leaves twenty-seven named Christians. In what follows, watch the statistics, the details, and the names, especially which names are female and which are male. Crossan & Reed claims,

First, and above all, it is a woman who carried Paul's letter from Corinth to the Christian groups at Rome. A Pauline letter carrier would also have to circulate, read, and explain it among the Christian communities at Rome. Second, two presumably married couples are singled out for rather extraordinary praise. "*Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risks their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches for the*

⁸⁷ Ibid., 113.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 114.

Gentiles" (16:3-4) and "*Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was*" (16:7). Notice, that Prisc[ill]a is mentioned first in that designation.⁸⁹ Third, in the total of twenty-seven individual Christians in the above list, ten are women. Conversely, however, five women and six men are singled out for special praise.⁹⁰ Fourth, it may be unfair to assess which gender gets the highest praise among those accolades or epithets, but one point should be noted. Paul's *greet* root for special apostolic activity is *kopiao*, meaning "worked hard." He uses it of himself twice, in Galatians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 15:10, but four times in Romans and exclusively for women, for Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis. Finally, there is Junia. For the first twelve hundred years of Christianity, commentators had no trouble identifying her name as female, presumably the wife of Andronicus (16:7), like Prisca is of Aquila (16:3-4). Then the name started to be identified as male. If Junia were female, Paul's compliment should read "prominent to the apostles" rather than "prominent among the apostles." The only reason for suggesting a masculine meaning seems to avoid a major *female apostle*.⁹¹

d. Justification through faith (Gal 2:16)

We know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ.

As Cousar argues, Paul's gospel, preached to the Gentiles ("justified through faith in Jesus"), aims at including the Gentiles into the household of God. So justification is a gift of God for them and they are required to live a righteous life.⁹² Now a new community of faith dawned for all people, regardless of their gender or class. In this new community all are included: male and female, Jews and the Gentiles.

e. New Creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17)

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

According to Paul, anyone in Christ becomes a new creation. This means we do not judge people according to their physical, outer appearances. In Christ there is no role of circumcision or uncircumcision (Jews and Gentiles); men and women freely participate in the church. All who are in Christ are entitled to serve as priests, prophets, or any roles, using their gifts. Gender has no place in this regard.⁹³

⁸⁹ Ibid., 114 (Phoebe, Prisc[ill]a, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, an unnamed mother, Julia, and an unnamed sister) and the other seventeen are men (Aquila, Epaphroditus, Andronicus, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, Herodion, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Nereus, and Olympas). . . ("I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well" (16:1).

⁹⁰ Ibid., 115 (Women: Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, and that unnamed mother. Men: Epaphroditus, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, and Rufus).

⁹¹ Ibid., 115 (**Fifth**, in one way or another everyone Paul knows personally gets some sort of comment. Herodion, for example, is "*my kinsman*" (i.e., fellow Jew). But it is interesting to compare in terms of gender the first seventeen individuals known to Paul by personal contact with the last ten known only by hearsay report. Of ten people indirectly known to Paul, only two are woman and eight are men, but of the seventeen people directly known, nine are men eight are women. Those known to Paul by direct contact are about evenly divided between women and men.

⁹² Charles B. Cousar, *Biblical Commentary on Galatians* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 56-57.

⁹³ Ji Chul Kim, "A Biblical Approach to Women's leadership," in *Status of Women's ordination in the Korean Presbyterian Church (TongHap)* (Seoul, Korea: National Female Ministers Association of the Presbyterian Church (TongHap), 1992), 110.

f. All are one in Christ” (Gal 3:26-28)

“For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26-28).

Many believe that Gal 3:28 is part of a baptismal creedal formula practiced in early Christian communities. In baptism all are equal, with no discriminations made on the basis of race, gender or class. This means that a new order of community was created, moved away from the old order of discriminations. Human equality expressed in Gal 3:28 became a foundation for UN Human Rights Declaration.⁹⁴ Paul used this same baptismal formula in Galatians to ascertain equality of members in Christ, regardless of their origin, race or gender that new members of the Christian communities may express their equal identity in Christ, rejecting Greco-Roman values of hierarchy.⁹⁵ Gal 3:28 is a conclusive case for Paul that he believed the equality of people in Christ. Within the community of Christ all are equal: Jewish Christians, Gentile Christians, male or female, freed persons or slaves.⁹⁶ Indeed, Gal 3:28 shows a fundamental principle of gender equality in Paul’s theology, and within the community all become God’s people through faith (Gal 3:24), not by any human standards or dominating ideologies such as ethnicity, class, or gender.⁹⁷ For many centuries the teaching of Gal 3:28 had been greater charter of gender equality in the Christian community.⁹⁸

According to Crossan, the basic Pauline principle of equality among Christians applies not just to slavery, but to patriarchy as well. In Paul’s theology, Christian gender inequality can no more exist than can Christian class inequality. For Paul, females and males are therefore equal in family, assembly, and apostolate within Christianity. Indeed, the historical Paul opposes *any* superiority, inferiority, or inequality within Christianity.⁹⁹

Think about how entrenched was the view of women that Paul encountered. For long periods of history women were considered to be property, owned first by their fathers and second by their husbands. Recall, for example, that the last commandment orders men not to covet other men's wives or their oxen (Ex. 20:17). Upon that tradition were built laws that enabled polygamy to become a way of life, for if a wife was property, a man could have as many wives as he could afford. These laws refused to allow divorce as an option for women, no matter how abusive the husband was. They fed a tradition that defined women as not educable – not intelligent enough to vote, to own property, to enter the profession or to be

⁹⁴ SangNim Ahn, *Feminist Theological Story* (Seoul: DaeHan Kidok Seohoe, 1992), 300.

⁹⁵ Lee, OJ., *Theology for Women*, 229.

⁹⁶ Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, xiii.

⁹⁷ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 37.

⁹⁸ Lee, OJ., *Theology for Women*, 179, 224.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

part of armed forces. This is what must be set aside, Paul stated in his revolutionary language to the Galatians, for in Christ there is neither male nor female, nor is there superiority or inferiority. Paul was articulating a startling, powerful new reality that exploded into this world in the Christ experience. Paul was suggesting that this is the vision, the experience, the reality that we must recover if the power of anti-female prejudice in Christian history is to be broken.¹⁰⁰ Korean men and women can understand this point gender hierarchy better than anybody because we experienced it. Many Korean men and women are conditioned to the that practice. We must free ourselves if we want to be a new creation in Christ Jesus.

In sum, Paul's view of gender relations is radical. It is his conviction that there is no longer female and male in Christ. Those who insist unequal gender relations in Korean churches need to rediscover Paul's radical view of gender equality. For this purpose, Paul's letters need to be carefully analyzed as we showed before. Namely, Deutero-Pauline (Colossians and Ephesians) and Pastoral letters (1-2 Tim and Titus) should be distinguished from Paul's seven undisputed letters. A gendered hierarchy is clearly observed in those later letters (Deutero and Pastoral letters). We should know that if we exclude women from the leadership roles, we also reject Paul's view of gender equality. Paul affirms all clothed with Christ equally participate in the ministry of the Lord. Now is the time for all Korean churches to adopt Paul's view of gender equality and to embrace both men and women in leadership positions. If we do so, we can participate in "new creation" – a new community of equality and diversity.

5. Paul's Female Coworkers

As stated above, in a society where women were property, Paul's respectful working relationship with women co-workers is remarkable. We saw in chapter 5 that female leaders had important roles in the early Christian churches. Early Christian movement began with small house churches and most of their leaders were women. In this section we will introduce a few female leaders, Paul's coworkers: Phoebe, Prisca, Lydia, Junia, and Dorca. This is evidence that Paul practiced his view of gender equality in the church.

a. Phoebe

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, 2 so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well" (Rom 16:1-2).

In this text, Paul introduces Phoebe as *diakonos* (deacon), which means "service." Outside of the New Testament, this word is often used with serving on the table. However, according to Josephus, a Jewish historian in the first century C.E, the meaning of *diakonos* in Judaism was expanded to include priestly works. In the New Testament, Jesus used it as referring to God's love, moved away from the typical use of

¹⁰⁰ Spong, *Sin of the Scripture*, 103.

the Greco-Roman world. In other words, *diakonos* (service) means also work of loving sacrifice for others. To serve the little ones is equal to serve Jesus (Mt 25:40). *Diakonos* is also used for apostles: “servant of the gospel” or “servant of Christ/God” (2 Cor 11:23).¹⁰¹

Paul uses it to himself (1 Cor 3:5), to Apollos (1 Cor 3:6), and to Christ (Rom 15:8). In this context of usage of the word, Phoebe (as deacon) must have been a church leader and an apostle of the gospel at Cenchreae.¹⁰² However, interestingly, when *diakonos* is used for a man, many English translations have it servant/minister (Eph 3:7; 6:21; Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Tim 4:6); but when it is used for a woman, they translate it as a deacon (implying that she was not a minister or leader). It is obvious that the church Fathers didn't want to recognize her as a minister.

Phoebe's other title is *prostatis* (Rom 16:2), which can be translated as benefactor or helper. In Greco-Roman world, *prostatis* means a person's powerful position, like a wealthy benefactor who could function as a leader of the household and as a supporter of other members belonging to him. Thus it is believed that Phoebe was taking the role of leadership at the church of Cenchreae. Thus the translation of “helper” for *prostatis* is not a good one. The other meaning of *prostatis* is “presiding officer” (1 Tim 5:17) and its verbal form is used for elders (presiding elders). Thus we can say that Phoebe could also be a leading elder. The same verb of *prostatis* was also used to mean “to rule” (Rom 12:7-8; 1 Thess 5:12). In the writings of the church fathers, the masculine noun of *prostatis* was used to those who executed the Lord's Supper. However, translations of Phoebe's title (*prostatis*) were not done well. Phoebe was not a mere female helper but a leader (pastor) of the church.¹⁰³ It is believed that Phoebe played a significant leadership role in the church and worked with Paul.¹⁰⁴

b. Prisca and Aquila

“Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ” (Rom 16:3-5; cf. Acts 18:2, 18, 26; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).

Prisca and Aquila are a married Jewish couple and are highly commended by Paul. The name of this couple appears six times in the New Testament, four of them appearing with Prisca mentioned first. According to Acts 18:2, they had become followers of Christ before Paul came to Corinth. Prisca and Aquila were part of the Jews, expelled from Rome by the edict of Claudius. This couple worked together

¹⁰¹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmann Pub., 1985), 153. See also the RSV Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (Marshall).

¹⁰² Soo Am Park, *Women Ordination in the New Testament*, 1992, 94.

¹⁰³ Richard and Catherine Kroeger, *Female Elders Called by God* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church USA, 1980), 16.

¹⁰⁴ HyunSook Nah, *Right, Lord* (Seoul: Presbyterian Church Women Association, 1994), 133.

with Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:3). They went to Ephesus along with Paul and built a house church (Acts 18:18-19; 1 Cor 16:19). Paul calls them coworkers in Rom 16:3, and they served as leaders of a house church.¹⁰⁵ Their house was used as a gathering place (church), and they played a leadership role in the early house church. This Jewish Christian couple taught Apollos. This is evidence that both men and women exercised leadership roles in early Christianity. *“He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately”* (Acts 18:26). Note here too that name Prisca is mentioned before Aquila, her husband.

Adolf Von Harnack claims, "Prisca is the author of the Letter to the Hebrews." As we saw earlier, women in early house churches equally participated in the church by prophesying or praying in public service (1 Cor 11:5).¹⁰⁶ It is believed that Prisca also served as a leader.

c. Lydia (Acts 16:11-15, 40)

In 50 C.E, Paul preached to a group of women praying outside of the city of Philippi on the day of Sabbath. They gathered at Lydia’s house. This is the beginning of the Philippians church (Acts 16: 13-15, 40). Paul built the first church in the West by the initiative of Lydia and other females as central leaders. This church had very warm relationships with Paul, as we know from its financial support of Paul’s ministry. This first European church had women leaders. Actually, this church was founded by Lydia and her female friends after they prayed and met Paul.

d. Junia

“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was” (Rom 16:7).

Junia is a common name and it appears 250 times in historical documents. We find that some translators/copists translated (changed) this female name Junia to Junias, which is a male name. As we read in Rom 16:6, Andronicus and Junia are a couple. But as time passed by, some people in later time did not like that fact that a female was an apostle along with her husband, not mere apostles but among prominent apostles.¹⁰⁷ See Roman 16:7, where a woman named Junia is said to be "prominent among the apostles."¹⁰⁸

John Chrysostom, a great bishop of the Greek church in fourth century C.E, also acknowledged Junia’s apostleship: “To become a disciple is great. How great women’s dedication is! She deserves to be

¹⁰⁵ Park, SA, *Women's Ordination*, 93; Kim, JC, 112-113.

¹⁰⁶ Lee, OJ, *Theology for Women*, 246-248.

¹⁰⁷ Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 115-116.

¹⁰⁸ Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006), 219.

an apostle.”¹⁰⁹ Junia and Andronicus were among outstanding apostles.¹¹⁰ They seemed to be a couple like that of Prisca and Aquila. They were imprisoned together with Paul.

e. Dorcas (Tabitha)

“Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity” (Acts 9:36).

Dorcas is called disciple, the only woman disciple (*mathetria*) explicitly mentioned in the Bible. In some Korean Bible she is a *female believer*, instead of disciple, but NRSV correctly translates it as a female disciple. *Mathetria* is not equal to a female believer; thus such a translation of a female believer is a critical mistake. Dorcas was a female disciple. Women listed in Rom 16 functioned as deacon, patron, fellow worker, and apostle. For Paul, there seems to be no difference between men’s role and women’s role. Put differently, leadership role was more important than gender role for him.¹¹¹

Paul called all these women his "coworkers." According to E. Eral Ellis, as for Paul, coworkers (*synergos*) means the ones who participated in his mission journeys while *brothers* means local church members in general. *Diakonos* means someone who preached or taught with charismatic gifts as leaders of the local churches, while *apostolos* means all apostles beyond the Twelve, including Paul. Women have all these titles as we see in Rom 16.¹¹²

In conclusion, we note that for Paul, the "apostles" are a larger group than the Twelve and include women. Paul respected women and worked with female workers – leaders of the church. In this respect, “women’s silence in the church” is impossible for Paul. As 1 Cor 14:34-35 was discussed already, Paul is salvaged through an interpolation (insertion) theory that his advice of women’s silence is to be applied to a specific situation of the church. Paul acknowledged women’s leadership roles in the church (Rom 16:7; Acts 9:36). Women were his coworkers (Rom 16:1; Phil 4:2). The Church was a dynamic, vibrant community in which all members, men and women, are interdependent with one another. For Paul, "It is God’s will for all people to be equal with one another,"¹¹³ especially in Christ's Church. Paul’s view of women and equality of genders in Christian ministry was a revolutionary one, because society was run by a gendered hierarchy. As we saw earlier, in early Christianity there were many women followers of Christ, many of whom played a significant role in the church. In our church situation today, Paul’s radical view of gender equality and equal leadership roles should be brought back to our life. We need to reclaim Paul’s

¹⁰⁹ Kroegers, *Female Elder*, 17.

¹¹⁰ Ahn SN, *Feminist Story*, 267.

¹¹¹ Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 115.

¹¹² Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 53.

¹¹³ Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 233.

theology of radical equality in Christ. Our portrayal of Paul should not come from later epistles written after Paul's death (for example, 1-2 Tim), in which we see a clear language of hierarchy between masters and slaves, between a husband and a wife, and so forth. The next legitimate question is: Where did Paul learn his radical reforming theology and insights of gender equality and equal leadership roles between men and women? To answer this question we now move on to Jesus as reported in the Gospels.

C. JESUS AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

Spong presents the following as the background of the Jew's concept on God: The first-century world, and ancient people generally, thought of God after the analogy of a superhuman. The human image of the highest rank was a king, the most powerful person in the land. God was pictured as a super king, very much male, with sovereignty over the whole world, with power beyond human comprehension. It was the power of light, darkness, wind, wave, thunder, lightning, flood, drought, life, and death. His throne was beyond the sky, where he reigned in majestic splendor. In the face of this divine power, people groveled in fear. They sought to win God's favor with sacrifices, offerings, and words of flattery and praise. They sought to win divine approval with behavior modeled on what they understood to be God's will, God's law.¹¹⁴

Jesus was interpreted by the early Christians in terms of their assumed and unquestioned concepts of God, modeled after the image of heavenly king. The focus was on the exalted Jesus seated at the right hand of the heavenly throne.¹¹⁵

Among Hebrew people there was a vast Messianic expectation that took many forms, but Jesus did not fit any of them. The image of a crucified Messiah, hanging limp and dead from a wooden cross, violated Hebrew messianic expectations. Spong describes,

Not only was he executed in a public place, but soldiers hurled a spear into his side, and buried him in a borrowed tomb. His closest friends certainly did not understand him as a Messiah. One of them betrayed him, another denied him, and all forsook him and fled. He claimed no power. Rather he said things like: "Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:3). He said, the "last shall be the first" (Mark 10:31). He washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:1-11). "I am among you as one who serves," he stated (Luke 22:27). He identified his cause with finding the lost sheep (Luke 15:4) and welcoming home the prodigal (Luke 15:11). His teaching found him using Lazarus, a poor beggar of the street, as the sign of his kingdom rather than the rich man (Luke 16:20). He identified his cause with the half-breed Samaritan who went out of his way to alleviate suffering, not with the priest or the Levite who passed by on the other side (Luke 10:29-37). He said his disciples were to turn the other cheek (Matt 5:39), to go the second mile (Matt 5:41), and to love their enemies (Matt 5:44). He placed his cause on the side of the "woman of the city" who washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, not on the side of the morally righteous Simon the Pharisee, in whose home he was a guest (Luke 7:36). He was not willing to fight for his rights or his life. He laid himself as a sacrifice to his enemies. His life was a call to reverse the standards of the world. When this self-giving Jesus was crucified, he refused to defend himself. He accepted the whips and

¹¹⁴ Spong, *Born of a Woman*, 33-34.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

nails of his tormentors, and he died praying for them (Luke 23:34).¹¹⁶ Yet, his life was too vivid to be forgotten, too real to be ignored. His love was real. His sense of presence was vivid. His magnetic appeal to others was immense. Self-giving, suffering, powerlessness, and self-sacrifice were the marks of his human life. This Jesus was in fact "a man for others." Conflict between experience and expectation reached a climax on Good Friday. Jesus died.¹¹⁷

But Easter broke. The life of Jesus reflected a new image of God, an image that called into question the exalted king as the primary analogy by which God could be understood. Spong adds,

This life – selfless, broken, loving, given away, powerless – this life was the very life of God. A dead man became the means through which the living God was seen. A weak man, beaten and broken, was the symbol through which the triumphant God was perceived. An executed man became the one who made these disciples aware of the meaning of a divinity to which their eyes had been closed or even blinded. That life was God's life. God was present in that life, was their inescapable conclusion. God was seen not as a king ruling life but as a power within life. God was not to be perceived after the analogy of a distant deity, who was both superhuman and isolated, but rather as a divine essence not separate from and not identical with but incarnate within humanity, emerging from the heart of life in self-giving love and freely offered being. That was the meaning of God disclosed in the person of Jesus. That essence, consequently, had to be lifted theologically into being the essence and definition of God.¹¹⁸

We see God and God's word in Jesus because God is the source of love, and the love that was apparent in that Jesus embraced all sorts and conditions of humanity. He was open to beggars (Mark 10:46), prostitutes (Mark 14:3), thieves (Luke 23:32), lepers (Luke 17:11), and the demon possessed (Mark 1: 32), Mary Magdalene who was caught by 7 demons, the bent-over woman, the bleeding woman, the adulterous woman, the Samaritan woman and all other sin-sick souls who by all measures were persons of no status. No one was apart from the love of this Jesus. The divisions that human beings create to determine worth were swept aside.¹¹⁹ Neither lack of status nor presence of status affected the being of Jesus. He was who he was.¹²⁰ Edmond Browning, the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church in the United States, observed, "The ethics of the kingdom have to be grounded in the compassion of the Christ. By the life of the Christ no one was rejected, because no one was rejectable."¹²¹

Pope John Paul II has supported a document and an attitude that proclaims, "Women will never be priests in the Roman Catholic Church because Jesus did not choose any women to be his disciples." Many fundamental Protestant Christians will give cheer to this statement. Scholars argue that this is a literal misuse of the Holy Scriptures. In the social order and mores of the first century, choosing a woman as a

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 38-39.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 39-40.

¹¹⁹ Spong, *Living in Sin*, 160.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 161.

¹²¹ Ibid., 160.

member of the twelve disciples could have been inconceivable. Perhaps it has not yet occurred to the bishop of Rome that Jesus did not choose any Polish males to be disciples either, but this did not exclude from the priesthood the Polish boy Karol Jozef Wojtyla, who became John Paul II.¹²² The same thing can be said about any church that exclude women from leadership role. Such a patriarchal claim compels us to review Jesus relationship with women in his ministry as reported in the Gospels.

1. Women were included in Matthew's Genealogy (Matt 1:1-17)

2. Women were among followers of Jesus (Mt 14:21; Mk 15:40-41; Lk 8:1-3)

3. Jesus had female apostles and female disciples.

- a. Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:3; Mk 15:40-41; John 20:11-18)
- b. A Samaritan woman (John 4:9-25)
- c. Martha and Mary of Bethany (John 11:1-44)
- d. A woman who anointed Jesus (Mk 14:3-9; Mt 26:6-13; Lk 7:36-50; John 12:1-8)

4. Women were believed to participate in the Lord's Supper.

5. Women were the final witnesses to Jesus' crucifixion.

6. Women were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

1. Women were included in Matthew's Genealogy

Scholars explain as follows regarding the inclusion of women in genealogy:

Matthew has inserted the names of five women, including Mary, who is identified as "the mother of Jesus" (Matt 1:16). It was unusual in those days to mention women in any genealogy; but, beyond that, these particular women [except Mary] present a special problem. All of them were tainted by some sexual impropriety. In addition to Mary, the genealogy presents Tamar, who played the prostitute to seduce her father-in-law, Judah (Gen 38:1); Rahab, another prostitute, who assisted the spies in Jericho (Josh 2:1-6); Ruth, the Moabite lady who, by sleeping in his bed while he was inebriated, forced Boaz to exercise his filial responsibility to marry her (Ruth 3:6); and Bathsheba, who was identified in this genealogy not by name but as the wife of Uriah. David had violated this woman and arranged for Uriah's death in battle (2 Sam 11:2). The inclusion of these women in this genealogy has intrigued and frustrated interpreters through the ages. The fact is, however, that in the Jewish piety of Jesus' time these women were highly esteemed and would not have been thought of as sinners by Matthew's readers. Luther appears to have been the first to suggest that all these women were foreigners and were included by Matthew to show that the Jewish Messiah was related by ancestry to the Gentiles; Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth a Moabite, and Bathsheba presumably was a Hittite. That argument may have some power, given Matthew's desire to uphold universalism. Mary, however, does not fit into this scheme. But in Matthew's day these women were regarded by the Jewish tradition not as foreigners but as Jewish proselytes.¹²³

¹²² Spong, *Born of a Woman*, 6-7.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

2. Women Among the Followers of Jesus

What the women's status looked like in Jesus' time? Several scholars observe:

In Jesus' social context there was a purity system that created a world with sharp social boundaries between pure and impure, righteous and sinner, whole and not whole, male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile that became the base of discrimination.¹²⁴ Traditional patriarchal law denied women adults autonomous civil status. Women were treated legally as permanent minors and dependents of fathers and husbands. They had no rights to represent themselves politically as legal persons. Civilly, women were non-persons who were represented by their male guardians. The daughter or wife was in some sense property or chattel, regarded as being owned by her father or husband.¹²⁵ In Jesus' day, it was a scandal for a man to appear in public with a woman. A woman's word was considered useless in court. It was better to burn a copy of the Torah than to allow a woman to touch it. Women were excluded from most parts of the temple nor did they count in calculating the quorum needed for a meeting in the synagogue. First-century Jewish men regularly thanked God that they were not Gentiles, slaves, or women.¹²⁶

In such a society, there was no ground for women to stand on. It was unthinkable for women to meet other men or to walk with them. However, many women followed Jesus throughout his ministry and provided for him when he was in Galilee (Mark 15: 40-41; Luke 8: 1-2; 23: 49,55). How and why would first-century Jewish women (and slightly later, gentile women) be attracted to Jesus? Because Jesus and the early Christian movement subverted the conventional wisdom about women among both Jews and gentiles. The subversion has been denied by much of Christian history, but it is right here, in a prominent place in the story of Jesus' life.¹²⁷

Jesus and earliest Christianity gave women an identity and status that they did not experience before. Jesus welcomed and embraced women, children, tax collectors, sinners, prisoners, the disabled, the sick, and all oppressed and marginalized into the household of God. All are children of God. This was Jesus' new community of love where all people belong together, regardless of their social standing or gender. In this new family of God, one of the least is to be cared for and included (Mt 25:40). In a sense, Jesus himself was one of the least, who advocate for them at the cost of his life. As Moltmann observes,

Jesus is actually their representative, just as the people represent him. He is one of theirs, and they are the least of his brothers and sisters (Matt. 25:40).¹²⁸ In the fellowship of mutual service without domination and without servility, they live out the liberty which Jesus brought into the world. The closeness of the women to the service of Jesus is important not only for the women but for Jesus himself too.¹²⁹ So these marginalized women were among the followers of Jesus.

¹²⁴ Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995), 53, 55-56.

¹²⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse." Edited by Carson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 31.

¹²⁶ Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Complete Evangelism* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1997), 75.

¹²⁷ Borg & Crossan. *The Last Week*, 152.

¹²⁸ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 149.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

3. Female Apostles and Disciples Among the Followers of Jesus

Pope John Paul II argue that women were excluded from leadership roles in the church because Jesus as a man called only male disciples [the Twelve], and that only men can serve as apostles and disciples. We wouldn't deny that Jesus is a man, but let us ask, did he save men only because he was a man? Do we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior because his gender is male? We also know that Jesus Christ is not only a man but also a Jewish male. Then shall only Jewish men become disciples or apostles?

Apostleship

Scholars argue that as for Paul, apostleship was not limited to the Twelve; rather, it included those who witnessed the risen Lord and/or those who were assigned a new task of preaching the gospel.¹³⁰ In discussing who would become a disciple instead of Judah Iscariot, Acts 1:21-26 states a few conditions for a new disciple: the one who followed Jesus in his earthly ministry and witnessed the risen Lord. In fact, women appearing in the four gospels satisfy these conditions because they had been with Jesus from Galilee to the last moment of Jesus' life. Therefore, they were the essential apostolic witnesses of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection (Mt 14:21; Mk 15:40-41; Lk 8:1-3; 23:49, 55; Jn 20:11-18).¹³¹ Crossan and Borg agree by noting that for Paul, the "apostles" are a larger group than the Twelve and include women. See Romans 16:7, where a woman named Junia is said to be "prominent among the apostles."¹³²

Calvin freely acknowledges that women assumed apostolic role:

[Christ] even gave them [women] the message of the gospel for the apostles, in order to make them the teachers of the apostles. That in the first place was a rebuke to the listlessness of the apostles, who were lying all but dead of fright where the women were anxiously hurrying to the tomb and thereby earned no common reward deemed them worthy of singular honor, giving over to them the apostolic mandate taken away from the men for a short time¹³³

Discipleship

Discipleship means "to follow" Jesus. Women were among "the followers" of Jesus (Lk 23:49). "Following" is essential to discipleship, as Lk 5:11 indicates: *When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and "followed him."* Some of these women came from Galilee (Lk 8:1-3) and left everything to follow Jesus. If they followed Jesus, they were also disciples, who responded to the call of Jesus and who supported Jesus' mission with all their mind and material (Lk 8:3). They served Jesus and learned from him just like male disciples. In Luke, woman is a model of service and discipleship. Thurston argues,

¹³⁰ Lee, O.J., *Theology for Women*, 230-231. See also Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women Around Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 111.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*,

¹³² Borg & Crossan. *Last Week*, 219.

¹³³ Douglas, *Women & Calvin*, 58.

Women were among the foremost disciples of Jesus, recorded in all four gospels. For instance, Mk 15:40 affirms, “When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables.” What this verse suggests is that in the inner circle of Jesus there were more than the Twelve. In Mark’s Gospel, “his disciples” was used 43 times whereas “the twelve” was used 10 times only. Women were part of “his disciples” and followed Jesus wherever Jesus went. According to Mary Ann Tolbert “discipleship” means, “to follow, serve, and suffer for Jesus, and women were an excellent role model for all of these qualifications for ‘discipleship.’ ” Therefore, it is possible that Mark’s community must have had prominent female apostles and disciples.¹³⁴

The image of female disciples in Mark is more positive than that of male disciples, who hardly understood Jesus’ humanity, teaching, and mission (Mk 6:35-36, 49, 52; 8:16-21; 9:32-36; 10:35-45; 13:1). Male disciples challenged (Mk 4:38; 5:31; 8:4; 14:4) and disobeyed him (Mk 7:36). Though Peter’s confession of Jesus was excellent, he still could not understand Jesus. His mind was set on the flesh or glory (Mk 8:27-32). Even one of the twelve, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Jesus and handed him over to the religious elites and authority (Mk 14:10-21). All male disciples fled from Jesus when he was captured and tried (Mk 14:50-52). Peter was busy denying Jesus, when he was being interrogated at the High Priest’s yard (Mk 14:53-72). But women followers had neither denied nor abandoned but faithfully followed Jesus all the way from Galilee to the scene of his crucifixion in Jerusalem (Mt 27:55-61; Mk 15:40-41; Lk 23:49; Jn 19:25). In Lk 8:1-3 (Mk 15:40-41, Mt 27:55-56). They left their homes to follow Jesus just like the Twelve. They provided support for Jesus’ mission. These women’s devotion is an example of discipleship.

Jesus called Matthew, a tax collector, one of the most hated jobs, to be his disciple (Mt 10:3).¹³⁵ He accepted this tax collector through the love of God and made him his disciple (Mt 9:9-13; Mk 2:14-17; Lk 5:27-32). Likewise, Jesus made women disciples. Let us now look into four examples of women disciples who took leadership roles.

a, Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:3; Mk 15:40-41; Jn 20:1-18)

Mary Magdalene appears twelve times in four Gospels. Except for Lk 8:2, she appears in the stories of Jesus’ passion, burial, and resurrection. Many scholars have been assuming that her name Mary Magdalene is derived from her hometown Magdalene. However, Spong presents interesting research results:

"Magdalene" has no reference whatsoever to a village of Magdala, as many have suggested with the translation "Mary of Magdale." No one has ever been able to locate an ancient village Magdala or any Jewish or Roman record that mentions such a village. Other possibility surfaces: There is a

¹³⁴ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 77.

¹³⁵ Park, *SA Women's Ordination*, 84-85 (Tax collectors were hired by the Roman government to collect taxes from Jews. They collected more than required by the Roman Empire and put the over-collected money in their pocket. Because of this, Jews hated this job. Tax collectors did not have even the power of witnessing in a court. This means they were treated like other Gentile slaves (Mt 18:17; 10:5), sinners (Mk 2:15), or prostitutes (Mt 21:31-32). In addition, their money was not accepted by charity.)

Hebrew word, *migdal*, which has the same consonants as Magdala. Could Magdalene be a play on that word? *Migdal* originally referred to a tower (*a migdal edor*) from which shepherds could view the fields in which their flocks grazed. Such a tower – tall, large and of great significance – is mentioned twice in the Hebrew scriptures (Gen 35:21. Mic. 4:8). A play on the word would suggest that the early church, by calling Mary "Magdalene," was asserting that she was a tall, large or great figure – that she was "Mary the great" or "the great Mary."¹³⁶

At any rate, she recovered from her disease through Jesus' healing ministry. Then she left her home for Jesus, serving him with all strength (Lk 8:3). Mary Magdalene is more frequently mentioned than other women, which suggests that she was a leader of the community. In a certain gospel tradition, Mary Magdalene has the same leadership position with Peter.¹³⁷ She traveled with Jesus throughout Galilee and followed him to Jerusalem (Mk 15:40-41). Mary Magdalene was highly regarded by the church fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church until fourth century CE. She was among prominent apostles. Moreover, on the wall of the temple she was drawn and depicted as a female leader appointing priests.¹³⁸ In Mk 15:40-41, Mary Magdalene, along with Mary and Salome, followed Jesus, and "following" means discipleship, as we saw before. Mary Magdalene served Jesus in Galilee. Thus her service can be understood as ministering or priestly work.¹³⁹ Mary Magdalene was an outstanding disciple, who accompanied Jesus all the way to the crucifixion and resurrection.

Mary Magdalene was the first witness of the risen Christ (Jn 20:1-18). She watched Jesus suffering and dying on the cross and went to the tomb of Jesus early in the morning. Finding the empty tomb, Mary cried. But the risen Christ appeared to her. Jesus said to her, "go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (Jn 20:11-18). Mary was the one who first met the risen Lord, the one who was first called to deliver the message of the risen Lord, and the one who first announced it to the world. Mary was assigned an important task of witnessing the risen Christ. This was against the social norm of the day that women's witness was useless. The story of Mary Magdalene in John 20:1-18 suggests that she was an apostle or disciple of Jesus. Indeed, she is the one who witnessed everything about Jesus: his life, suffering, death, burial, and resurrection.¹⁴⁰ Mary Magdalene was a perfect candidate for an apostle who could replace Judas Iscariot. She meets conditions of apostles mentioned in Acts 1:21. According to Jang Sang, Mary is a foundational figure of the early Christian community as a carrier of Jesus' resurrection news.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Spong, *Sin of the Scripture*, 107.

¹³⁷ Lee, OJ, *Theology for Women*, 231.

¹³⁸ Nah, HS, *Right, Lord*, 132.

¹³⁹ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 69.

¹⁴⁰ Ahn, SN, *Feminist Story*, 248-249.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 237. (It is a shame that by denigrating the woman called Magdalene during Christian history, the church destroyed the healthiest female symbol in ancient Christianity. There is no evidence in the Bible to support the familiar claim that Magdalene was a prostitute. That charge was fabricated beginning in the second century of the Common Era, when Greek dualism portrayed flesh as evil. This flesh-and-blood woman at Jesus'

b. Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-40).

Jesus traveled through the regions of Judea and Galilee, ending up by a Jacob-related well in the village of Samaria. Jesus meets there a Samaritan woman and asks her to give him water. No doubt she was surprised because a Jewish man was not supposed to talk with a woman in public space. In addition, Samaritans were in hostile relationship with the Jews.

According to Funk, the Samaritans were a bastard race by Judean standards. They were presumably descended from Israelites who had remained behind when the Assyrians deported the leading families of the region following their conquest in 722 B.C.E. The Israelites remaining behind intermarried with foreign settlers brought in by the Assyrians in the years that followed.¹⁴² Since then, Samaritans had been despised by Jews because they were considered to be racially and ceremonially mixed and unclean. They were treated like sinners or the unclean pagans. Jews were not allowed to be with Samaritans. Even eating or worshiping with them were prohibited. So, Jesus surprised her by asking for a drink. Jewish men did not speak to women in public and in fact the rabbis especially shunned Samaritan women, whom they viewed as perpetually unclean. Jesus breaks both a cultural and an ethnic taboo and a religious prohibition and begins a discussion about "living water."¹⁴³

Thurston claims:

the Samaritan woman is, in fact, one of the most theologically informed person in the Fourth Gospel. She knows the regulations about ritual purity (4:9), ancestral traditions of Israel (4:12), the necessity to worship at a valid temple (4:19-20), and the expectation of a Messiah (4:25). During the discussion he asks about her "husband" and remarks that she has had "five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband" (4:16-19). For the first time in the Gospel and to her, Jesus both reveals his messiah-ship and uses the "I am" self-designation that characterizes John's Christology (4:25-26). The woman returns to her village, shares what she knows of Jesus, and leads many Samaritans to believe in him – thus in effect fulfilling the role of the first apostle/evangelist.¹⁴⁴

As disciples left their homes, boats, and nets to follow Jesus, this Samaritan woman also left her things behind at the well to tell good news to her people in a village. Her work is an example of

side was perceived by the dualism as a threat to his holiness. So the church set about trashing her reputation. Church leaders began to identify her with the woman taken in adultery in John's gospel (8:1-11), though there is not a shred of evidence to support this identification. Just to be safe, they also identified her with the unnamed woman of the city in Luke's gospel (7:36-50), though once again there is not a shred of evidence to support this identification. With her character in tatters, Mary Magdalene was left to play the role of the harlot in Christian history. In her place at Jesus' side, the church installed the sexless, and therefore unthreatening, virgin mother, who was docile, dependent and passive. With two major female figures in the Christian story relegated to the classical roles in male fantasy of virgin and whore, there was no viable female role model left in the Christian story. (Spong: *Sins of Scripture*. 108).

¹⁴² Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996), 175.

¹⁴³ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 83. (The older generation Koreans can relate to the issue of cultural bias very well; for a few decades after 1950-Korean War, women who were engaged in interracial marriage to foreign soldiers who were stationed in Korea were severely discriminated and despised as the ethically unclean and the culturally deviated).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 83-84.

apostleship (Jn 4:5-42). This is evidence that Jesus had no preference of people on the basis of gender, ethnicity or religion.

c. Martha in Bethany

Raising Lazarus from the tomb (Jn 11:1-44), Jesus asked Martha about her faith in him. She answered: “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world” (Jn 11:27). Her faith is very mature in John’s Gospel.¹⁴⁵ Martha’s confession is comparable to Peter’s in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus revealed his identity to a Samaritan woman earlier in the Gospel and now Martha confesses about his identity. Traditionally, Peter’s confession was considered the rock of the church (the Roman Catholic Church believes that Peter’s confession is the foundation of the church, and Peter is the first pope). Since Martha had an excellent confession, she seemed to be an excellent apostle. In John’s Gospel Martha is a model of leadership. Wendel-Moltmann asserts that Martha seemed to be a respected leader in the Johannine community.¹⁴⁶

Today many people read of Martha as a kitchen worker, preparing food for a guest (Lk 10:38-42). Martha’s work is referred to as *diakonian* in 10:40, which means “to serve.” In Luke’s Gospel, it can be related to a mediator or a leader of Christian mission. *Diakonian* is used in Acts eight times, and six times of which mean the work of leaders. As Carter points out, the story of Mary and Martha was included in Luke’s Gospel to demonstrate the importance of women’s ministry in the church. Both listening to the word of God and acting it out are important. Mary and Martha served in different ways; both were disciples of Jesus. Mary D’Angelo also agrees with Carter that Mary and Martha were among female followers of Jesus, serving as leaders of the house church. Fiorenza also thinks that Martha’s *diakonian* implies her special leadership role in the house church. Martha’s understanding about Jesus is clear and deep, calling Jesus as the Lord.¹⁴⁷

In this story (Luke 10: 38-42), Martha demands that Jesus order Mary to abandon the pupil role for the more acceptable domestic role of assisting with the dinner preparations. Jesus uphold Mary and defends her consciousness-raising act by stating that she has elected a higher choice. Jesus is asserting a revolutionary idea: a woman is educable; she can be a learner. Nothing in the new order that he has come to establish rules out this possibility, because in Christ there is neither male nor female. The divine barriers of power and pejorative definition are simply transcended.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 87-88.

¹⁴⁶ Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women Around Jesus*, Trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroads Pub. 1982), 25-26.

¹⁴⁷ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 110.

¹⁴⁸ Spong, *Sin of the Scripture*, 106.

d. A Woman Anointing Jesus' Head (Mk 14:3-9; Mt 26:6-13; Lk 7:36-50; Jn 12:1-8)

Spong would present the story as follow:

Mark tells the story a woman who, in the last week of Jesus' earthly life, broke in upon him at a dinner in Bethany, at the home of a man called Simon the leper. Simon was presumably a cured leper who would have a greater sensitivity toward anyone who might be an outcast. The woman's purpose in interrupting the dinner was to perform an act of devotion. She poured upon Jesus' head and feet a perfume known as nard, imported from India. Her act was a violation of every Jewish patriarchal custom, every defining patriarchal norm, and all the men at the banquet moved to condemn her behavior. If such exceptions were allowed, the prevailing norms would no longer be norms. It was a potentially revolutionary moment. But Jesus is portrayed by Mark as rebuking her tormentors and affirming her right to be present, her actions and her motives. "She has done a beautiful thing," Jesus is quoted as saying. "She has anointed my body beforehand for burying" (Mark 14:3-9).¹⁴⁹

Though this woman's anointing story is a bit different in each gospel, all four gospels record this episode, suggesting that this story is very important to early Christian communities. It is possible that she was invited to this table. She could be among the disciples of Jesus. Even though this woman's name is not given in this story, her outpouring of love and anointing prepares moments of his last life – his betrayal and suffering and death. Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem. Judas Iscariot betrayed him. Religious leaders such as high priests and scribes planned to kill him. Jesus predicted his suffering, death, and resurrection three times to his disciples. In the first prediction (Mk 8:30-32), Peter rebuked Jesus not to do so (Mk 8:32). Jesus then rebukes back Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" (Mk 8:33). Peter did not understand about Jesus' identity and work. Just moments earlier, Peter's confession had been great. Jesus again predicted about his suffering and death (Mk 9:30-31), but his disciples still didn't get it. The third time Jesus spoke about his suffering and death (Mk 10:32-34), but his disciples did not care about it, aspiring for a higher place and glory: "*Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory*" (Mark 10: 37-38).

All male disciples of Jesus seemed not to understand about Jesus even though they followed him for long time. Their mind was set on worldly things. Jerusalem for them was a place of victory without foreseeing the difficult journey ahead. But this woman anointing Jesus knew what was going to happen to Jesus in Jerusalem. She knew about his suffering and death. That is why she prepares for his death in such a symbolic gesture, with holy waste of expensive ointment. This woman's preparatory gracious act is contrasted with male disciples, who never understand Jesus; contrasted with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed his teacher; and also contrasted with the religious leaders' plan of killing him. She truly loves Jesus and

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 104.

understand his ministry.¹⁵⁰

This woman poured an expensive jar ointment on Jesus' head. Anointing the head of a king or a priest means a special calling from God. Prophets in Ancient Israel established a king after anointing him. This woman's anointing of Jesus is a symbolic act of declaration that Jesus is Messiah (the anointed) (Mk 14:6-7). This woman's act also foreshadows Jesus' crucifixion (Mk 14:8-9). Perhaps this story implies that in the Early Church women's role was outstanding. This woman's act is prophetic – the first person who truly understands about Christ crucified.¹⁵¹

Jesus praises her act: "She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" (Mk 14:8-9). Nobody else received such a high praise. Her act of anointing is the work of a true disciple.¹⁵² Borg and Crossan agree by saying, "Hence that supreme and unique praise for her as the first believer and the model leader. The unnamed woman represents the perfect disciple-leader and is contrasted with Judas, who represents the worst one possible."¹⁵³

4. Women were at the Lord's Supper

Scholars believe that women also attended the Lord's Supper besides the Twelve disciples. Quentin Quesnell vigorously argues:

"Women were at the Lord's Supper." On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus taught at a synagogue, and women followed him. Therefore it is believed that women were to be part of participants at the Lord's Table. In fact, some ancient manuscripts have "apostles" at the Lord's Supper, instead of "the Twelve" in Lk 22:14. Apostles include women as well in Luke. But some editors changed to "the Twelve." NRSV has "apostles" in its translation. A more conclusive evidence of women's presence at the Lord's Supper would be that Passover meal is a meal of family, which includes women as well (Lk 22:13). Similarly, Joachim Jeremias thinks that women must have been there.¹⁵⁴

5. Women Were the Final Witnesses to Jesus' Crucifixion

Notably, all male disciples fled from Jesus, but women followers were there at his crucifixion. Women's response to Jesus' teaching was remarkable. Jesus taught women and fought for them. The relation between Jesus and women were very intimate and strong; they worked together for the kingdom

¹⁵⁰ Kim, JC, *Law & Prophet*, 111.

¹⁵¹ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 75.

¹⁵² Ahn, SN, *Feminist Story*, 181-182.

¹⁵³ Borg & Crossan. *Last Week*, 104-105.

¹⁵⁴ Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, 112.

of God, impressed by Jesus' teaching. At the risk of their lives, women did not leave the final scene of Jesus' death, because they loved him so much. All four Gospels record women's presence in Jesus' death and burial (Lk 23:49, 55-56; Jn 19:25-27; Mk 15:40-41; Mt 27:55-56). Women's faithful following of Jesus demonstrates a model of true discipleship.

6. Women Were the First Witness to Jesus' Resurrection

After Jesus' death, the male disciples fled because of their fear and disappointment. By contrast, a few women, including Mary Magdalene, witnessed Jesus' death and went to his tomb at the risk of their lives. The women are invited to inspect the place where Jesus' body had been lying. They have seen an open tomb and the divine messenger. They have heard the resurrection announcement. Now they are invited to certify that the body is gone. These women are already official witnesses to Jesus' death (Mark 15:40) and his burial (15:47). Now they become official witnesses of the empty tomb.¹⁵⁵ Lee affirms,

In all the gospels, women play a major role in the story of Good Friday and Easter. They witness Jesus' death. They follow his body after his death and see where he is buried. In all the gospels, they are the first ones to go to the tomb on Sunday and experience the news of Easter. Magdalene's meeting of the risen Jesus is called "a vocational epiphany" (Jn 20:1-18). It is these women's courage and bold witnessing of Jesus that his movement survived and continued after his death. Women followers of Jesus play a major role in proclaiming the prophetic message of Jesus.¹⁵⁶

Women are the first witness to meet the Risen Lord. Women are the first one to be called to witness to his resurrection. Women are the first to go out to the world to witness to his resurrection.

In summary, the closeness of the women to the service, death and Resurrection of Jesus is important not only for the women but for Jesus himself too. Here the fact that Jesus was a man is irrelevant. In the community of Jesus, the women manifested truly human existence that the new creation of all things and all conditions sets free.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Timothy J. Gedert. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Mark* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 394.

¹⁵⁶ Lee, OJ, *Theology for Women*, 241-242.

¹⁵⁷ Moltmann, *The Way*, 146-147.

E. CONCLUSION

We examined the most frequently used Scripture texts in creation stories and Paul's writings that are used as weapons to block women's ordained leadership positions in the church. We then presented counter arguments against the literalist's claims. We presented Paul's core equality ideal. And we reviewed the historical Jesus and his relationship with women in his ministry on earth.

We learned the followings:

1. In reviewing women in the creation story, we learned that God's original intention was creating man and woman equally in God's own image and blessing them equally. That is the core of God's equality principle in gender relations. There is no sign of inequality in the creation story. The claim that woman is inferior and must be subordinate to man's control is simply a patriarchal interpretation resulting from reading the Scripture literally. God's gracious intention is absolute *equality* between man and woman.
2. A portrait of Paul as a chauvinist who sets the guidelines to exclude women from leadership role in the church is a product of reading literally certain texts or post-Pauline texts, and interpreting, teaching and practicing them, ignoring entirely Paul's egalitarian principles on gender relations to fit and defend the literalist's patriarchal vision of gender relations.
3. Jesus' relationship with women in the Gospels discloses the truth that literal readers of the Scripture seem to ignore and exclude Jesus entirely in the discussion of women's leadership in the church.
4. We rediscovered Paul and Jesus to be the most revolutionary ones who dared to break patriarchal norms in living out their egalitarian principle in gender relations. We conclude that Paul is the faithful disciple of Jesus because he learned equality principle from him and lived it out exactly the way Jesus did. We met excellent models of women disciples in the Scripture who were with Paul and Jesus as their co-workers.
5. Literal readers and interpreters of the Scripture seem to alter the most liberating truth of the Scripture into the most excluding and oppressive animal. Thus their unjust exclusion of and discrimination against women as ordained leadership in the Church has resulted in making the church the most sexist institution in the Western civilization.

6. Many scholars and theologians alike argue that the Bible actually promotes gender equality and equal leadership in the church. The Bible as a whole portrays God and Jesus as liberators of the poor, the oppressed and marginalized (Lk 4:18-19), and they are deeply compassionate toward all of them.

7. We joyfully rediscovered Paul and Jesus are the most revolutionary in defending and practicing women's equality in leadership role in the church, and uplifting women's image as God's equal children as well as equal leaders to serve the Church.

Where do we go with our learning? We have a few suggestions and recommendations:

1. We must open our eyes and see clearly the rapid change in society and world. The Church must transform the world if the world practices corruption and injustice. But we must learn from social practice if it is promoting human dignity and equality as children of God better than the church.

Many male Biblical scholars, including Spong, present the changing world in gender relations:

By godly decree, the role of women in the past was clear: She was created for marriage and motherhood. She was to be the keeper of the hearth, the rearer of children, obedient and loyal to her husband. Her goodness and success as a woman were determined by how well she satisfied the patriarchal expectations. The role of the man in that era was also equally well defined: He was the patriarch, the king of his household, the decision maker, and his wife and children were expected to serve him.¹⁵⁸ [However], patriarchal definition of human sexuality, power between men and women, masculinity, femininity, and marriage are changing. All of patriarchal principles and patriarchal prejudices are shifting. All of that demands redefinition of God. The world men knew and loved, the world that had served them well, was and is dying. The era of male domination is on its way out.¹⁵⁹

Fritjof Capra, the philosopher-physicist, observing the signs of our times writes, "We have reached the end of the reign of male domination. In language influenced by Eastern religious thought, the masculine, 'yang,' having moved to its ultimate limit, now is in full retreat before the feminine 'yin.'"¹⁶⁰

Women, breaking the stereotypes of the ages, are entering into every field of human endeavor. In the United States women serve as the Senators, Representatives, State Governor, Lawyers, University/Seminary Presidents, Supreme Court Judges and Ministers in the Church. Many nations such as India, Israel, the Philippines, Norway, and Great Britain have all been governed by an elected female head of state in this century. Korea is no exception. Women used to be discriminated against extremely by Confucian ideology, which used to bind women in a chain of oppression. However, today women serve

¹⁵⁸ Spong, *Living in Sin*, 43.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

not only as politicians, educators, doctors, and lawyers but also a woman is being just elected as the next Presidential. Some Korean Christian churches that read scripture right started to ordain women already, except fundamentalists in Korea as well as in the U.S. who hold onto their patriarchal prejudice.

Even in the seminaries of all the mainline Protestant traditions in the U.S., the gender balance of the student bodies has shifted to a female enrollment that averages 30 to 40 percent of the student body. Some seminaries now have female majorities. The United Methodists have already broken the Episcopal sex barrier by electing some outstanding women of ability as bishops. A change is obviously on the way.¹⁶¹ Today women serve not only as a minister and rabbi in the U.S. churches and synagogues but also as a Moderator in some mainline Christian denominations including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

2. We must recognize that Korean males and females are taught by patriarchal ideologies and Confucianism, whose values are imposed on them. Men and women both are conditioned to the destructive value system and become victims. This results in men denying women's leadership role in church, and many women refuse to fight for or accept ordained leadership responsibility in the church. Therefore, Korean male Christians need to recognize their explicit or implicit participation in the oppression of women in the family, the church and society. Women also must understand that they are equal partners with men in all aspects of ministry in the church. Women can neither be preoccupied by an imposed value of inferiority nor give up their hopes of serving the church as equal partners with men. Those churches that ordain women already and those women who are in the leadership role already must challenge and encourage other women to get up to stand in solidarity with them in seeking and welcoming the leadership role in the church.

3. Both Korean male and female Christians must understand the Christian church that God wants is not a male dominated church but the church of servanthood that men and women equally share as leaders. We hope that many women will be proud of their God-given talents in leadership roles for the church. We also hope that men and women together will walk hand-in-hand for God's kingdom – a place of equality and solidarity. Men and women must help each other to be free from their past belief system and recover the full humanity of both men and women. We hope all churches will join in the efforts of National Council of Korean Presbyterian Church to enhance women's leadership roles in the church. Korean male and female Christians must also understand that women's equal leadership issue in the church is not a woman's issue as is being said so often, but is everyone's issue; it is a faith issue; our relationship issue with God and Jesus. It is a salvation issue. It is a justice issue. It is a human rights issue. Therefore, excluding women from leadership roles or refusing to accept leadership role is against God's will. Some Korean

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 223.

churches in Korea as well as in the United States will claim that they already ordain women as elders. It is good for them to practice that. However, many of them ordain women as a token. It often serves as an excuse to show off with one woman elder in the whole session. All churches must realize tokenism is not a practice of God-given equality or fair representation. We must be free from such a tokenism.

4. We need to understand the Bible in a fresh way. We can neither read the Bible literally nor use passages taken out of the context. We should make this new reading a reality in our church. We must reclaim equal leadership roles once practiced in early church by rejecting a hierarchical, patriarchal reading of the scriptures. We should renew our reading of the Bible with a focus on equality principles of God and Jesus. Cynthia Campbell, the former president of McCormick Theological Seminary reminds us;

Any idea or teaching that denies the equal humanity of women does not reflect God's salvation, a far cry from God's true character. Conversely, anything that advocates full humanity of womanhood is holy, reflecting the true character of God. Such efforts to heal broken relationships between men and women would be good news for all people.¹⁶²

We would like to end with a comment by Spong:

A new day is dawning in the lives of 50 percent of the human race. The church that was once the enemy of this new day, quoting and acting upon the basis of biblical text born in patriarchy, could become both the ally of these oppressed ones and the place where a new humanity in which there is neither male nor female can finally be acted out. The church that does not adopt this vision will die! There is no other possibility! Now do you still want to waste your time arguing that the full inclusion of women in the power position of church leadership violates scripture, overturns sacred tradition and threatens the unity of the church? That is the height of suicidal irrelevance for the Christian church. I prefer to grasp the new day, to expose the "sins of the scripture" and to claim the Jesus seen in the often hidden texts of the New Testament as the ally of a new humanity in every form.¹⁶³ A new value of radical equality would become the mark of the church of the future. In that church there would be no barrier erected against women, no attempt to define their worth as second-class citizens. As we work toward that radical equality, the church will find a new ally in the Jesus who destroyed power boundaries and power definitions. This Jesus, appears to have called women into a new being, to have enabled them to experience a new humanity.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Cynthia Campbell, *Theologies Written From Feminist Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Office of General Assembly, PC USA, 1987), 22.

¹⁶³ Spong. *Sins of the Scripture*, 109.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

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Rev. Jean Kim's Bio



Rev. Jean Kim was born in Korea (1935) and immigrated to the U.S. in 1970 (St. Louis, MO). She moved to Seattle 1979. She is a retired minister/staff of PC(USA) for the issue of homelessness. She is a Maplewood Church product; she started out as an elder here 33 years ago, and was ordained here 25 years ago as a minister of the Word and Sacrament by North Puget Sound Presbytery. Received B. Div. from Han Shin Seminary and BA from Dan Kuk University in Korea; MSW from St. Louis University; Studied at Fuller Seminary, and D. Min from San Francisco Theological Seminary. Founder of several homeless missions including the Church of Mary Magdalene and Korean Nest Mission for which she is a Minister/mental health/social service director. Washington State certified social worker and mental health counselor. Has been serving homeless/most underprivileged people for the past 4 decades. She also gave her heart for the Korean Church's issue in excluding women from the church leadership. Served on dozen boards of homeless missions and committees including Washington State Governor's Advisory Council on homelessness and also served on the national committees on women's leadership in Korean Churches. Received 19 awards including Women of Faith Award from PC(USA), Medal of Honor from Korean government. Authored several books; "Jean Kim says End Homelessness" published by the Hunger Program of PC(USA); "Critical study on Homelessness and Mission Strategy" and Co-authored "Women's Leadership in Korean Churches" published by National Council of Korean Presbyterian Church; "Myth and Facts on Homelessness" published by Seattle Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness. She is a preacher, lecturer, workshop leader and a resource writer. (Contact number (425) 712-1677. E-mail: jeankim1935@yahoo.com. Website: www.jeankimhome.com)

She is known as " a purple woman," because she wears a purple shirts every day which "End Homelessness" printed on. The purple is a liturgical color for Lent season in Christian tradition. As we grieve, lament and repent for Jesus' suffering and commit to serve him, in her purple shirts she grieves, laments, and repents for having so many homeless in this country and commit herself to work toward ending homelessness.