

DICTIONARY of Feminist Theologies

Letty M. Russell & J. Shannon Clarkson, eds. *DICTIONARY of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996),

Letty M. Russell is Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School. J. Shannon Clarkson is Assistant Professor of Education at Quinnipiac College in Hamden, Connecticut.

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Mary's virginity is seen as a symbol of autonomy, as she is not dependent on any man and could carry out God's liberating action directly through her own life. Mary's servanthood is reinterpreted to emphasize her active response of faith to God's call. Mary becomes a model for full womanhood and of the fully liberated human being. She is no longer understood as a model of oppression of women but as a model of their liberation. (171).

Han Kuk Yom, "Mariology," *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, eds. Letty M. Russell & J. Shannon Clarkson (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 171.

"Minjung is a Korean word. It is a combination of two Chinese characters, *min*, translated as "people," and *jung*, "the mass." These two letters, *minjung*, can be translated as "the mass of people." Social scientists define *minjung* as economically exploited people, but *minjung* theology developed a sociopolitical biography of Korean Christians in the midst of the Korean people's struggle for their just and basic rights during the 1970s. *Minjung* perceive themselves as powerless and oppressed for various reasons; class, status, race, culture, religion, etc. In *Minjung* theology theologians seek to preserve the subjecthood of the *minjung* through their own definition of themselves, which is a relational definition, particularly in terms of power." P. 184.

Korean feminist theologians call Korean oppressed women the *minjung* of *minjung*. In the first category are "minjung women," those doubly oppressed as *minjung* and women under poor political, economic, and social conditions. In the other category are "women *minjung*," those discriminated against under the power of male "domination because they are women. Both *minjung* and women *minjung* live in the full feeling of *han* which is a collective experience of oppression among the *minjung* of Korea.

Patriarchy means the 'rule of the father.' Patriarchy refers to systems of legal, social, economic, and political relations that validate and enforce the sovereignty of male heads of families over dependent persons in the household. In classical patriarchal systems, such as were found in Hebrew, Greek, and Roman societies, dependent persons included wives, unmarried daughters, dependent sons, and slaves, male and female. In Roman law, the term *familia* referred to all persons and things ruled by the *paterfamilias*, including animals and land.

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According to Cheryl Ann Brown, "many draw analogies from the story of Hagar. Womanist theology in particular views Hagar in the wilderness as a prototype of African-American women's experience, representing "a near-destruction situation in which God gives personal direction to the believer and thereby helps her make a way out of what she thought was no way" (Williams 1993a, 108); Cheryl Ann Brown.

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wilderness experience, finding in it a paradigm of women's own journey amid continued oppression, having been technically set free yet still longing for and moving toward the Promised Land of full equality and harmony. Ecofeminism affirms the linking of women and nature and maintains that patriarchy is responsible for the oppression of both. For ecofeminists, "wilderness" signifies the wasted condition of planet Earth under patriarchal domination. Cheryl Ann Brown. *DICTIONARY of Feminist Theologies*. Letty M. Russell & J. Shannon Clarkson, eds. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 315.

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Gospel means "good news." The term has three referents in Christian theology that stem from the New Testament. First, Jesus' proclamation of the reign of God is identified as gospel (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43, 8:1). Second, Paul uses the word *gospel* about fifty times to refer to the message he proclaims about Jesus Christ and especially about Christ's death and resurrection. Third, the word refers to literary accounts of Jesus' ministry, teaching, death and resurrection, in particular the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John found in the New Testament.¹

The opening verse of the Gospel of Mark is the earliest example of the use of the noun *gospel* at least in part to designate a narrative about Jesus. In addition to the four canonical Gospels, manuscripts of other Gospels have been found, for example, the Gospels of Thomas, Peter, Mary, the Ebionites, and the Hebrews. Some tell only of Jesus' birth and childhood. Others, like the *Gospel of Thomas* present only a catalogue of teachings, with little reference to Jesus' ministry, death or resurrection. Some clearly differ from the picture of Jesus found in those Gospels that were accepted into the canon, or they present doctrines that the church judged unacceptable. Others simply may not have been well enough known among the early Christian communities to have won support for inclusion in the canon.²

Even the four canonical Gospels differ in their portraits of Jesus. Neither Mark nor John, for example, refers to Jesus' birth or childhood, and the best manuscripts of Mark have no stories of appearances of the risen Christ to the disciples. All four traces Jesus' ministry from his connection to John the Baptist through a time of teaching and other activities (including a ministry of healing) to a final drama including a time with the disciples, arrest, administrative healings before religious and political authorities, condemnation to death, crucifixion, and the discovery by some women of the empty tomb. Despite this general similarity, the four do not agree in the content or order of events and teachings they relate.³

¹ Letty M. Russell & J. Shannon Clarkson, eds. *DICTIONARY of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 132.

² Letty M. Russell & J. Shannon Clarkson, eds. *DICTIONARY of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 132.

³ Letty M. Russell & J. Shannon Clarkson, eds. *DICTIONARY of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 132-133.

Each Gospel proclaims Jesus' significance for the ongoing life of the Gospel writer's own community. All four of the New Testament Gospels were written in the final third of the first century, several decades after Jesus' death. They came from communities of varied ethnic composition (Matthew and John, for example, predominantly Jewish, and Mark and Luke with a large proportion of Gentiles), living in various cities of Mark, perhaps in rural Galilee or southern Lebanon). The writers drew on collections of teachings attributed to Jesus and stories about him that had been circulating in oral or written form among the early Christian communities, and later writers may have incorporated Gospels written earlier. In that process of memory, interpretation, and transmission, traces of the ministry of Jesus in rural Palestine early in the first century were altered in accordance with social realities and theological beliefs of churches shaped by the Roman-Jewish War of 66-70C.E. ⁴

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