

Western Buddhist Feminists' Contribution to Christian Theology

Western Buddhist Feminists' Contribution to Christian Theology

By

Dong Jin Kim

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



Western Buddhist Feminists' Contribution to Christian Theology

By Dong Jin Kim

This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2023 by Dong Jin Kim

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-9044-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-9044-1

To My Mother Hun Sun Yim

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ix
Preface	xi
Acknowledgments	xii
Abbreviations	xiii
Introduction	1
Part I	3
Male and Female in Traditional Christianity	
Part II	24
Traditional Christian Feminism	
(a) A Literature Review of the Feminist Understanding of Christianity.....	24
(b) Analysis of the Nature and Theological Import of Christian Feminism.....	45
Part III.....	66
Weaknesses of the Feminist Response to Traditional Christianity	
Part IV	86
Theological Resources Beyond Traditional Christianity: Importing Western Buddhist Thought	
(a) Literature Review of Buddhist Feminist Interpretation	86
(b) The Nature and Theological Import of Western Buddhist Feminism.....	106
(c) Traditional Christian and Western Buddhist Feminism Compared	123
Summary	135

Conclusion.....	139
Appendix 1	142
Appendix 2	145
Bibliography.....	149

FOREWORD

The subordination of women, in Christian tradition and in its surrounding societies, became a presenting issue for twentieth century Christian theology leading some to abandon Christianity. Various Christian theologians have tried various intellectual approaches to overcoming the challenge. Some have pointed out that the Christian tradition itself offers hints that remove male gender from the divine being. Others have noted the strength of goddess figures in various pagan religions and have attempted to import such figures into Christian theology. Both approaches have received considerable support, both scholarly and at large, but neither has achieved overwhelming support since their assumptions appear to be incompatible with important aspects of received Christian tradition. Furthermore, such approaches do not deal with the real pain sexism delivers to people of all genders.

To provide an alternative that is far less disruptive to traditional theological assumptions, Dong Jin Kim points to a strength of Western Buddhism, particularly as represented by Rita Gross, that addresses spiritual dimensions and is accessible to prayer. In inner contemplation, Western Buddhists have arrived at a spiritual state of a relationship with divinity free of gender, and have also found relief from the pain experienced by all genders from the sexism of surrounding societies. Such contemplation takes the individual beyond the arena of intellectual conflict and beyond anger and ideology.

Such a position may delay outward action to change societal injustices until there are sufficient changed reformers who can proceed without anger, but it will improve life experiences for all practitioners on the way. And meditation should be expected about social reforms in order to complete them when they do occur, taking away the pain they have created.

From the beginning, Christianity has offered the recognition that, in considering the experience of salvation in Christ, real differences do not make a difference. This includes, as the Epistle to the Galatians makes clear, the real differences between men and women: "in Christ, there is neither ... man and woman." Christianity and its narratives and theories must acknowledge real differences, but its spiritualities may rise above them. Thus liberation from inequities may require liberation from theology.

The spirituality Dr. Kim proposes makes concrete this doctrinal and theological assertion from Galatians in a universally accessible way.

Herein is a worthy approach to get beyond the impasses offered to the attempts by theologians to correct our narratives and theories.

—David Neelands,
Dean Emeritus, Trinity College, University of Toronto

PREFACE

This book comes from my Ph. D. dissertation, “Western Buddhist Feminists’ Contribution to Christian Theology”. Studying Buddhist Christian comparative religion and religious dialogue, I noted that many religious women reject male privileges and want to submerge more deeply into spiritual, psychological, and physical liberation from patriarchal and androcentric systems. Many Western Buddhist women and feminists such as Rita M. Gross have made a spiritual journey from Christianity and Judaism to Buddhism for such liberation and mindful peace. Researching such historical religious facts, I have wondered whether Buddhist doctrines can assist Christian women and feminists to learn the skills to understand God’s nature and this book to offer learning skills and methodologies from Buddhism for Christian theology and women.

Thus the hope behind the book is that Christian women and feminists can get some sources of women’s spiritual, psychological, physical liberation from it through comparing the religious experiences of Buddhist and Christian women. Especially, the weaker aspects of Christian theology with respect to women can receive new resources from Buddhist women and religious experiences. Moreover, through the book Buddhist women can learn of Christian women’s religious experiences, noticing what the Christian women and feminists need to understand, feel, and experience from Buddhist women and feminists. In discovering women’s anger and suffering cries, furthermore, the book helps men to recognize and experience deeper gender relationships with women. Lastly, I hope that the book empowers all religious women to release their suffering and anger in their religious or everyday lives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would firstly like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Dr. David Neelands, who has patiently supported and encouraged my continuous Ph. D study concerning Buddhist-Christian Comparative Philosophy and Theology, on the basis of Systematic Theology and Feminist theology. Without his continuous support, this thesis could not have been born.

Besides my supervisor, I would like to sincerely thank the supervising committee: Professor Abraham Khan and Professor Christopher Brittain. Their comments and inspirations encouraged and empowered me to argue my dissertation very cogently and coherently. Professor Donald Wiebe also gave me much useful advice in order for me to finish this thesis.

Lastly but not the least, I would like to thank my mother Hun Sun Yim. She has supported me financially during my Ph. D study. Moreover, I want to dedicate this thesis to my late father Chun Sun Kim, who long ago had very religiously prayed to God for my ministerial and academic success.

ABBREVIATIONS

Bible Versions

KJV/NKJV	King James Version/New King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

Old Testament

Gen.	Genesis
------	---------

New Testament

Rom.	Romans
1 Cor.	1 Corinthians
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Gal.	Galatians
Eph.	Ephesians
Col.	Colossians
1 Tim.	1 Timothy
2 Tim.	2 Timothy
Phil.	Philippians

Other Documents

CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Christianity in patriarchal systems has regarded women as secondary and subordinate to men.¹ Resisting this male-normative patriarchy in the church and Western society, most Christian feminists such as Mary Daly and Catherine Keller have claimed gender equality of men and women.² Although the Christian feminist movement has gained increasing prominence in the traditional church, male-centered ideas and structures have still remained in ecclesiastical positions and in congregations. One of the reasons for this persistence is to some extent related to some weaknesses of Christian feminist theology.

As a matter of fact, with the development of Christian feminist theology, some weaknesses have become more visible in the traditional church. For example, according to Rita M. Gross, by focusing on patriarchal sexism as the primary source of sufferings, Christian feminists have failed to recognize that their proposals have not been helpful to many women, and that women's individual actual sufferings are unavoidable and broadly shared.³ These weak points still encumber the advancing progress of Christian feminist theology.

On the other hand, accepting Buddhism from the East, Western Buddhist feminists have importantly addressed both the actual experiential inevitable sufferings of women and the patriarchal sexism of traditional Buddhism. Their methodologies to treat gender inequality and women's sufferings differ from those of the Christian feminists. These differences

¹ With the comments of Augustine's understanding of the image of God, Rosemary Radford Ruether claims that "[t]his assimilation of male-female dualism into soul-body dualism in patristic theology conditions basically the definition of woman, both in terms of her subordination to the male in the order of nature and her 'carnality' in the disorder of sin"— See Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Father of the Church," in *Religion and Sexism—Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed., Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 156.

² See Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). Also see Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

³ See Rita M. Gross, "Feminism from the Perspective of Buddhist Practice," *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 1 (1981): 73-82.

and their skills can contribute to developing Christian feminist theology in the actual church.

Comparing the ideas of the Christian feminists such as Mary Daly, Rosemary R. Ruether, and Catherine Keller, with those of the Western Buddhist feminists such as Rita M. Gross, Diana Y. Paul, and Anne C. Klein, this book aims to help Christian feminist theology heal women's unavoidable pains more experientially and efficiently, including the sufferings deriving from patriarchal sexism and its structures. The methodology of this book uses analytical, hermeneutical, critical, and comparative analyses of the Christian and Buddhist literature. Through this research, both church tradition and Christian feminist theology will attain more abundant theology so that women can be liberated from their actual experiential sufferings.

Part I will explore how traditional Christianity has interpreted male and female images of God in the Bible, the relationships between male and female during the period of the Church Fathers, and in the modern time. Responding to the patriarchal structures in Christian theology, Part II will analyze how Christian feminists develop traditional Christian feminism, review Christian feminist literature and explore the nature of and theological import of Christian feminism concerning mythology and psychology. Part III will analyze some weaknesses of the feminist response to traditional Christianity. Part IV will discuss importing Western Buddhist thoughts as theological resources beyond traditional Christianity. In order to explore the possibilities and the implications of importing Western Buddhist feminist ideas, the subsections of Part IV will review how Western Buddhist feminists interpret the traditional doctrines and teachings of Buddhism, what the theological implications of these teachings are, and how Christian feminists can import their ideas into Christian feminist theology with respect to the social justice of gender. The last section will compare traditional Christian feminism with Western Buddhist feminism, concerning what similarities and differences Western Buddhist feminists and the Christian feminists have in relation to gender justice as a part of the social justice movement, or as Buddhists would prefer to say "social engagement"⁴.

In the last part of this book, I will summarize the arguments and conclude with the expected possibilities that would occur for Christian feminism by importing Western Buddhist feminist ideas into Christian feminist theology.

⁴ Although social justice of gender in the Christian feminist theology has some similarities to social engagement in relation to gender, they have some great differences. I will treat them in (b) and (c) of Part IV.

PART I

MALE AND FEMALE IN TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Christian church tradition has consistently distinguished man from woman in terms of gender identities and roles. Even though today many churches, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant try to eliminate gender stereotypes, the gender stereotypes still remain, visible or invisible, in the church's hierarchal structures in various ways. According to gender categories in traditional patriarchal society and systems, man as the first gender represents soul, spirit, mind, intellect, and reason, while woman as the second gender symbolizes body, defect, evil, stupidity, incompleteness in spirituality and reason, and subordination to man.⁵ I will explore how the image of God in the two creation stories in Genesis 1:1 to 2:4a and 2:4b to

⁵ See Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans., A. L. Peck (London: William Heinemann LTD; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1943), 113(729b, 10-15)—“Now of course the female, qua female, is passive, and the male, qua male, is active—it is that whence the principle of movement comes.” Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Vol. Two (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1984) 1990(1254, 10)—“Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior.” See Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. With an Introduction and an Appendix on *Atlantis*, Desmond Lee (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 122—Plato sees that female sex comes from the immoral male sex—“The men of the first generation who lived cowardly or immoral lives were, it is reasonable to suppose, reborn in the second generation as women.” See Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, The Fathers of The Church—A New Translation Vol., 45 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, INC., 1963), 352—Augustine claims that man and woman in a whole is God's image —“But when she is assigned as a help-mate, a function that pertains to her alone then she is not the image of God; however man is not the same as woman. See Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*—Latin Text and English Translation Introduction, Notes, Appendices and Glossaries (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company), 61(1a, 93, 4) Aquinas follows St. Augustine's idea of sexes as mentioned above and moreover argues that man is “the beginning and end of woman, just as God is the beginning and end of all creation.”

3:24 is derived from male-centered systems in patriarchal society; in relation to the texts, I will also explore how Pauline letters—such as Galatians 3:26-28 and 1 Corinthians 11—define the gender roles of women and men in the tradition. In relation to them, moreover, I will argue how the traditional church in patriarchal systems reinterprets and develops the roles and positions of women through the feminine resources in the church, such as the concepts of virginity, the person of the Virgin Mary, and the ecclesiastical images of the church itself.

With respect to the biblical texts that affect patriarchal gender roles and identities, the two Jewish creation stories in Genesis 1:1 to 2:4a and Genesis 2: 4b to 3:24 have consistently influenced androcentric ideas in Christian tradition. Particularly, the phrase *Imago Dei*, assuming God's image as exclusively male, has contributed to creating the gender discrimination of male over female. On the basis of the creation order of man preceding woman, it is the male who inherits the image of God in the two narratives. Written by the Priestly writer, Genesis 1:27 states, "[a] [s]o God created humankind in his image, [b] in the image of God he created them; [c] male and female he created them."⁶ Although the NRSV translates the term *hā·'ā·dām* (Adam) as humankind or humanity as the collective species of human beings, most Bible versions, such as the New American Standard (NAS), the King James Version (KJV) translates Adam as "man"—assumed as male, and the Septuagint (LXX) uses a masculine pronoun for a neutral noun. For example, LXX says, "[a] [a]nd God made man [the human being], [b] according to the image of God he made him, [c] male and female he made them."⁷ Here, the term "him" implies a male. Although the NRSV is a recent correction, it remains true that the church tradition has given male precedence, lowering femaleness into inferiority. The feminist scholar Lone Fatum argues that since "Adam" is a masculine noun, female comes from male.⁸ She introduces this assumption based on the biblical patriarchal society and religion that privileged man with authority in the family. For one thing, in the Priestly document, God's name *'ē·lō·hîm* is a masculine plural. For another, the term "created" *bā·rā* is in the third person masculine form of the perfect tense. Thus with respect to Genesis 1:27, masculinity symbolically is prior to femininity in patriarchal structures.

⁶ NRSV, Genesis 1:27.

⁷ <http://ecmarsh.com/lxx/Genesis/index.htm>

⁸ Lone Fatum, "Image of God and Glory of Man: Women in the Pauline Congregation, in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (New Jersey and Oxford, Solum Forlag, 1991), 67.

On the other hand, Phyllis A. Bird claims that because the Priestly writer regards Adam as the collective species of human beings, Adam must be both male and female. For this reason, from Adam come male (*zā·kār*) and female (*nə·qê·bāh*) simultaneously created in Genesis 1: 27c.⁹ On the other hand, comparing Genesis 1:27 to Genesis 2: 4b to 3:24—human creation—written by the Yahwist writer, Bird acknowledges Adam in Genesis 2 and 3 as a distinct individual, that is, a man, and Eve as an individual woman. It is worth noting that Adam who is created as solitary by God keeps an incomplete and defective status until Eve is coupled with him. “For although he bears the appellation of the species, he does not fully represent it. The personification is defective in its limitation to the male alone.”¹⁰ Even in Genesis 2 and 3, Bird seems to follow the first Priestly creation story because in her exegesis of Genesis 1:27 she defines Adam as compounded of male and female as with bisexuality, or double gender.¹¹ For her, the sexual relation between man and woman becomes complete by the union of the couple. As a result, when the humankind of Adam who is imprinted by God’s image become bisexual, God appears to be bisexual. However, Bird abandons developing God’s bisexuality although she ascribes masculine and feminine to Adam.

On the other hand, Rosemary Ruether dissents: “Christian feminist anthropology” has viewed in Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28 “God’s image” as “woman, equally with man.” This claim undergirds “a belief in woman’s full and autonomous humanness that derives from modern

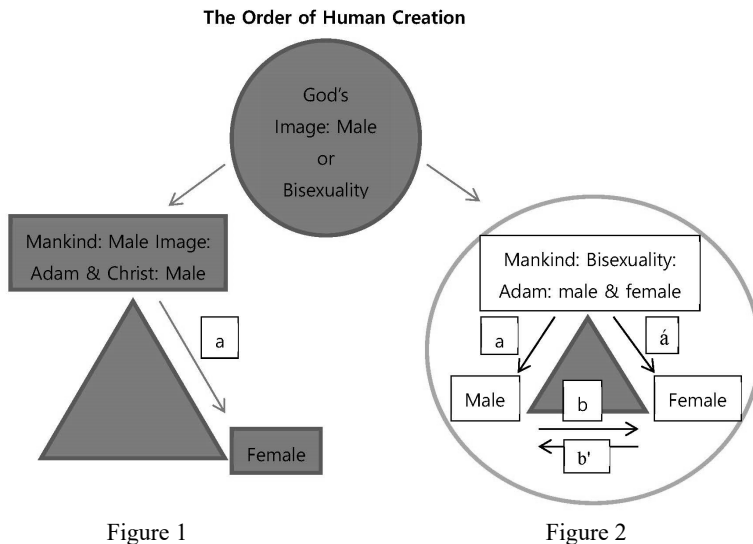
⁹ Phyllis A. Bird, “Sexual Differentiation and Divine Image in the Genesis Creation Texts,” in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (New Jersey and Oxford, Solum Forlag, 1991), 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹ By “bisexual”, I refer to a gender identity that is *both* male and female. Bird sees “Adam” as the collective noun in Genesis 1:27 but “Adam” as the individual species in Genesis 5:2, which she claims “recapitulate” of Genesis 1:27. The difference between two verses is that in Genesis 5:2 Adam is named after male and female are created as individual but in Genesis 1:27 “Adam” appears before male and female are created. Of course, a semicolon is assumed as Genesis 1:27 reads that “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (NKJV or New King James Version). As usual, this semicolon indicates the addition or rephrase of the previous meaning. From this point of view, she seems to claim that the name “Adam” in 1:27 indicates the collective noun, that is “bisexuality”—See Bird, *Sexual Differentiation and Divine Image in the Genesis Creation Texts*, 22. See Andrew M. Greeley, *The Mary Myth on The Femininity of God* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 90; Greeley upholds androgyny of Adam.

feminism.”¹² Finding Bird’s idea that Adam as humanity represents male and female inadequate, Ruether points out that in the ancient Hebraic world if Adam represents “the male head of family” his gender signifies male.¹³ Consequently, she argues that reading the text in equal male and female terms comes from “both egalitarian and also individualistic assumptions of modern democratic societies foreign to the social context of the ancient author.”¹⁴ Yet, for Ruether, examining and realizing the real male-centered texts written by the ancient male authors can offer some insights to reconstruct and reinterpret the patriarchal texts from today’s point of view. For this reason, when women follow an interpretation that ignores women’s real experiences of patriarchal gender oppression, gender discrimination continues and feminists will fail to reform gendered inequality.

In the visuals that follow, Figure 1 indicates the male authority of God’s image prevalent in Christian tradition. Figure 2 offers the recently reconstructed movement against a male sexual image of God in Christian tradition. Unlike the traditional patriarchal image of God of Figure 1, Figure 2 incorporates female or no sexual image to God’s image.



¹² Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Imago Dei, Christian Tradition and Feminist Hermeneutics,” in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (New Jersey and Oxford, Solum Forlag, 1991), 275. See also 278.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 263.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

As Figure 1 shows with respect to the two creation narratives of Genesis 1 to 2:4a and 2:4b to 3:24, God's masculine image in a circle at the top, a circle shared by both Figures 1 and 2, is imprinted in Adam as male, and then the image arrow "a" directs into female. Figure 1 displays a male symbolic God and man's authority in a patriarchal society in which male-centered systems work and women are subordinate. This religious and social structure of gender is normalized and stereotyped in patriarchal religion and society.

On the other hand, the new movement to reconstruct Christian tradition displayed in Figure 2 interprets God's image as bisexuality-androgyny in the circle at the top.¹⁵ As for Bird, when considering Adam as humankind, male and female originate in Adam formed by God's bisexual image—insofar as the image implies the gender of God. When Bird considers Adam's nature as bisexual in Genesis 1:27, male and female can come from Adam as "a" and "ā" arrows point to male and female at the same time, qualifying the equivalent privileges for male and female. The reciprocal pointing of "b" and "b'" arrows connotes coequality of male and female. However, from the patriarchal point of view, in Genesis 2:4b and 3:24, Bird appears to be unable to apply God's image as bisexual or better asexual—God's asexual appearance will be treated in Part III and Part IV—because Yahwist God appears as masculine and Adam is expressed as an male individual (2:7). Although Bird assumes that Adam is the complete sexual male until the appearance of the female Eve, the anthropomorphic appearance of God already embodies masculine gender as in the masculine individual Adam. Thereby God gives the first breath to Adam preceding Eve. This traditional Christian understanding of male domination in two creation narratives empowers St. Paul to reinterpret them in 1Corinthians 11:2 to 16 and Galatians 3:26 to 28.

Explicating the order of human creation, the church, and a family in 1Cor. 11: 2 to 16, Paul argues that women have to be subordinated to and dependent on their husbands (as they were in pagan society). This stands in contrast to the declaration, in Gal. 3:26 to 28 wherein he proclaims women's liberation by inclusion in Christ. Nonetheless, in my view, the

¹⁵ With respect to God's androgynous symbol, See Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father—Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973). See Mary Daly, "The Courage to Leave: A Response to John Cobb's Theology," in John Cobb's *Theology in Process*, eds. David Ray Griffin and Thomas J. J. Altizer (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977). Johnson testifies the equivalent image of God male and female—See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is—The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002).

texts testify Paul's assumed gender identities and roles. In commenting upon 1Cor. 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza acknowledges that Paul affirms "the subordination of women on the theological ground" and "reactionary patriarchal evolution of the Christian community," without any challenges to the patriarchy of "the Christian community."¹⁶ Through this exegesis, she finds that in the texts Paul "justifies the inferiority and dependence of woman," rephrasing the verse 1Cor. 11:7, "Man is the image and glory of God whereas woman is only the glory of man, a prolongation and manifestation of his author and power."¹⁷ About 1Cor. 11:2-16, Schüssler Fiorenza's viewpoint understands that Paul seems to be forced to follow the patriarchal systems of the time. Though I agree with Schüssler Fiorenza that in 1Cor. 11:2-6 Paul assumes gender differentiation, I disagree with her that in Gal. 3:26-28 he shows no gender differentiation.

Although Paul states that in the verse 28c of Galatians 3 "there is no longer male and female" and in the verse 28d "for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (NRSV), he still retains a male centered tendency, relegating female into a secondary status. On the contrary, for Schüssler Fiorenza, with respect to the paired status of the baptismal effect in the verses 28—" [a] There is no longer Jew or Greek, [b] there is no longer slave or free, [c] there is no longer male and female; [d] for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"—she thereby concludes "no sociopolitical or cultural-religious status difference."¹⁸ For her, the baptismal effect can only become the outlet to liberate women, since it includes Jew, Greek, slave, free-born person, and male and female. In the next exegesis, very ambiguously, Schüssler Fiorenza doubts that not all married women are free of marriage order in relation with their husband—signifying that "[w]hile Paul could envision the freedom of slaves and passionately desired the erasure of the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles, he could not condone the abolition of marriage and hence the gendered status of wife."¹⁹ Considering her ambiguous interpretation stated above, it seems that Schüssler Fiorenza does not clearly distinguish the female sexual transcendence by Christian baptism from the social order in relation to men in the church and the society. By the baptismal transformation in the v. 26, Paul claims in 28c that the women baptized in Christ can transcend their female sexuality.

¹⁶ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Changing Horizons—Explorations in Feminist Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 34.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁸ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic—The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 164-5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 166-7.

However, this sexual transcendence means becoming “sons of God.”

With respect to becoming the “sons of God” in Christ, Christian women are able to transcend their sexuality through the baptismal ritual, feminine sexuality into masculinity in Christ. To analyze the Greek texts of Gal. 26-28, unlike NRSV’s translation, “no longer male and female” of the v. 28c which implies female sexual transcendence, means rather that through the baptismal ritual we become “sons of God—*υιοὶ Θεοῦ*”²⁰ “into Christ—*εἰς Χριστὸν*”²¹. The only way to transcend her female nature and status is through baptism, *changing* female into male and combining with the male Christ, that is, becoming the sons of God. Fatum resists this position. Fatum addresses annulment of sexuality, but yet female is ultimately dissolved into male. She claims,

It is one thinks when Paul in v. 28c. with the idea of the abolition of sexual differentiation in mind, defines the abolition of gender and sexuality as a freedom in Christ for the sons of God...practically speaking, asexuality is qualified as the equal terms that will allow a woman to be regarded as a full human being, i.e. a man or a son or a brother before God.²²

Once a woman is baptized in Christ, she becomes one of God’s sons and [one] of [the] Christian brothers, transforming her female sex into maleness. For her, the act of baptism means returning to the “image of God”²³ recorded in Genesis 1:27, becoming a man, human beings’ original image. If so, does this female sexual transcendence really mean abolishing of social order in relation to men in the church and family?

Gender inequality in the social order of marriage and in the church still exists. As mentioned previously, Schüssler Fiorenza also seems to acknowledge that Paul refuses to annul actual marital hierarchy in family, keeping the statement of 1Cor. 11:3b, “the husband is the head of his wife.” However, Fatum argues that the v. Gal 28c does not mean nullifying “the social roles and categories of man and woman” but “sexual functions” about “the differentiation into male and female” of “the human being of creation.”²⁴ For Fatum, nonetheless, the original appearance of

²⁰ *υιοὶ* in Greeks represents masculine plural noun and *Θεοῦ* the genitive case of masculine nominative *Θεός* God.

²¹ *εἰς* is used as the preposition to take accusative noun, that is, accusative masculine *Χριστὸν* of Christ nominative *Χριστός*.

²² Fatum, *Image of God and Glory of Man*, 69-70.

²³ For Fatum, as implying asexuality, woman no longer functions as reproductive in Christ but as a son of God she becomes a man in God’s image—Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 68.

the image of God in creation is a man—a son—representing the human being, male and female. She seems to mean a son who does not symbolize a sexual male.

In the same way, in relation to the v. Gal. 3:28, Ruether contends that wrestling partially with women's secondary gender, Paul shows that "Christ" as "head of eschatology" marks "restoring man" to "his prelapsarian state," "a male androgynous state prior to sexual differentiation." Moreover, Ruether asserts that "[i]n Christ the baptized are taken up into this male-identified non-sexual state."²⁵ This assertion of Ruether confirms Fatum's idea, the stage prior to human creation of male and female, the image of God, that is, Adam, who surfaces in Gen. 1:27a and b. Fatum's and Ruether's argument appears to be more persuasive and attractive than Schüssler Fiorenza's theory, which takes an ambivalent position between biological sexual differentiation and sexual differentiation of social, political, cultural roles in the church and family.

Fatum and Ruether find that Gal. 3:28c involves no biological sexual differentiation, yet allow that a social order in marriage still exists in the church and family. Nonetheless, the difference between Fatum and Ruether comes from the fact that Fatum finds no sexual differentiation in Gal. 28c as giving Christian women self-affirmation of freedom from female sexual discrimination, while Ruether sees only the baptized virgins as liberated in that they are free of marriage subjugation and cares of children, and so they are exempt to some extent from male domination and authority in the church.²⁶

Unlike Fatum's direction, Ruether's argues that Pauline writings in deutero-Pauline churches leave open an important issue concerning whether the baptized celibate virgins can teach and lead the laypersons in the church because as females they are spiritually not below males. In the pastoral letters to Timothy, we see prohibition for women to teach or lead in the church. 1Timothy 2:12 declares, "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent" (NRSV). By contrast, in Ephesians 4:11-13 the leaders and teachers must be "a perfect man" into "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (KJV). This passage may show that those who change into "a perfect man"²⁷ with Christ can teach and lead the church members.

Baptized in Christ and transformed into a perfect maleness, the

²⁵ Ruether, *Imago Dei, Christian Tradition*, 266.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 266-7.

²⁷ "εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον" means that the term "man" ἄνδρα symbolizes a male singular accusative noun. εἰς is a preposition taking an accusative noun and τέλειον indicates an adjective marking this accusative as meaning "complete."

unmarried virgins as ascetic women can be teachers or leaders. Freed from their nuptial lives and husbands' controls, the ascetic women can grow up to become "spiritually male."²⁸ The concept that an unmarried woman who chooses a celibate life in the early church as baptized and made a spiritual male indicates that femaleness still represents inferiority and defectiveness in comparison with a male, the image of God. According to Kari Vogt, it is true that in the early church becoming a spiritual male constitutes the soteriological symbol for women.²⁹ This viewpoint comes from seeing femininity and femaleness as negative in nature. In Paul's time, considering that humanity is composed of masculine and feminine natures, gender division implies that the tendency towards masculinity in a person means spiritual, intellectual, and pristine status but effeminateness connotes the sensual, a defective level.³⁰ To overcome the religious and social order of gender in the time of Paul, women must be ascetics—that is, they must be masculinized. In relation to Gal. 3:28c, although the baptismal ritual releases women from gendered social order and offers them the opportunity to become leaders and teachers in the church, its concept of becoming manly in the process creates another gendered hierarchy.

In a Post-Pauline church, to become a virginal celibate means to free a woman of feminine sexual identities and roles that the contemporary society and church assume. As Ruether points out, ancient people divide human being into three parts, "*sarx, psyche*, and *pneuma*": flesh, mind, and soul. Here body denotes femininity and mind masculinity. When overshadowed by sensuality, whether a man or a woman, one becomes effeminate; however, by being faithful to "spiritual maturity" and restricting sensual instincts, one becomes masculine.³¹ Although ascetic men and women both give up sexual desire and bodily sensual entertainment, gender hierarchy still exists between them. As Ruether notes critically, virginal celibates must continuously be ruled by male authorities such as bishops.³² For this reason, although changing from

²⁸ Ruether, *Imago Dei, Christian Tradition*, 267.

²⁹ Kari Vogt, "Becoming Male: A Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor," in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (New Jersey and Oxford, Solum Forlag, 1991), 276. See Kari Elisabeth Børresen, God's Image, Man's Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen. 1, 27 and 1Cor. 11, 7," in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (New Jersey and Oxford, Solum Forlag, 1991), 195-6.

³⁰ Ruether, *Imago Dei, Christian Tradition*, 267.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

sensual femaleness into spiritual maleness in male-centered milieus, inasmuch as the gender's stereotypes and roles endure, femininity can be regarded as inferior to masculinity. This relationship appears preeminent in the analogous relation of Adam and Christ, Eve and the Church-Mary.

Considering the virginal status of Adam and Eve before their Fall, all four figures of Adam, Eve, Christ, Mary, and Church³³ have in common a form of virginity. Although Christ is incarnated as male, because he was unmarried and obedient to God the Father, one can see him as a celibate man on earth—one who lived a virginal life. In the early Church, the symbolic meaning of virginity indicates obedience, especially to the Lord. As the first known to compare Mary with Eve, Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) states,

For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, gave birth to disobedience and death after listening to the serpent's words. But the Virgin Mary conceived faith and joy; for when the angel Gabriel brought her the glad tidings that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and that the power of the Most High would overshadow her, so that the Holy One born of her would be the son of God, she answered, 'Let it be done to me according to your word' (Lk 1:38).³⁴

As Justin points out, with reference to the typological analogue of Eve and Mary, because of her unfaithfulness to God's commandment, Eve loses her virginity, while as submitting to the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary keeps her virginity. Likewise, in *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus of Lyon (A.D. 115-202) argues, "[m]oreover, it follows that Mary the virgin is found to be obedient. She says, 'Behold your handmaid, Lord; let it be done with me according to your word' [Luke 1:38]. Eve was disobedient, to be sure, since she did not obey when she was still a virgin."³⁵ In spite of Eve's disobedience and Mary's obedience as common ground for Justin and Irenaeus, they differ. For Justin, Eve's disobedience simply brings death. For Irenaeus, Mary's submissiveness reduces Eve's incomppliance, that is,

³³ In the New Testament, the term "church"—ἡ ἐκκλησία—is a feminine noun. Christ is the bridegroom and the church is seen as the bride of the Lord.

³⁴ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 100, in *Patrologia Graeca* (PG) 6, 709-12; cited and translated in Luigi Gambero, S.M. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church—The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 47. See Patricia Cox Miller, *Women in Early Christianity—Translations from Greek Texts* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 291.

³⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.22.4. see Miller, *Women in Early Christianity*, 292.

that Mary's compliance brings salvation to her and humankind. Irenaeus comments, "Moreover, the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosened through the obedience of Mary."³⁶ Church tradition models Mary's obedient position for women in the church and family. From Irenaeus onward, as Mary replaces Eve, at the same time, Mary symbolizes the church as the icon of women's obedience and sacrifice for the church.

Furthermore, Mary's devotion characterizes the image of the church. According to Luigi Gambero, "Ambrose (A.D. 340-397) is the first Christian author to call Mary the type and image of the Church."³⁷ For Ambrose, unlike Eve's loss of virginity, Mary's retained virginity contributes to keeping the church immaculate in the world. He declares,

Well [does the Gospel say]: married but a virgin; because she is the type of the Church, which is also married but remains immaculate. The Virgin [Church] conceived us by the Holy Spirit and, as a virgin, gave birth to us without pain. And perhaps this is why holy Mary, married to one man [Joseph], is made fruitful by another [the Holy Spirit], to show that the individual churches are filled with the Spirit and with grace, even as they are united to the person of a temporal priest.³⁸

Although Mary is married and has a husband, she keeps her virginity, which survives in the church, which bears new church members by the Holy Spirit. In a symbolic sense, though her virginity is praised in the sanctuary of the church, Mary's gendered hierarchy as an ordinary woman stays subordinate to maleness. Ambrose states, "Mary is the branch; the flower of Mary is Christ."³⁹ When mentioned in connection with the relationship of the church with Christ, although Mary is the mother of Christ, she is subordinated to her Son Christ and pictured as sacrificial mother for his church.

Following Ambrose's idea, Augustine of Hippo (A. D. 354-430) sees Mary as a model of the church. She images the sacrificial mother of Christ who becomes the image of the church for Christ. However, she cannot become Head of the church but remains only a member. The Headship of the church is given to her Son Christ. Augustine states,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Gambero, 198.

³⁸ Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 2, 7 in *Patrologia Latina* (PL): 15, 1635-36. See Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 198. Cited in *Lumen gentium*, no. 63, of Vatican II.

³⁹ Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 2, 24; PL 15, 1641-42. See Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 199.

Therefore this woman alone, not only in spirit, but also in body, is both Mother and Virgin. She is Mother in the Spirit, but not of our Head, the Savior himself, for it is she who was spiritually born from him, since all who believe in him, among whom she too is to be counted, are rightly called children of the Bridegroom. Rather, she is clearly the Mother of his members; that is, of ourselves, because she cooperated by her charity, so that faithful Christians, members of the Head, might be born in the Church. As for the body, she is the Mother of its Head.⁴⁰

Because she is a submissive virgin, she could symbolize the church, as well as become the mother of Christ. Here, she appears as devotional mother for her Son as well as his bride the church. As a woman, she serves her Son as Head of the church, and must bear the memberships of the church and nurse his children, finding that she herself becomes a member and a child of the Head of the church Christ. Considering Mary's sacrificial image as related to the church, as Thomas A. Thompson points out, "the church and Mary are inseparable."⁴¹ From the feminist point of view, for Augustine, Mary leaves the helpmate for her Son Christ and maternity for his members in the church, which is compared to Christ's bride.

While Mary as new Eve is reflected as the devotional image of the traditional motherhood for her Son's church, the church as new Eve is confessed as the bride of new Adam, Christ. Eph. 5 describes in figurative expression the patriarchal hierarchal relationship of Christ and the church in that of a husband and a wife in marriage. In *Sexism and God-Talk*, in relation to Eph. 5 and the comparison of Christ-Church and a husband and a wife in marriage, Ruether criticizes the inappropriate application by the post-Pauline writer. In the first place, with respect to Christ becoming the body of the eschatological church and making it spotless and holy as a husband consecrates his wife, she asserts that the analogy appears improper—since a husband cannot render his wife sacred.⁴² In the second place, she thinks that while celibate life grew prevalent in the early church

⁴⁰ Augustine, *De sancta virginitate* 6; PL 40, 399; CSEL 41, 240. See Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 223. See Augustine, *De bono coniugali & De sancta virginitate*, Oxford Early Christian Texts, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 71-3.

⁴¹ Thomas A. Thompson, S.M., "Historical Perspective: Mary's Faith and Role in the Church," in *Mary on the Eve of The Second Vatican Council*, eds. John C. Cavadini and Danielle M. Peters (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press), 58.

⁴² Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk—Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 141.

with respect to Christian eschatology, the post-Pauline author seems to spurn the equality of marriage in that eschatological life. Accordingly, Ruether finds that the author stands between the eschatological view of the church—no differentiation of male and female—and reactionary patriarchal marriage—a hierarchal structure of husband and wife.⁴³

Ruether appears to overlook the spiritual and esoteric relation between Christ and the church separated from the world, because the church thinks that Christ bears the children of God through the church. The real problem is to identify femaleness with the inferior body but to regard man as the superior spirit and mind. In this gendered view, Christ symbolizes superior maleness, while the church as his bride is controlled by his masculine power, just as patriarchal society invites a husband to hold his wife as one of his possessions.

The analogy of Christ and the church to a husband and a wife reinforces the gendered hierarchy. Like the comparison of human marriage to the union of Christ and the church in Eph. 5, the *Symposium* of Methodius (dated A.D. 311) shows the union of Christ and the church. As a new Adam, Christ descends to the church, “Christ’s spouse” in order to marry with the church, which is simply inseminated by Christ as God the Father’s Word. Christ cleanses the church in a laver, sows and plants the blessed spiritual seed. By so doing, the church as “a woman” “conceives of this seed and forms it until the day she bears and nurtures it as virtue.” Moreover, Methodius states that the church could not regenerate followers by “the laver [Eph. 5:26]” unless Christ humiliated himself for “their conception of Him.”⁴⁴ Here Methodius views Christ as the active husband and the church as the dependent and passive wife.

However, Ruether finds that “the nuptials of the church with Christ are set in contrast to and annul the human nuptials that procreate mortal offspring through sexual intercourse.”⁴⁵ She thinks that in the eschatological view the nuptials of Christ and the church instigate the Methodius’ idea allows one to ignore real human marriage in the imminent.

Gendered hierarchal structure is no doubt prominent in Christian traditional literature in the early church. On this point, in *Rhetoric and Ethic*, Schüssler Fiorenza argues, “*kyriocentric* [ruling sovereignty] texts” cause the “absence of all wo/men” and “the marginality” to surface “from

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Methodius, *Symposium*, Logos 3. 8. See Herbert Musurillo, S. J., trans., *St Methodius—The Symposium—A Treatise on Christianity* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1958), 65-7.

⁴⁵ Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 143.

public historical consciousness.”⁴⁶ Her unique term “*kyriocentric*”, considered as masculine power in biblical literature and subsequent Christian writings, applies to Methodius’ writing, which is deemed to subordinate women’s growing faith life to masculine authority, promoting the Christ-bridegroom as an actively-life-giving character and the church-bride as a passive-life-receiving field.

To illustrate the gendered hierarchical relationship of Adam-Eve, Christ-new Adam, and Mary/Church-new Eve, one can consider the following figure:

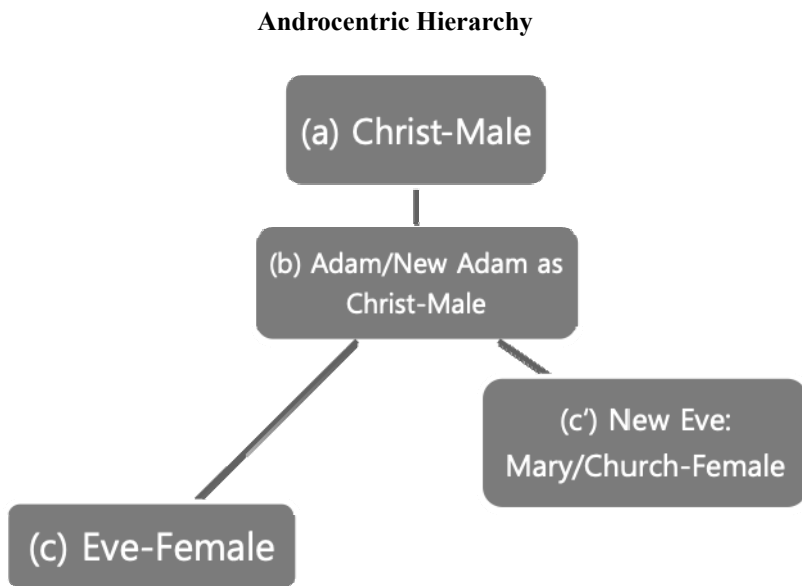


Figure 3

From the early church onwards, tradition often affirms that since Christ as the new Adam is incarnated in a male,⁴⁷ Christ as male reinforces androcentric superiority over the female. Though Rom. 5 shows the typical analogy of Adam and Christ as new Adam and 1Cor. 15 describes the resurrection of Christians in relation to human body, Paul in the two chapters states that through Adam’s transgression death came into the

⁴⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 140.

⁴⁷ See Methodius, *Symposium*, 65-7. Methodius comments that Christ represents new Adam as active and the Church is defined as new Eve as passive.