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Living Out, Redeeming Together: An Ethico-Theological Reconsideration of Protestant “Calling” in the 21st-Century Korean Context

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Abstract

From the winter of 2024 through the spring of 2025, public plazas in Seoul, particularly Yeouido and Gwanghwamun, became major sites of anti-martial law political mobilization. A striking feature of these protests was the visible leadership and participation of young women, who transformed civil resistance into a festive and affective form of collective action through cheering sticks and performative solidarity. The main driving force behind the political mobilization of young women was the increased influence of feminism after the “feminism reboot” in Korea since 2016. During the civil resistance, they were also active in solidarity with various minorities. The resistance was successful, and Korea has regained the order of a democratic society. However, young women who had experienced autonomous protest and mutual solidarity found themselves, upon returning to their everyday lives, still facing the remaining task of struggling against patriarchal cultures and institutions. Among them, Christian women confronted an even more inhospitable sphere—that of the Korean Protestant church, which remains largely constrained by patriarchal norms, a Christian–Confucian mixture. A representative example is the emphasis on “women’s calling” based on fundamentalist/sexist readings of the Bible. The huge gap between current social change and the church situation is reflected in the recent phenomenon of many young female Christians’ de-churching. In confronting the incongruous realities of young Christian women, this study seeks to provide an ethico-theological basis for a feminist reinterpretation of the Protestant concept of “calling”. After analyzing the social/existential topos of young Korean Christian women in the recent Korean context, this work considers a feminist reinterpretation of the “creation order” and “calling” in the process of an intersubjective dialog between the Bible and pre-patriarchal Korean cultural resources of “Mago-affiliated” myth, *Seolmundaehalmang* (the Great Grandmother Seolmun) narratives in particular. By providing sociological, ethical, and theological resources to construct new norms of “calling”, this research contributes to enabling young Christian women in Korea to overcome their existential fragmentation and to seek forms of women’s calling that are attuned to their historical moment and identity.



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1. “Lighting the Darkness Together”: A Proposal on Young Korean Church Women’s Feminist Reimagining of Christian Calling

Following the martial law declared on 3 December 2024, Yeouido Square, where citizens gathered in resistance, was illuminated by a sea of cheering sticks. The very light sticks were the ones young women in their twenties and thirties had once waved at their favorite K-pop stars’ concerts. Those in their forties and fifties, who had once hurled Molotov cocktails and stones against a dictatorship, looked on in wonder at the bright, playful defiance of the younger generation. “How can they be like that?” They wondered, curious about where the young women’s new way of protesting came from.

Another striking scene of 2025 is found in the globally successful animated film the *K-pop Demon Hunters*, in which a girl group in their twenties saved the world through their songs, surrounded and empowered by enthusiastic peer fans. In this animated film, three members of a girl group perform as singers by day but take on the role of exorcizing malevolent spirits by night. The brief yet striking introductory sequence of the movie reveals that this mission is not unique to these young women but has been passed down through generations as the sacred calling of female *mudang* (shamans). “Shall I light the darkness alone? We shall sing our song. With our steadfast voices, we will protect the world.” The film’s theme song reached No. 1 on the Billboard chart, and the movie itself maintained a dominant position as the top-ranked OTT content for an extended period, drawing worldwide attention. Many critics argue that the film’s success cannot be attributed solely to technical sophistication or the global popularity of K-culture. Rather, it lies in the work’s central and universal theme: even when both the world and one’s own identity are caught in the ambiguous and uncertain tension between good and evil, one can still choose the brighter path—to pursue goodness, light, and hope. At the heart of this phenomenon that has captivated the world stand young Korean women once again, embodying the spirit and agency of a new cultural generation.

Seeing the image of cheering sticks in the Yeouido Square merge with scenes from *KDH* of female saviors, my long-standing question resurfaced. Where does the power of collective resistance historically demonstrated by Korean women come from? One could answer that the power of collective resistance stemmed from the fact that the close-knit female solidarity from the traditional society had not yet disappeared during the rapid modernization process. Especially in the Confucian Chosŏn society (1392–1910), a strong patriarchal one, this survival-oriented bond was essential for women, who occupied a relatively weaker position (S.-j. Chang 2008). While this interpretation is partially valid, if such a framework were indeed hegemonic, one would also expect to find visible manifestations of women as collective agents of resistance during Korea’s earlier periods of modernization and industrialization. If female solidarity was the primary driver, then why were young men predominantly in the leadership roles of citizen resistance movements a generation earlier? You might give another answer, in addition to the recent K-pop fandom culture which is largely led by young women, that the equal (sometimes higher) education opportunities between males and females since the 1990s has led Korean young girls to be proactive subjects politically as well as culturally. It is partially true that the “compressed modernity” of Korea has rapidly weakened patriarchal performativities among the MZ-generation. The concept of “compressed modernity,” proposed by Korean sociologist K.-S. Chang (1999), describes the various problematic situations arising as Korean society underwent the process of rapid and compressed modernization compared to the Western world. The view captures the contradiction and problems between traditional practices and rapidly adopted institutional structures.

In 2005, the rate of female university enrollment in Korea (73.6%) surpassed that of males (73.2%) for the first time, a phenomenon that was by no means unique to Korea. In his 2006 book *Alpha Girl: Understanding the New American Girl and How She Is Changing the World*, Kindlon (2006), drawing on qualitative interviews with over 150 American girls, declared the emergence of a new social class—talented, self-confident young women driven by a strong desire to exercise leadership. It is possible that the trend that had unfolded over the past half century in the United States is now being observed in Korea as well. In the U.S., the mothers or aunts of these so-called “alpha girls” were results of the feminist movements that achieved legal and institutional gender equality. As postmodern society evolved, traditional gender roles became increasingly blurred. The process of individual specialization and professionalization that accompanied this societal transformation may now be manifesting in Korea, albeit within a condensed timespan of roughly three decades. Nonetheless, although these analyses elucidate the empowerment and individualization of young women, they fall short of explaining the motivations underlying their collective agency of resistance.

In fact, the collective resistance exhibited by the cheering-stick girls cannot be attributed to a single motivating factor. Rather, it is most accurate to view “*The Square of 2025*” as a visible manifestation of multiple intertwined factors. Instead of conducting a sociological analysis of those factors, this study narrows its focus to the divided position of female church youths, who were once intertwined in that scene but were soon required to inhabit another sphere governed by distinctly different values and norms. Their experience of participating in the Square contrasts sharply with their return to church life, where they encounter a religious and cultural gap that they cannot reconcile within their own lives. This is because the Protestant discourse on home and women—developed during the formative period of modern Western society—continues to be transmitted in Korean churches as a rigid and authoritative expression of “orthodoxy” and “divine order.” While the so-called “moderate (soft) patriarchy” of modernity, which structured the public and private spheres along gendered lines, is gradually disintegrating in the broader postmodern society, the church’s gender discourse, shaped through an “elective affinity” with patriarchal modernity, remains intact. It continues to emphasize that a woman’s rightful place lies in the private domestic sphere, where she fulfils her divine vocation as a “helper” and “supporter” to her husband. Consequently, young Christian women who participated in the “Revolution of Light in 2025” and experienced a liberating collective awakening outside the church now confront an unresolved inner tension: within their faith—an essential foundation of their belief system—they are unable to deconstruct or overcome the patriarchal interpretation of womanhood that the church still upholds.

Accordingly, this study seeks to explore the identity struggles of young women living as “contemporaries” in 2025 within the entanglement of feminist genealogy. In particular, it focuses on the topos of young Christian women who experience the tension between two markedly different forms of “contemporaneity,” aiming to illuminate how they reconstruct their identities both as Christians situated in the Korean context and in solidarity with their non-Christian peers. To this end, the paper reexamines the Protestant notion of “women’s vocation,” which has been reinforced over time, through the lens of Korean mythological genealogy concerning women’s creative and communal agency. While there has been a burgeoning body of feminist research on the Korea goddess tradition itself, including the work of Hwang (2018) and that of J. S. Oh (2020), this study majorly aims to bridge the concept of ‘calling’ among Korean Christian women with these traditions. Furthermore, it intends to introduce current indigenous research findings by drawing extensively on Korean language sources.

2. Locating the Voice of the 4.0 Feminist in Korea in Comparison with Her Predecessors

Emerging scholarship has begun to highlight the dynamic capacities embedded in young women's feminist identity formation. Amid these developments, a recent doctoral dissertation written from an insider perspective captured my attention—Hye-min Oh's *"The Era of Postfeminism Reboot: The Rise of Young Feminists and Epistemological Vulnerability,"* completed at Ewha Womans University, long regarded as a cradle of Korean feminism. Although definition of "youth" may vary, this study designates women aged nineteen to thirty-four as its research cohort—a spectrum that, when measured from the vantage point of 2025, includes those born between 1991 and 2006 (H. M. Oh 2024, p. 34). Genealogically, within the history of Korean feminism, this age group is typically categorized as the "4.0 generation."

Oh argues that the dynamism with which "young women" gather and forge community both online and offline is, paradoxically, rooted in their distinctive form of "vulnerability." Confronted with a backlash that vilifies and excludes an imagined, unreal "feminist," these young women, she contends, have pursued with intensified fervor "the affective experience of protest, the sense of solidarity, and the reassurance of being together" as a means of reclaiming their own actuality (H. M. Oh 2024, p. 203). If these 4.0 feminists are young adults positioned within the neoliberal system of relentless competition and structural reorganization—thus facing the urgent condition of mere "survival"—this is also an experience shared, albeit differently, by the preceding 3.0 generation.

However, the 3.0 feminists encountered the collapse of the modern patriarchal configuration of the "stable nuclear family"—a structure enabled by rapid industrialization and middle-class expansion—in the aftermath of the 1997 IMF crisis, during their adolescence. Rather than translating this rupture into individualized survival strategies, they developed their feminism through a critical integration of their identity "as women." They had witnessed how their mothers—the generation that built families in the 1970s and 1980s—regarded the life course of the "full-time housewife" as the unquestioned norm, irrespective of whether they themselves had been received higher education. Yet beginning with 1997 as a highly visible turning point, the daughters, who would become the 3.0 feminists, observed their diligent and devoted "full-time housewife" mothers suddenly thrust into the labor market—often into low-wage, low-quality jobs lacking basic labor protections—following the abrupt collapse of single-income household economies. This experience compelled the daughters (3.0) to confront, with new seriousness, the contradictory tension between their own position as modern professional individuals and the "place of women" prescribed by patriarchal society. As these reflections intertwined with broader socioeconomic transformations, a significant number of young women began to engage deeply with feminist concerns (Baik 2019, p. 128).

Ultimately, the 3.0 feminist generation (the mid-1990s-early 2000s) can be understood as one that clearly articulated feminist identity as a matter of survival—unlike their mothers, who, mostly trained as modern subjects and professional individuals, but trapped in patriarchal gender arrangements. Without recognizing the structural contradictions between their life histories and the patriarchal society that objectified them, 2.0 generation experienced depression, lethargy, or other "problems without apparent cause" (invoking *The Feminine Mystique*).

It is, therefore, within the 3.0 generation that a broad segment of young women in Korea—beyond the intellectual elite—began to emerge as subjects of feminist consciousness. This is not to suggest that feminist thought and practice were absent in earlier periods. Rather, the 2.0 feminists (late 1970s-early 1990s), who developed Korean feminism during the generation of the 3.0 feminists' mothers, were largely regarded from the standpoint of

mainstream society as occupying an “exceptional” status outside the heteronormative nuclear family system. To full-time housewives and their husbands, 2.0 feminists appeared as women who had failed to enter the domain of the “beautiful and safe family”—that is, women deemed insufficiently “attractive” in their femininity and as figures who disrupted the ideal of the “happy home.” Numerically small, feminists of that era were mainly intellectuals teaching in universities, and they often viewed the overwhelming majority of full-time housewives as “naive women” with “unenlightened, traditional” mindsets. Although there were also women’s movements associated with labor struggles in industrial sectors also emerged during the same period, their primary focus lay less in feminist discourse than in broader concerns over labor and human rights shared by both genders. Accordingly, this dimension falls outside the scope of the present analysis, which is concerned with a genealogical comparison with the generation 4.0.

Identifying an earlier 1.0 generation of feminism in Korea—based on the criteria of movement building capacity or social influence—is even more difficult. At the turn of the twentieth century, when Western modernity entered a rigidly Confucian patriarchal society, ideas concerning women’s rights reached a small cohort of elite women. While some individuals made resistant, even groundbreaking, personal choices, these appeared more as isolated events than as a sustained genealogical generation. Moreover, under the ensuing colonial regime, gender concerns were superseded by the overarching national agenda of “independence,” which foregrounded collective solidarity under the identity of being Korea. Likewise, during the 1960s and 1970s—when second-wave-feminists in the West were critiquing patriarchal structures—South Korea, shaped by national division and military dictatorship, was dominated by the imperatives of “unification” and “democratization,” leaving little discursive space for other public debates. Furthermore, even after feminist theory began entering university campuses in the mid-1970s, Korea was at the height of industrialization, a period that witnessed the most dramatic expansion of a self-made middle class. Structural critiques raised by second-wave feminism found limited resonance in such a social climate (Baik 2019, pp. 128–29). Due to these historical particularities, it was not until the arrival of the 3.0 generation that the possibility of constructing a collective identity of “women as agents of resistance” could emerge as a central agenda with momentum.

Whereas most 3.0 feminists were young educated women whose activities were primarily organized through small, campus-based academic circles, the 4.0 generation exhibits distinctly popular and affective characteristics, being more active and expressive in online spaces. This phenomenon is not unique to Korea. Prudence Chamberlain, in her 2017 book *The Feminist Fourth Wave: Affective Temporality*, also highlights the newly emerging feminists in the British context, identifying “affective intensity” as the core driving force of the fourth wave. Likewise, The *Guardian* journalist Kira Cochrane had already published *All the Rebel Women: The Rise of the Fourth Wave* in 2013, noting that temporary activism—centered on sexual politics, reliant on online platforms, and marked by intersectionality and humor (or satirical subversion)—is not an abstract analytical category invented by scholars but a characteristic form of collective action observable since the 2010s.

Affect, however, is not a force driven by coherent ideology or belief. Rather, as Chamberlain notes, it is “determined by people, by outside influences, wider social contexts, developing technology, and then individual events that stimulate mass, feeling response” (Chamberlain 2017, p. 10). While she cautions that the feminist 4.0 generation is still too new to evaluate conclusively, she nonetheless concurs that it is better understood not as a recurring “wave” but as a “nonlinear” formation, or what Agamben (2009) calls “contemporaneity”: those who “do not perfectly coincide with their own time and are not attuned to its demands” (Chamberlain 2017, p. 62). Etymologically, “contemporary” derives from

con (“together”) and *tempor* (“time”); thus, those who live within the same historical moment while “anticipating” thoughts or actions not yet shared by the majority inevitably risk isolation by articulating “unpopular views.” To remain contemporary, Agamben argues, requires “not sinking into the space in which we live and work” but instead preserving a certain discomfort (Chamberlain 2017, p. 63). Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of *affect* in the context of animality is instructive here, for it resonates with the notion that affect may arise at a pre-conscious level. Agreeing with their description of affect as “the effectuation of power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel,” Chamberlain argues that affect is “a transmissible form of becoming,” capable of creating a mode of passage through which “personal emotions can shift into shared social experience.” In this process, “the subject is affected, affects others, and becomes through this very movement” (Chamberlain 2017, pp. 78–81).

Certainly, affect is not synonymous with feeling or impulsivity. Thus, in an era when particular forms of knowledge or agendas are rapidly accelerated and popularized through globalized networks, it is inappropriate to dismiss the action-oriented practices of so-called “4.0 feminists” as merely those of emotionally driven young women who impulsively gather and disperse. As Hartmut Rosa notes, contemporary society is one in which “individual lifestyles and life-orientations are increasingly detraditionalized, deconventionalized, and pluralized,” resulting in diverse ethical frameworks and, consequently, “an inevitable increase in the time required for decision-making” (Rosa [2013] 2020, pp. 77–78). Yet, at the same time, the technological developments characteristic of the 4.0 era have accelerated not only individual lives but political, economic, and cultural tendencies and choices to such an extent that late-modern society can aptly be called a “society of acceleration.” The *desynchronization* produced by these two directions renders individuals prone to being swept up by forms of leadership that appeal to the public through simplified, intense, and resolute convictions (Rosa [2013] 2020, pp. 100–3).

Although the 3.0 generation also shared the onset of online networking, intensely affective and fast-moving features of the acceleration society became markedly more pronounced with the emergence of the 4.0 generation, an important factor distinguishing the latter from the former. A 2025 incident in which the *affective* characteristics of 4.0 feminists became especially evident was the so-called “Namtaryöng Battle.” On 21 December 2024, a standoff occurred at the Namtaryöng Pass near Sadang Station between police forces and farmers with agricultural demands. While they were being blocked by state authorities, young women who had been occupying the public square with a different agenda, namely the democratic resolution of an impeached administration, swarmed to Namtaryöng “like a hive.” Go-eun Chung, a Korean feminist (3.0), characterizes this phenomenon as the “wasp-like allied struggle” of “fan-girls.” Even through the farmers’ demands (guaranteed rice pricing, mechanisms for stabilizing agricultural commodity prices, and reinstatement of agricultural protection policies) were neither women’s issues nor youth issues, and indeed were unfamiliar topics to many, an “affective entanglement” emerged through their shared contemporaneity and co-spatiality. Spending the frigid winter solstice night—well below freezing—in solidarity with the “farmer uncles,” the young women learned about the farmers’ situation and ultimately helped them break through the police blockade and peacefully enter Seoul with their tractor convoy. This experience of solidarity then led them to appear at other sites of resistance where people were struggling for agendas different from their own; for example, the disability rights movement for transportation access, the reinstatement struggle of the dismissed workers of the Sejong Hotel, and the struggles of subcontracted shipyard workers (Chung 2025, pp. 125–27; Kwon 2025, pp. 141–43).

In sum, it can be argued that Korea's fourth-generation feminists, situated within the socio-structural conditions of late-modern, neo-capitalist society, experienced their own vulnerabilities as young women while simultaneously demonstrating the capacity to mobilize affect and solidarity both online and offline. Having acquired an empowered voice through the dismantling of patriarchy and the equal educational opportunities shared with men, they have emerged as agents who translated such affective energies into new forms of feminist collectivity.

3. When Calling Divides: Gendered Vocation and the Crisis of Young Christian Women in Contemporary Korea

Building on the theoretical work of the second generation and the identity-orientation pursuits of the third, the fourth generation of feminists led to the popularization of feminist movements after 2016, a phenomenon often referred to as the "feminism reboot". However, when comparing the components that constitute the affective register of contemporary young women, the case of young Christian women in Korea proves markedly heterogeneous and is shaped by particularly powerful elements; namely, the "content and convictions of traditional faith." These factors often lead them to experience a profound sense of "internal division." For young Korean feminists, resolving the tension between *becoming oneself* and *becoming a woman* is already a formidable task; if such a subject happens to be Christian, her struggles over identity and practice become all the more complex. This is because the historically specific conditions of the early modern period, during which Protestantism, introduced to Korea, produced a rigid "composite" of Confucian patriarchy, modern patriarchy, and Protestant domestic discourse, an assemblage that many churches continue to proclaim as a "divine order" and strongly impressed upon their members.

How, one might ask, is such a configuration still possible in this day and age? Agamben's notion of "contemporaneity" is particularly apt here: within Korean Protestant churches, young Christian women encounter a very old, antiquated, yet still potent mode of contemporaneous meaning-making. For Christian women in South Korea living in the postfeminist reboot era, the year 2025 was especially bewildering. Each autumn, denominational General Assemblies guide and regulate these institutional actions of their constituent churches. At the 2025 General Assembly of the Hapdong Presbyterian denomination in Korea, the Assembly enacted a regressive revision that altered the qualification for ordination from a "person" to "a man." In Chapter 4, Article 2 of the denominational constitution—formerly stating that "a candidate for ordination must be a graduate of Chongsin Theological Seminary, possess ample learning, exhibit virtuous conduct and sincere faith, be competent in teaching, demonstrate propriety and holiness in all matters fitting the gospel, govern his household well, and be well regarded by outsiders, being at least thirty years of age (1 Tim 3: 1–7)—the final phrase "being at least thirty years of age" was revised to "being a man at least thirty years of age." This amendment was brought to the floor and approved. The move appears to have been intended to block institutional pathways to the pastoral office while allowing only the "authority to preach," in response to the previous year's constitutional reform committee on female exhorters, which had proposed granting women limited preaching authority, a proposal that the denomination found increasingly difficult to reject outright.

The Hapdong Presbyterian denomination attempted the same division in 2017, but it was defeated under strong opposition from the Chongsin Women Alumni Association. Considering that the broader Korean society from 2017 to 2025 was marked by vigorous challenges to institutional and cultural barriers rooted in gender hierarchy—a period often captured under the label "feminism reboot"—the decision of the "contemporary" Korean

church amounted to erecting a substantial barrier for young women seeking to remain within the Christian fold.

In fact, patriarchal assumptions that churches require women's leadership yet must not grant them qualifications equal to men can be traced back to the earlier period of Protestant influence in Korea. At the time, Protestantism was regarded as the "spiritual engine" of advanced Western civilization, and since the dominant social structure of late Chosŏn society was premodern patriarchy, Protestant discourses on womanhood—possessing relatively more progressive orientation—appeared decidedly "liberatory" and "forward-looking." Thus, it would have been difficult for early Korean Christian women to recognize, within their own contemporaneity, that Protestantism was assimilated through a framework that *divinely sanctioned* form of "moderate/soft patriarchy." The Christian claim that "women, like men, are children of God with equal dignity" provided converted women in Chosŏn with a new ethic and agency grounded in the value of "freedom" and "liberation." Indeed, many of the *Bible Women* who exercised influential leadership in early Protestant evangelism were women who had suffered within patriarchal systems—through polygyny, spousal infidelity, or abuse within the husband's family—and for them, simply gaining a name and an independent role constituted a palpable experience of liberation. Evangelism among women spread like wildfire, and between 1897 and 1898 Korea's first women's Bible classes were rapidly organized. According to a 1908 report, eighty-nine such classes were operating in the Pyŏngyang region alone, seventy-five of which were led by Bible Women, encompassing 2248 students (Yang 1991, p. 8). In fact, most of the institutions that later became the denominational seminaries of Korea were initially established as specialized training schools for Bible Women, formed in response to the dramatic growth in the number of female believers.

A close analysis of the curricular offerings established for the training of women's leadership in the church reveals the scope of expectations placed upon Bible Women and female church leaders from the very beginning. The curriculum consisted of foundational Christian subjects—such as the Bible, biblical geography, and hygiene. Significantly, it is evident that no courses in systematically developed academic theology were offered at the time. As Mikang Yang, a Korean feminist church historian, has pointed out, although the curriculum provided the basic knowledge needed for immediate fieldwork, it imposed clear limits on the intellectual development and professionalization of Bible Women. These limitations have persisted into the present, continuing to shape the auxiliary status of female evangelists (*yŏjŏndosa*) and the restrictions placed on their ordination (Yang 1991, p. 9).

In light of the recent crisis and calls for restructuring within Korean higher education, I undertook an analysis of the curricula of fourteen theological seminaries and theology/Christian studies departments in universities to assess the condition of my major disciplinary field in 2024. The study revealed that some theological schools still differentiate between the curricula for male and female students. In the case of Hapdong Theological Seminary, an institution marked by theological conservatism and a modern patriarchal view of gender, female students were not permitted to enroll in "Church Polity and Administration," a course available only to male students. Conversely, courses such as "Women's Ministry," "Home Education," and "Theory and Practice of Christian Counseling" were included exclusively in the women's curriculum (Baik 2024, p. 170).

Of course, not all women in the Korean church internalized such intended curricula. As the church became institutionalized on Korean soil, some reflective women recognized patriarchal problems embedded in the structures and practices of Protestantism introduced to Korea. For example, in 1922, more than 300 Bible Women of the Southern Methodist Church collectively demanded a salary increase, raising concerns about struc-

tural gender discrimination by pointing to the significant disparity between their wages and those of male clergy performing comparable roles (Ha 1999, p. 17). By the 1930s, voices advocating for the enhancement of women's status and roles within the Korean church appeared in denominational journals. *Sinhaksegye* (The Theological World), representing a relatively progressive Methodist theological orientation, argued—based on the question of Jesus' posture toward women—that although “Jesus did not explicitly advocate women's rights or deliver speeches against slavery,” “his teachings encompass both” (Ha 1999, p. 18). Through commentaries on the woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan woman, and the woman who broke the alabaster jar, the journal also criticized the deeply entrenched chastity norms and gender-discriminatory structures of Korean society. Such cases were, quantitatively speaking, often emphasizing women's obedience based on selected biblical texts.

The issue reached a peak with the petition for the ordination of women pastors and elders around the 1933 General Assembly of the Tonghap Presbyterian denomination, which called for “equal leadership for women within the organizational structure of the church.” At the time, the constitution of the Korean Presbyterian Church limited eligibility for the eldership to “a male communicant member over twenty-seven years of age who has maintained good standing for at least five years, possesses adequate discernment and leadership ability, and meets the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1–7” (Polity, ch. 5, art. 3). This rendered the institutional possibility of both women pastors and women elders effectively impossible. In 1934, women from twenty-two congregations of the Hannam Presbytery submitted a petition to institutionalize the office of female elders, but the request was rejected.

Although a minority, some male clergy did express support. A notable example is Pastor Chun-bae Kim's interpretation of Paul's letters. In a published article, he argued that Paul's admonitions such as “women should be silent” or “I do not permit a woman to teach” reflected “the teachings and customs of a particular region under particular circumstances two thousand years ago.” To universalize such instructions as immutable truth, he claimed, was “to bind ourselves for yet another day and to delay the church's progress” (C.-b. Kim [1934] 1997, p. 155). However, after more than a year of conservative feedback from the denominational Theological Committee, Kim soon faced the threat of exclusion, and the controversy concluded only after he retracted his position.

Ultimately, the theological and institutional conflicts raised in the 1920s and 1930s continue to resurface even a century later. To be sure, if one considers only agendas such as “the ordination of women pastors” or “the admission of women elders,” the number of denominations that recognize these practices has gradually increased. The Korean Methodist Church adopted a policy of ordained women pastors at its first General Conference in January 1930—led in large part by women missionaries—and in 1955, Milla Jeon and Hwa-yong Myung became the first women to be ordained. Given that the United Methodist Church in the United States granted full clergy rights to women in 1956, the two developments occurred in nearly the same period. In the Presbyterian tradition, the Tonghap permitted the ordination of women only relatively late, at its 79th General Assembly in 1994, with the ordination of women elders and pastors beginning the following year. Yet when I was invited to speak at a major national gathering of Tonghap elders in 2017—an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Reformation—I was shocked to discover that the proportion of women elders remained barely five percent. Even within the Kichang (Christian Presbyterian) Church of Korea, the denomination most associated with progressive theology, a proposed constitutional amendment requiring “at least one woman elder when three or more elders are installed” was rejected at this year's General Assembly.

From a qualitative perspective, the situation is even more troubling. It remains exceedingly rare for women pastors, women elders, or women lay leaders to be entrusted with positions of genuine decision-making authority. Drawing on my extensive conducting leadership training for laywomen, I have often asked participants—regardless of denomination—to mark on a floor plan of their church the places where they spend most of their time on Sunday. Overwhelmingly, even among women serving as elders or deaconesses, the circles cluster around the church kitchen, the choir, and the Sunday school classrooms. However, when I provide a blank floor plan and ask them to mark where they want to stand in the future, a far more diverse set of responses emerges. “I would like to work in the finance planning committee—wouldn’t a woman’s perspective help us attend more carefully to how church finances are raised and used?” “I hope to become a lay preacher. Although I receive theological training, marriage and other circumstances prevented me from seeking ordination. But that very background has become a hindrance within the church. I would love to lead a Bible reading group from a woman’s perspective. I wish opportunities for laywomen to preach would expand.”

If this is the reality for women in their forties and fifties, it is hardly persuasive to expect women in their twenties and thirties to accept the church’s rigid gender hierarchy as it stands. Young Korean Christian women today are a generation shaped by the discourse and affective energies of the post-“feminism reboot”. Yet the Korean church continues to articulate the Protestant concept of “calling” in gender-differentiated terms, insisting—through theological interpretation—that “woman as helper” represents God’s created order. The biblical passages most frequently invoked are the creation narratives in Genesis and the apostle Paul’s admonitions. When Martin Luther proclaimed the shift “from nun to wife,” advancing marriage as a “calling,” especially in *On Monastic Vows* (1521) and in *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), his argument held persuasive force within his own contemporaneous context—an era in which girls barely older than five or six were sent to convents as a matter of cultural–religious routine and bound by vows of celibacy by their mid-teens, leaving many without the possibility of choosing their own lives. In this setting, Katharina von Bora’s audacious agency—escaping the convent hidden in a herring wagon and actively selecting Luther as a potential husband—resembles not a submissive “helper” but a self-determining free subject. Yet, as the temporal emphasis that sought to remedy the abuses of clerical celibacy in the late Middle Ages faded from collective memory, the Protestant communal discourse gradually transformed marriage into “the universal calling of women.” Thus, as marriage became solidified as an ethical teaching within Protestantism, the “individuality of persons” was erased and vocation became standardized and uniform.

In Europe and the United States as well, scholars have noted the affinity between moderate/soft patriarchy and Protestant discourse on women, and have worked painstakingly to dismantle it. The Korean situation has been even more complex; women’s “calling” became trapped within a rigorously sacralized domestic discourse produced by the triple entanglement of Protestant teaching with a deeply rooted Confucian patriarchy (Baik 2009). Confucian ethics—structured around the powerful doctrine of *nawaeböb* (inner-outer segregation)—readily merged with the modern public/private dichotomy, with that Ulrich Beck termed “industrial feudal society,” (Beck [1986] 1997, pp. 180–81) and with Protestant ideals of the “angel in the home” and the “helpmeet.” Yet for contemporary young Christian women—immersed in feminist affect and living amid the rapid dissolution of the modern gender order—this produces an existential split in which one side must be abandoned. Increasingly, many young Christian feminists are choosing to abandon the church.

4. Refiguring Korean Christian Women's Calling Through Dialog with Indigenous Goddess Archetypes

In assessing the enthusiastic competence and role of Bible Women in the early history of Korean Protestantism, certain studies have focused on the “religious-cultural traditions” of Korean women as a primary driving force. One such study is *The Forgotten Story of the Korean Church: A Study on the Role of Bible Women in Early Korean Protestant Mission and Church Growth, 1892–1945* by Sung-jin Chang, originally a doctoral dissertation completed in the United Kingdom and later published in Korean language (2008). In this work, Chang argues that “the Bible Women were not merely subordinate agents under missionary control, but rather made constructive contributions to the indigenization of Christianity in Korea, exercising forms of traditional female leadership from marginalized positions amid the turbulence of Korean society” (S.-j. Chang 2008, p. 46). This analysis suggests that the Confucian “inner-room” network, Buddhist ritual spirituality, and shamanistic spiritual power and leadership operated in a syncretic manner, enabling Korean women to exercise their distinctive and pragmatic forms of leadership rooted in indigenous religious traditions. The reason missionary reports cannot be uncritically accepted, according to Chang, is that Western evangelists often evaluated Korean women through a “civilizing” lens, thereby misunderstanding or undervaluing their actual lives and capacities. Much like the introduction of *K-pop Demon Hunters* on women's piety, Chang's research positively evaluates the enduring collective solidarity among Korean women expressed through their religiosity. Yet, Chang's emphasis lies not only in the syncretic cultural roots of the Bible Women's religious leadership, but more importantly in a critical stance against the Western missionaries' patriarchal and ethnocentric gaze that misinterprets their position and limits their agency.

In a similar vein, I do not seek to construct a syncretic synthesis between Christianity and Korean religious traditions in rearticulating the vocation of Christian women. Rather, I aim to examine how women's creative and spiritual agency has been transformed and distorted while passing through the structures of patriarchy. To move beyond both the outright rejection of the so-called “women's calling” as an outdated and absolutized faith package, and the uncritical acceptance of it as a matter of religious obedience—which often forces young Korean Christian women into a divided existence estranged from the lived realities of their contemporaries—I contend that the first step in reimagining women's calling must be to discern between the liberative core of the Christian gospel and its patriarchal mutations. This is what motivates my interest in the mythic narratives of Korean goddesses and the ways in which they have been reconfigured under patriarchal transformations.

Seon-ja Kim has conducted sustained research on East Asian creator-goddesses in the Manchurian region who have been diminished, distorted, and rendered either tragic or caricatured. In fact, the Chinese goddess Nüwa, originally a creator deity in the Central Plains, came to be depicted as merely the consort of the male god Fuxi, and as Fuxi's divine status grew stronger, her role diminished to that of a maternal figure who blesses fertility. Likewise, Xi Wangmu, who once possessed the elixir of immortality, was transformed into a banquet host preparing feasts for the Jade Emperor (S.-j. Kim 2023, pp. 17–18). In a similar fashion, *Seolmundaehalmang* (The Great Grandmother Seolmun), the creator goddess of the Jeju region, was gradually redefined—first as the wife of *Harbang* (the Grandfather), and later as the sacrificial mother of five hundred sons. Hyun-seol Cho, who collected and analyzed more than 150 oral traditions and ancient textual sources of the Mago lineage goddesses in Korea, notes in *Magohalmi sinhwa yǒngu* (A Study of the Mago Grandmother Myth) that the goddesses of the “Mago Grandmother” lineage largely retained the image of primordial mother or creator deities, who once played a decisive role in shaping mountains and landscapes. *Seolmundaehalmang* is understood as a local manifestation of the “Mago

Grandmother” tradition. Over time, however, their images became distorted, to the point that they were later demonized and referred to as “*Maguihalmöm* (witch-like old women)” (Cho 2013, p. 13).

“Mago” appears in Taoist texts such as *Shenxian Zhuan* (Records of the Divine Immortals) as a female immortal or goddess, described as a young and beautiful woman of about nineteen, yet she is said to have lived long enough to witness three cosmic transformations of the world (Campany 2002, pp. 260–65). Given the active intellectual and cultural exchange between Silla and Tang China, it is unsurprising that mythic elements relating to the Taoist goddess Mago naturally entered the Korean mythological corpus. The reappearance of Mago in later works—such as *Budogi* (The Records of the Heavenly Principle) or *Gyeweon Pilyeongjip* (The Kaiyuan Collection of Literary Writings), both reconstructed from later descendants’ memories—can be understood in this context.

Budogi, which provides one of the most detailed and ancient accounts of Korea’s pre-historic era, is attributed to Park ([1953] 1986) in Silla era and classified by historians as an apocryphal text. Although it became known to the public only in modern times, it had long been preserved as a manuscript within the Yeonghae Park family. The original text was reportedly lost during Geum Park’s exile to South Korea amid the Korean War, after which he reconstructed the content from memory. His recollected version in Classical Chinese (1953) was translated and annotated by Eun-su Kim and published in 1986. Nevertheless, the existence of *Jingsimrok* (Record of Disciplining the Mind), the book containing *Budogi*—referenced even in Si-seup Kim’s *Postscript to Jingsimprok* (Postscript to *Jingsimrok*) written between the 1480s and the early 1490s—and the musical and scholarly lineage of the Yeonghae Park family, including Yeon Park, who codified court music under King Sejong (r. 1418–1450), suggested that *Budogi* cannot be dismissed as pure fiction. While further scholarly examination is required to assess its historical reliability, *Budogi* remains significant not only as a potential source of Korea’s creation mythology—given the absence of extant texts other than the Dangun myth in *Samguk Yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), thought to be fully completed by 1285 at the latest—but also as a work of enduring cultural imagination and mythopoetic value.

In *Budogi*, the celestial being Mago, the daughter of Heaven, appears. She “conceived alone” and gave birth to two daughters, Gunghee and Sohee. These two, in turn, bore children with four heavenly men—Hwanggung, Baekso, Cheonggung, and Heukso—each couple producing three sons and three daughters, who became the ancestors of humankind (Ch. 1–4). The main sustenance in Mago Castle, where Mago resided, was *jiyu* (the milk of the earth). People required nothing else for survival, and thus had no teeth. However, as the population increased and *jiyu* became scarce, Jiso, a descendant of the Baekso clan, went in search of an alternative food source and discovered grapes. Upon tasting them, Jiso is said to have sung in awe:

“Vast and great is Heaven and Earth! My vitality surpasses all—
Is this the Tao? It is the power of the grape”. (Ch. 5)

Enlightened and invigorated, Jiso shared the grapes with others, and from that moment, people came to know *omi* (the five tastes), developing desire in pursuit of sensory pleasure. While subsisting solely on *jiyu*, humans had enjoyed immortality; but once they began consuming various plants and fruits, their teeth grew in, their lifespans shortened, and they lost their heavenly nature—punished for consuming other life forms. In remorse, Hwanggung knelt before Mago and vowed *bokbon* (return to the origin). He then departed Mago Castle and migrated to the Tian Shan region of Northeast Asia, becoming the direct ancestor of the Korean people. His descendants were said to include Yuin, Huho, Hanin, Hwanung, and Dangun (Ch. 6–8, 10, 12).

If one accepts this ancient cosmology, not as historical fact but as a resource for mythological imagination, then *Budoji* preserves an even older mythological stratum preceding the Hwanung and Dangun narratives of *Samguk Yusa*, highlighting the centrality of the goddess Mago and her role in mythic prehistory. This myth bears notable parallels with the Judeo-Christian stories of humanity's creation, fall, and longing for restoration. In *Budoji*, the notions of "defilement of blood" and "corruption of the spirit" evoke a moral order even stricter than that of Eden, in which the violation centers on the eating of flesh, not fruit. From this perspective, *Budoji* conveys a sterner cosmological justice regarding the destruction of life. Both the episode of Jiso who tastes the grape and introduces it to others, and that of the first woman who partakes of the forbidden fruit and offers it to the first man, exhibit etiological similarities as mythic explanations for the origins of sin and human greed. The episode in which Hwanggung leads his celestial kin away from Mago Castle to new lands also resonates with the biblical narratives of Abraham. Like Abraham's departure from the land of Ur—the realm of desire and idolatry—in pursuit of God's covenant, Hwanggung's journey to *bokbon* and seek a new, sacred land mirrors a mythic exodus toward spiritual renewal.

For a culture long shaped by the Sino-Korean linguistic sphere, it is understandable that many native expressions emerged through the hybridization of Sinitic characters and the Korean vernacular. The evolution of "Mago" into "Mago *Halmöm* (Grandmother Mago)" can thus be understood within this cultural-linguistic process. Cho (2013) interprets the Korean folktale figure "Mago *Halmöm*" as a fusion between the Taoist goddess Mago and the indigenous "*Sansin Halmöm* (Mountain Grandmother)" of Korean folk religion. While certain motifs—such as long fingernails and the ability to traverse the sea—derive from the Taoist Mago, the defining features of gigantism and creative maternity are distinctly Korean mythic elements absent from the Taoist tradition (Cho 2013, pp. 17–19). Based on this, Cho classified the mythic narratives of "Goddess Grandmothers" across the Korean peninsula—including Jeju's *Seolmundaehalmang*—under the broader "Mago *Halmi* (Grandmother)" lineage, noting their shared mythic structure and symbolic functions. Within this framework, regional deities such as Nogo *Halmi* of the Mount Jiri, Gaeyang *Halmi* of the western coastal areas, Sögu *Halmi* of Gangwon Province, and Angadak *Halmi* of Chungcheong and Kyeongsang Province all belong to the same category of creator and guardian goddess. The following oral narrative about Nogo *Halmi* exemplifies this tradition:

"The elders used to say, long ago there was an old woman named Nogo. She made all the mountains and rivers. Her hands were so big and strong that when she drew lines across the flat land, mountains and valleys formed, shaping the world. At one place she came to a great rock while creating the mountains, and because its flat top was beautiful, she decided to place something on it. So, resting her palm on a long tobacco pipe, she lifted the great rock with one hand and set it upon another stone" (Cho 2013, p. 43).

Here, the archetypal "long nails" of Mago goddess remain, but not as symbols of beauty or seduction. Instead, they serve as creative tools, raking the earth to form mountains and valleys, enriching the landscape, and sustaining human life. The myth of *Seolmundaehalmang* of Jeju shares a motif in which a goddess uses her long fingernails to create and shape geographical features for the benefit of humankind. However, Seon-ja Kim challenges earlier scholars who linked the compound word "*Seolmundaehalmang*" with "Mago", questioning their interpretation of the name as "*Seolmundae*" plus "*Halmang*." Instead, she argues that the name should be segmented as "*Seolmun*," "*Dae* (Great)" and "*Halmang*" (S.-j. Kim 2023, p. 20). In fact, the written record of the oral narratives surrounding *Seolmundaehalmang* appears quite late. The oldest traceable source mentioning her name is Han-cheol Jang's *Pyohaerok* (An Account of Drifting at Sea) in 1771, which refers to "Seonmasunpa" and "Seonmago." By that time, it is reasonable to conclude that the Neo-

Confucian social order of the Chosŏn dynasty had already exerted influence on the early mythic traditions. When interpreting the *Pyohaerok*'s "Seonmago," previous scholars assumed Taoist influence and understood it as "the immortal Mago" (S.-j. Kim 2023, p. 11). Yet, since the suffix "-go" in Korean can mean an elderly women such as grandmother or aunt, Kim contends that it should rather be read as "Seonma Grandmother/Aunt" (S.-j. Kim 2023, p. 13). Viewed in this way, Seolmun may represent a phonetically analogous form from Seonma within the realm of oral tradition.

The narrative element of "coming from the West" highlights the goddess's "foreignness," most vividly embodied by *Seolmundaehalmang*. Kim interprets the depiction of Seonmago "walking across the western sea and playing on Mount Halla" not as a reference to Jeju's western coastal geography but as a symbolic indication of external influx into the cultural space of Jeju. Kim emphasizes *Seolmundaehalmang*'s nature as a "foreign deity," which, rather than expressing Sinocentric subservience, underscores the possibility that the primordial deities worshiped by the northern, Manchurian ancestors who migrated to the Korean Peninsula were female (S.-j. Kim 2023, p. 18). Kim also speculates that the etymon "Seonma" or "Seolmun," based on phonetic resemblance, may derive from "shaman," although further etymological study is required to substantiate this claim.

In sum, when integrating late Chosŏn records with twentieth-century ethnographic data, *Seolmundaehalmang* emerges as a grand goddess who both created Jeju's major topographical features in their present form and simultaneously embodies the archetype of a "giant goddess of calamity." Works such as prementioned *Pyohaerok*, Du-bong Kim's *Jeju Island Chronicles* (1936), and Itsumi Seiji's *Jeju Island* (1935–1937) recount that Jeju was formed when the goddess grasped a handful of sand from the Han River, flew over the sea, and scattered it; the mounds of sand that slipped through her fingers became volcanic cones, and the marks left by her staff turned into lakes. Later oral versions modify certain details—such as saying she carried the sand in her skirt rather than with her hands, or that her finger marks rather than her staff created the lakes—but such variations do not undermine the myth's essential structure, reflecting only the fluid of oral transmission.

The greater issue lies in the transformation of the goddess's role. Once portrayed as a benevolent and approachable being—so mighty that people petitioned her to build a bridge between island and mainland—*Seolmundaehalmang* gradually became depicted as a troublesome giantess. One tale recounts that she promised to build the bridge if the people would make her a single garment; yet her body was so enormous that even their collective labor could not complete the task, and thus Jeju remained an island. Another version tells that she died tragically after falling into the cauldron while cooking rice for five hundred sons. Such narratives, with their motifs of failure and tragedy, reflect the growing influence of Confucian patriarchy evident in twentieth-century oral records. Nevertheless, due to its geographical separation from the mainland and its traditional emphasis on female productive agency, Jeju Island has retained a greater number of positive aspects of goddess mythology, and thus the patriarchal transformation observable in other Mago-line goddesses appears to be comparatively less pronounced.

In most regions, however, goddesses of the Mago Halmang lineage were demonized under late Confucian patriarchal ideology, becoming figures who are either subordinate to or defeated by male Confucian heroes. For example, in the folk of "Magwi Fortress and *Gwaendol* (the fixed stone)" collected from Yongin region, a stepmother figure called Magwi *Halmang* (Grandma the devil) appears. She raised a brother and sister. She urged the brother to study diligently for the national examination but told the sister that her brother would succeed only if she secretly built a fortress at night. When the brother discovered his sister's labor one night, she was startled, set down the stone she was carrying, and that stone became "*Gwaendol*" besides the fortress. The brother later passed the exam,

but upon returning home, found his sister dead from exhaustion and the old woman gone. The fortress she built is thus called “Magwi Fortress” (Cho 2013, pp. 90–91). Although the mythic motif of “building with stones” persists, the once divine and kind “Mago Grandmother” has now degenerated into an evil “Magwi Grandmother” who exploits human labor, especially young women’s.

In another legend from Samchŏk region in Gangwon Province, Mago Halmang appears as a “fox transformed into an old woman,” who deceives people with witchcraft until a wise man named Jin-hu Choi beats her to death and cauterizes her body with three hundred moxa burns to ensure her destruction. The rock she clutched as she died became known as “Sŏguam,” literally “Old Fox Rock.” Choi, celebrated as a filial Confucian sage, symbolizes, according to Cho, the complete subjugation of indigenous Mago Halmang tradition by patriarchal Confucian ideology (Cho 2013, pp. 93–96).

No one regards as historical fact the mythological narrative that Dangun, revered as the progenitor of the Korean people, is born from the union of the Son of Heaven (*Hwanin*) and a woman who had transformed from a bear (*Ugnyŏ*). Yet, as is the case with all mythic narratives, myth performs what Tillich (1957) described as the function of “Dreaming Innocence.” Such “dreaming innocence” as provides the imaginative power to reflect upon and to reconfigure reality. If the belief (a religious narrative) that a single woman’s transgression (Genesis 3) resulted in original sin for all subsequent humanity could captivate the world for so long and exert concrete influence on human behavior, then a mythic narrative in which the first woman possessed divine power and, through that power, created many of the elements that enabled human beings to live in abundance and safety may likewise become a legacy through which Korean women—her descendants—summon and enact creative agency in a world where destruction has become commonplace.

As Phyllis Tribble has persuasively demonstrated, the biblical narrative of the “first women” admits alternative interpretations. Rather than her sin being the cause of original sin for all humanity, it can be understood that patriarchal biblical interpretation imposed the sinful condition of all humankind onto a single woman. Tribble (1979) suggests that the narrative of the Fall could, instead, be read as a text that reveals the inquisitiveness and creative wisdom of the first woman created by God.

“Why does the serpent speak to the woman and not to the man? Let a female speculate. If the serpent is “more subtle” than its fellow creatures, the woman is more appealing than her husband. Throughout the myth, she is the more intelligent one, the more aggressive one, and the one with greater sensibilities” (Tribble 1979, p. 79).

Of course, Tribble’s argument does not suggest that men are foolish and women are intelligent. Rather, her intention is to highlight the androcentric bias that emerged when women were blamed as the primary agents of original sin, on the grounds that the serpent approached the woman because of her supposed moral and spiritual inferiority. In this sense, patriarchal transformations and exploitative interpretations of the Bible—applied and reiterated over a long period of time and thus established as tradition and orthodoxy—can be deconstructed. This approach aligns with methodological proposals within the Western Christian feminist tradition, such as Fiorenza’s (1983) “hermeneutics of suspicion”. Just as the absence of Peter’s activities from the narrative of Acts after chapter 15 does not imply that his apostolic work in the early church ceased after the point, the absence of references to Mary Magdalene or Mary of Bethany in Acts cannot be taken as evidence that apostolic actions by women absent from early Christian leadership. As Fiorenza has argued with substantial historical and hermeneutical grounding, the history of women’s leadership in the early church has been obscured, excluded, and distorted, and therefore must be reconsidered, reconstructed, and reimaged. Likewise, to accept an ideologically constructed, gendered notion of women’s vocation—formed in the midst of patriarchal

constraints and distortions—as “created order” is to misread the original order of the Garden of Delight (Eden).

5. Conclusions

When analyzing this historical and cultural genealogy from a feminist perspective, it becomes clear that there is diminishing justification for contemporary Christian women to absolutize the patriarchal gender roles—shaped by the elective affinities of the early modern period—as a divine calling. The proclamation in Genesis 1—that women, like men, were created in the *imago Dei* (Image of God)—remains our enduring legacy, having survived despite the pervasive traces of patriarchal redaction found throughout the biblical text. Expectations are high for the creative and communal “vocations of women” that will be constructed through the intersection of three distinct forces: the historical memory of Bible Women who resisted gender restrictions in early Korean Christianity; the aspirations of commoner women embedded in the oral traditions of *Seolmundaehalmang*, the primordial goddess who created and sustains this Korean land; and the affective and popular agency of the 4.0 feminist generation currently refashioning female identity in our late-modern Korean context. Having formed my identity within the 2.0 feminist movement—now a generation apart from the current wave—I believe it would be an overreach to define the substantive novelty that 4.0 feminist church women will create. Rather, my role is to remain faithful to analyzing their context and introducing the Christian and Korean sources available to them.

Whatever the content of the “women’s calling” they forge, I hope its trajectory liberates individual creative potential from both institutional constraints and the neoliberal culture of hyper-individualized competition that permeates contemporary Korean society. It is clear that we must move beyond the patriarchal “laws of prohibitions imposed by the Father”, summoning the primordial power of the Mother, not as a resource for self-development or capacity building, but as a power of solidarity aimed at restoring the world to its original brightness (*bokbon*).

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