Creator 'God the Mother as Land' in the Trinity: Reinterpreted from Feng Shui Cosmology

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Abstract

This article suggests an eco-feminist divine model of 'God the Mother as Land (Terrain)' reinterpreted from 'God the Father' in the Trinity in Korean context. The purpose of this theological endeavor is a devout hope for a theological solution to the all-pervading patriarchy in the contemporary Korean Protestant Church, where sexism and eco-antipathy are at its heart. This model takes an eco-feminist approach and employs a Feng Shui cosmology from an East Asian perspective, through a way of new hermeneutics and reconstruction theology. This attempt goes beyond the scope of the traditional hermeneutical theology of Christian language and challenges to break

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away from the patriarchy of traditional Christianity through an ecofeminist theology. This adopts a contextual approach to an eco-feminist imagining of God, based on the yin and yang symbolic thinking of Feng Shui, and aimed at being inclusive and restorative towards Korean women, and nature.

Keywords

Feng Shui Cosmology, Eco-feminist, Land, Yin and Yang principle, Contextual Theology

I. Introduction

This article endeavors a reinterpretation of the person of 'God the Father' in the Trinity of Christianity through the medium of the symbol of Land (Terrain) from Feng Shui cosmology, which infers femininity as Mother. This contextual approach to the model Trinity of 'God the Mother as Land' is a new hermeneutical tool with which to understand the meaning of the Trinity from an Asian eco-feminist perspective.

Eco-feminist theologians argue that the predominant use of masculine images and metaphors for God has strengthened the view that they are the one significant way of expressing God, while women's images are not at all worthy. Sexist language undermines women's equality with men, as beings who have been made fully in the divine likeness of God (Imago Dei). In addition, eco-feminist theologians have found that today's crisis of civilization comes from the exploitation of women and nature, and they criticize the patriarchal ideology and cosmological dualism in traditional theology that has caused such degradation.

In detail, feminist theologians assert that most languages that have been used in traditional theology are male-centered because they have been formed and developed in patriarchal cultures typical in most of the world.³ Elizabeth Johnson says that deeming dominantly male lan-

¹ Elizabeth A. Johnson, She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005), 36-38. See Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 9...

² Patrick Curry, Ecological Ethics: An Introduction (Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2012), 127-128. Karen Warren, 'Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections', in, MacKinnon and McIntyre, Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theory, (Kansas: Sheed and Ward, 1995), 106.

guage as the only language fit to describe God 'absolutizes a single set of metaphors and obscures the height and depth and length and breadth of divine mystery'. 4 Patriarchal speech is oppressive and idolatrous to women, and restrictive to the faithful who believe in the mystery of God.5

Eco-feminist theologians have proposed particular new languages, symbols, and metaphors for reimaging God in a way that is inclusive to women. The importance of developing a new and inclusive language for God proposed by eco-feminist theologians is the foundation for this challenge. This eco-feministic approach is vital to my searching for an inclusive God model. For example, Sallie McFague, 6 Rebecca Chopp, ⁷ Elizabeth A. Johnson, ⁸ Rosemary R. Ruether, ⁹ and Anne E. Carr, Mary Daley, Carol P. Christ, Catherine Roach, Charlene Spretnak,

³ Brian Wren, What Language Shall I Borrow? God-Talk in Worship: A Male Response to Feminist Theology (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 3-4. Rosemary R. Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 94-9.

⁴ Johnson, She Who Is, 18,

⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁶ McFague recognizes the necessity for a feminine image of God, or an image beyond gender, to overcome the male-centered God model. She suggests metaphors of God as a mother, a lover, a friend, and 'the world as God's body'. Sallie McFague, Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 78-180.

⁷ For Rebecca Chopp, an American theologian, theology encompasses awareness of and words about God, and God is typically understood and represented as the Word. She claims: 'As Word, God has traditionally been prevented from being represented by woman, while woman has been configured as taboo and placed on the margins of the Word'. Rebecca S. Chopp, The Power to Speak; Feminism, Language, God (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 3.

⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson presents a feminist theology, which overcomes oppressive languages and uses symbols from women's experiences. Her approach points to new metaphors, symbols, and names for God, which are related to the Trinity. Johnson, She Who Is, 273.

⁹ Rosemary R. Reuther suggests a comprehensive God/ess model, which includes metaphors for both women and men. Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk, 48.

and others¹⁰ have all contributed new linguistic ways of reimagining and re-expressing God. These feminist theologians are apostles of new linguistic ways for conceptualizing and visualizing God for women, in their rethinking of the Christological paradigm from eco-feminist perspectives. Thus, it is helpful to employ an alternative naming: God should be described universally, using both women's symbols and men's symbols. New and diverse languages that cannot be easily coopted by the systems of domination are necessary to inclusive theology. In this way, the goal of this article challenges to create a distinction between traditional patriarchal Christianity and a Christianity that promotes gender equality and the value of nature in contemporary Korea. It is also hoped to reconstruct a concept of a God who is physically close with us, by using metaphors that can overcome the limitations of the kind of traditional religious language that is prevalent in mainstream Korean churches, and that are relevant to contemporary women's reality in the Korean Church.¹¹

¹⁰ Anne E. Carr, Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). Carol P. Christ, Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). Catherine M. Roach, Mother/Nature: Popular Culture and Environmental Ethics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003). Mary Daly, Beyond God of the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985). Charlene Spretnak, Lost Goddesses of Early Greece: A Collection of Pre-Hellenic Myths (Boston: Beacon, 1987).

¹¹ Today, South Korea is a country highly advanced in its economy and technological capacity. More women are now entering the workforce, and seeking political careers. However, as opposed how to these advancements in the status of women are generally accepted in secular society, Korean churches have fallen far behind social movements and achievements in gender equality. This lag can be attributed to the gender roles in the Church, which are still greatly biased towards patriarchal structures. The availability of women's leadership positions in most Christian churches still has a long way to go. For example, many denominations prohibit women from being ordained, and still claim that women are second-class church members.

Feng Shui is literally a thought of wind and water, a kind of natural organic principles of East Asian philosophy that deals with the coexistence and interaction of humans and natural ecosystems by analyzing the harmony between a flow of wind, a stream of water, and a lay of the land in the space where humans are living. This article asserts logically that Feng Shui is considered appropriate and ideal to propose an eco-feminine divine model through dialogues with eco-feminist theology because the original meaning of Feng Shui carries an ecological and a feminine trait. Characteristically, the understanding of God in western Christianity has been developed through their historical and cultural backgrounds of the West and also through their western metaphysical thinking, while this article proposes an eco-feminist's God model through East Asian cultural backgrounds with contextualization work, and through East Asian metaphysical thinking of 'I Ching', which offers a basic idea of Feng Shui, which is familiar with the sense and recognition of East Asians from their eyes.

The idea of yin and yang in Feng Shui posits that all things in the world are closely interconnected and human beings dwell with all creatures in nature, in interconnectedness with the sacred Divine power (this is the Chunjiin idea from East Asian Feng Shui cosmology, which represents that Heaven-Land-Humanity are united as one) - and this principle of balance has potential to overcome patriarchal dualistic thinking. In this way, 'God the Mother as Land' is suggested from ideas that are deeply grounded in yin and yang principle and

This has implications for Korean women in the Church because their role has been thoroughly excluded and ignored, including within lay leadership, and in terms of ordination as elders, deacons, and ministers. This ongoing phenomenon also reflects the realities of Korean Christian ministry, where male-centered language dominates women by strengthening a patriarchy strongly joined to the Confucian tradition of Korea.

the spirit of Oneness (Chunjiin) in the idea of ecological balance and harmony to liberate Korean woman and nature. This article, ultimately, seeks to reimagine the traditional image of patriarchal God, God the Father as the Creator, as 'God the Mother as Land', which is comprehensive and inclusive in order to liberate Korean women and nature.

II. The Meaning of Land in Feng Shui Cosmology

In Feng Shui, Land (Terrain) refers to the complex of condensed yin as opposed concept to the sky (heaven, represented by yang). Feng Shui cosmology grounded on I Ching is holistic, making use of analogies between Heaven, Nature (Land) and Humanity (unified in Chunjiin). In Chunjiin nature (Land) is the most important source in the world. ¹² In I Ching, the feminine principle that Land inherently holds has been valued, and land and heaven are matrix of all things, and fundamental unit of yin and yang. The combination of yin and yang are relational symbols of the process of change.

Land(Terrain), from the tradition of Korean Feng Shui, has been one of the main subjects of folk religion along with the sky (heaven). Land, despite its impersonal image, has formed an intimate image of the mother in Koreans' subconsciousness. Therefore, in Korean Feng Shui thought, the spirit of Land is a mother, called *Jimo*. Land has been a symbol of a numinous maternal principle in and through the shape of benevolent maternal birth to all things, raising and nurturing them.

¹² Re Kwang Ahn, DaeGwae Feng Shui: Reading the Destiny of Land and Humanity from Logic of Feng Shui by DaeGwae Feng Shui (Seoul: Publishing Nice Room, 2015), 105.

Because of this maternal characteristic of land, it has been associated with images of abundance, fecundity, richness and fertility of women. Women are considered to be responsible for the crop harvest each year because they seem to be mediators for mysteries of creation. 13 Based upon this ideation of the feminine principle, it was soon accepted that women control the mysteries of life and death, and also preside over the supply of food. In this sense, land was symbolized as female, and as closely linked to the center of cosmic abundance.¹⁴ And because land provides most of all the products that sustained life in the ancient agricultural society of Korea, it was considered a home for the life source and the place where all things are created. Like caring for children, humans are cared for by land by the identification of land as a mother. This way, land is held sacred and is regarded as Creator the Mother.

The idea of Jimo (Land as a Mother) in Feng Shui, symbolizes the place where life originated and emerged. The character of maternity of land becomes a mysterious cosmic place where life begins and returns to. Land is believed to have an inherent power of creation and extinction, engagement and caring for the universe. Therefore, the *Jimo* idea in Korean Feng Shui typically emphasizes that humans and land are inseparable, and the fate of one is closely associated with the fate of the other, which means that the land raises humans and humans care for the land in return. That is, land consciousness and consciousness of women are united in Korean Feng Shui. Land was considered

¹³ Se Chang Oh, 'A Study on Feng Shui Thoughts from the Viewpoint of Environmental Geography'. Journal of Social Sciences Research 4, 2 (1997): 387-88. See Chang Jo Choi, Korean Indigenous Feng Shui 1 (Seoul: Min Eum Sa Publishing, 2011), 480.

¹⁴ Young Mee Lee, 'Reading of God in the Old Testament with Feminist Eyes', in, Korea Old Testament Society, Vol. 19, (2013): 181.

to be women and the center of the movements of the five elements. symbolized to be the origination place of primordial life. 15 This way. land in Feng Shui is considered to be the uterus where people came from and return to. This idea is considered a harmonious reflection of nature of an agricultural growing cycle of life.

III. The Creation Story in Traditional Christian Theology and Feng Shui Cosmology

In order to propose a new image of God the Creator 'God the Mother as Land', it is necessary to review some of the key theological understandings of the creation story. Here, I contrast traditional theological understandings of creation with those of process theologians, whose work informs this article. Traditional theologians argue that creation happened from nothingness - for "creation from nothing" (creatio ex nihilo). Edmond Jacobs contends that from only a few activities of God described in Genesis 1, creation can be considered as "creation out of nothing". 16 Process theologians, however, argue that creation is not made ex nihilo, but involves ordering activity from chaos. 17 Regarding this claim, traditional theologian Gerhard May argues that the doctrine

¹⁵ Jung Bae Lee, 'Korean Feng Shui and Ecology: Theological Approach on the Significance of Korean Feng Shui as an Ecological Perspective." SaMok Publishing 162 (1992): 37.

¹⁶ Edmond Jacob, The Spirit and the Word, trans. Arthur W. Heathete and Philip J. Allcock (London: Hodder&Stoughton/ N.Y.: Harper), quoted in Ben C. Ollenburger, Elmer A. Martens, Gerhard F. Hasel (eds.) The Flowering of Old Testament Theology; A Reader in Twentieth-Century Old Testament Theology, 1930-1990 (Indiana: Eisenbrauns 1992) 146-168.

¹⁷ John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Cobb John B & Griffin David, Process Theology, Trans, Kyung Ho Lee (Seoul: Yimun Publishing Co, 2012), 100.

of "creation out of nothingness" represents the absolutely unconditioned nature of the creation. He emphasizes God's omnipotence, along with the unconditioned freedom and contingence of God's creative work.¹⁸ Jürgen Moltmann is a theologian who represents the "creation from nothing" of this traditional classical theism. He maintains that God who creates the world "out of nothing" continues His creative works as a creative spirit, dwelling in the world that He created (shechina).19 Process theologians such as Alfred N. Whitehead and John Cobb advocate Moltmann's idea that God's creative work continues to progress; however, they reject the Divine absolute from the concept of God's creation ex nihilo because this advocates defending the sovereignty and transcendence of God.²⁰ They argue that humans have always related God to another world. They also claim that rejecting 'creation out of nothing' provides the opportunity to affirm that God continues to create and relate with the other beings of the world.

Like the process theologians' ideas, I Ching describes the world as chaos before creation, and the heaven and earth had been formed by the split of vin and yang. This creation story bears striking likeness to the creation of heaven and earth described in the Hebrew Bible when we see the world before creation in a state of chaos before it is differentiated. But the activity of creation does not seem to be work done by the absolute sovereign intervention of God, but rather it had been worked out in the flow of change from yin and yang, and creation con-

¹⁸ Gerhard May, Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought, trans. A.S. Worrall (New York: T and T Clark International, 2004), Foreword.

¹⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, Gifford Lectures, Trans, Kyun Chin Kim. God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation (Korean Theological Institution, 1987), 117-120.

²⁰ John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology, 91-92.

tinues progressively. According to the principles of change from I Ching, everything has not been created by the will of the Ultimate Reality but forms itself, changes itself, and becomes itself.²¹ In my view, creation in the principle of I Ching, continues to form itself inevitably, as the relationship between the Ultimate Reality and the world is intertwined with each other, not by contingency in the organic web of connection but by inevitable relationship.

Specifically, as expressed in I Ching, the ever-changing relationship between the two poles vin and vang is responsible for creation or formation. Bipolar vin and vang produce Four Images, and it produces the Eight Trigrams. The Eight Trigrams from vin and yang form the basis of all things in the universe and create and transform all things in the world. In this creative process of change, the Ultimate Reality

²¹ Jung Yong Lee Korean-American theologian presents his theological methodology through the yin and yang principle based on the Cosmology of IChing. Lee sees that the cosmology of East Asia basically comes from the nature of yin and yang (the bipolarity of nature). This complementary bipolar relationship of yin and yang is a basic element that makes up the universe. Everything in the universe is considered to have its complementary opposites known as yin and yang, and this constitutes the basic principle of the universe. It is the principle of everything in creation, and of change. Therefore, the changes of vin and vang are the foundation of everything in the universe, which is the endless flow of changes described in the IChing. Lee attempts to reinterpret the Christian God from an Asian perspective through this IChing. Lee claims that God is immutable and perfect; he argues for neither a fixed nor a static being, but rather for God as change itself. Lee finds it apt that God is expressed as 'Change itself' – as 'becoming itself', rather than 'being itself'. In other words, Lee implies a change in the ontology (the ontological Change), as opposed to the Western idea of ontology of substance (a fixed and a static ontology). He describes God as the source of all dynamic changes, which create all things in the yin and yang dynamic. According to his understanding of God based on IChing, God 'is definitely not the "unmoved mover"; it is the "moving mover", or "changing changer", that is the source of all creative becoming'. Jung Yong Lee, The Theology of Change: A Christian Concept of God in an Eastern Perspective (New York: Orbis Books, 1979). Jung Yong Lee, The Trinity in Asian Perspective (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

continues to work on creation through ongoing change. The creator of change becomes the sole basis and origin of creation, not simply a creator nor a ruler of all the creatures within the world. In I Ching, creation is not achieved by the absolute sovereignty from transcendent God, but rather it progresses in a mutually inherent and inevitable relationship between Creator and creatures, maintaining the continuity in the nature of yin and yang, which lies in the interchange and interplay of the two components. In this way, the Creator 'Mother of the Land' features that of becoming itself and changing itself. The person of 'God the Mother as Land' represents the immanent Creator who is not far away, but who dwells in our world, and suffers with us here and now. She is God the Creator, who is monistic, immanent, and relational between the persons in the Trinity from the ideas of Feng Shui, which are relational and harmonious.

Jung Bae Lee, a Korean theologian argues that the creation story from the Asian perspectives personalizes all the things in nature and does not go on distinguishing between God and nature. However, creatures created in the void space and in the state of absence of God, as Moltmann referred to, are regarded as though they are not *Imago Dei*.²² Lee argues that Moltmann understands contingency as an essence through continuous evolution and changes, and fulfills the space that God has abandoned eschatologically with continuous creation.²³ John Polkinghorn argues that such "continuous creation" (*creatio continua*) is a process in which the creator who continues to create must interact with the world of creation.²⁴

²² Jung Bae Lee, Christian Natural Theology based on Dialogue between Religion and Science (Seoul: Korean Christian Association, 2005), 72-77.

²³ Ibid.

This article argues that divine immanence exists in all things in the natural world and that adopting the conceptual meaning in the Oneness idea of Chunjiin personalizes all things in nature. Symbolically speaking, human beings recognize the Divine through nature. In this way, the Oneness from the Chunijin idea states that human beings understand God through communicating with nature. Therefore, the creation story from Feng Shui is more cosmological and holistic than that of Moltmann, because the idea of continuous creation and change from the Asian perspective contrasts with that creation *ex nihilo* posited by Moltmann. This type of cosmological understanding can be seen in Western theologians in the work of Thomas Berry.²⁵ He sees the universe as a sacred community that reveals the presence of God, and his theology of understanding human, nature, and spirit of God as one reality parallels Asian cosmological thought.

Moreover, most traditional theologians understand the relationship between God and the world as a coincidence in the idea of Trinitarian Creation.²⁶ According to Moltmann, creation occurs coincidently without any internal and external inevitability that causes creation, because all creatures are created in the empty space withdrawn by God from 'zimzum'.27 Process theologians, however, claim that all creatures are connected to each other, so God and humans are inevitably connected

²⁴ Paul S. Fiddes, Michael Welker, etc. The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis, edited by John Polkinghorne (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2001), Chapter 5.

²⁵ Thomas Berry and Thomas Clarke, Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 15-16.

²⁶ Aquinas says that the creation of the creatures is not by God's inevitability, but by intellect and will, and that God is not actually related with creatures. Elizabeth A Johnson, She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005), 226.

²⁷ Moltmann, God in Creation, 123-5.

to each other.²⁸ They have a theological position that God is becoming itself and changing itself, as is the universe. Feminist Anna Case-Winter, like process theologians, argues that the limits of God's power are metaphysical necessities, rather than voluntary self-limitations. She understands God's power not as overpowering, but as empowering. In that sense, she claims that God is just like a mother who empowers her child in the womb.29 However, other feminist theologians, like Daphne Hampson, criticize the women's moral value of self-emptying represented in this understanding of creation, for imposing "self-sacrifice" on them and assigning women subordinate roles in the creation process. 30 However, following Anna Case-Winter, this article presents Creator 'God the Mother as Land' in the Trinity, who empowers the world as a mother from the ideas of vin and yang, in which an inevitable relationship between God and the world exists.

IV. The Creator, 'God the Mother as Land' from Feng Shui

The Creator 'God the Mother' as symbolized by land is "conceived not only as original Creator, Faithful Preserver, Server, and Sustainer, but also as Continuous Creator of the cosmos". 31 Rejecting Her Divine transcendence and sovereignty, but representing Her immanence,

²⁸ John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, John B. Cobb & David R Griffin Process Theology, 234-238.

²⁹ Anna Case-Winter, God's Power: Traditional Understanding and Contemporary Challenge (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 171-226.

³⁰ Daphne Hampson, Theology and Feminism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 155.

³¹ Gloria L. Schaab, The Creative Suffering of the Triune God: An Evolutionary Theology (The American Academy of Religion), Kindle Edition. (Kindle Locations, 1401-1402).

which is with us as Faithful Preserver, Server, and Sustainer, the symbol of Mother expresses an interrelationship of life through the birthing and nurturing process.³² Therefore the symbol of 'God as Mother' claims divine immanence through a continuously changing relation of God towards the world. The metaphor of 'God as Mother' shows land is not just a subject awaiting exploitation, or one being conquered by a dualistic thinking system; rather, it is perceived as a part of the body of God the Mother.

More to the point, Creator God is being expressed as 'God as Mother' in a personal way, despite using the impersonal symbol of land from Feng Shui cosmology. This model originates from the *Jimo* idea that land is personified as a mother, who becomes the first person of the Trinity, which is 'God the Mother as Land' in this article. In this way 'God of Land' could eventually be conceived as a personal divine model of Creator God as Mother, symbolized through land. This idea parallels Sallie McFague's 'the world as the God body' model, but she compares this model to 'Mother, Lover, and Friend' in terms of the personal aspects of speaking about God. McFague's Mother model implies 'procreative-emanation' of God's role, through the giving birth to 'the world as the God body'.

McFague suggests that those personal metaphors, which resemble human images, can more intimately represent God: her perspective confines God to be associated with personality.33 But God cannot be described in exclusively personal ways, and God, we know through human language, is more than a personal being.34 The impersonal as-

³² Sallie McFague, Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 100.

³³ McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 20-21. See McFague, Model of God, 78-87.

³⁴ Jung Young Lee, The Trinity in Asian Perspective, 65.

pects and impersonal renaming of God are frequently found in the Bible. Soskice, for example, asserts that God has many metaphoric and impersonal names such as Rock, Lamb, Forest, Shepherd, Vine-Keeper, and so on, in Christian traditions. It is recognized within the discipline that many theologians have described God in impersonal ways.

The understanding of God in Feng Shui includes a comprehensive divine nature, which encompasses diverse analogies of relationships between Heaven-Land-Humanity. In this way, the 'God of Land' model is being proposed in this article through the impersonal metaphor of land, which inherently holds an image of 'mother' that in turn encompasses all things through the idea of Oneness of Chunjiin. Impersonal beings such as the land (earth) and Heaven (sky) are the sources of human beings and of all Creation. Heaven, therefore, is identified as father, land is identified as mother, human beings as their children, and other creatures as members of the household of the universe, which is the household of God in a familiar sense.³⁶ Therefore, my suggested model represents a more organic worldview that is intimate, holistic, and inclusive, its components being strongly attached and related to each other. In this way, the 'God of Land' model can be expressed in both personal and impersonal ways from the idea of Oneness of Chunjiin. Moreover, God transcends personal and impersonal categories through yin and yang symbolic thinking, which includes 'both/and', and 'is and is'.37 From this inclusive way of symbolic thinking, this article argues that an impersonal 'God of Land', which

³⁵ Janet Martin Soskice, The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1-2.

³⁶ Jung Young Lee, The Trinity in Asian Perspective, 63.

³⁷ Ibid., 65.

is based on the idea of *Jimo* from Feng Shui, is suggested as a personal 'God as Mother' model because *limo* represents the idea that 'land' is mother. This way, 'God as Mother', understood as land, presents a viable Christian response to, and feminist understanding of, the Divine, which reflects the pervasive reality of women's life. This then begs the guestion: What is the primary nature of Creator 'God the Mother as Land', as it is presented in this article?

V. The Nature of 'God the Mother as Land' as Creator.

The primary metaphors in the tradition of Christianity are traditionally quite dualistic, and tend to see God as an absolute monarch. This dualistic view leads to put some distance between God and His creatures.38 Therefore, the language representing the nature of God has developed masculine metaphors of King, the Son, or the dictator, which has been formed as a concept of the ruler, absolute, transcendent, and omnipotent God. This article, however, explores the nature of God through feminine metaphors of mother and land that are monistic and immanent.

Moltmann sees creation as emerging from the love of God, because of the self-imposed 'withdrawal' of a part of God that enables the creation of the universe, and as such he claims God is inherently love.³⁹ Paul S. Fiddes also stresses creation from love⁴⁰ and McFague understands the nature of God's creation as love, just like the agapeic love

³⁸ McFague, Models of God, 19.

³⁹ Moltmann, God in Creation, 128-9.

⁴⁰ Paul S. Fiddes, Michael Welker, etc. The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis, Chapter 10.

of parents.⁴¹ Likewise, this article claims the nature of the model 'God of Land' is inherently love, seeking the equality of all things through harmony and balance. This way, it is understood as a creative God's love, including the oppressed and marginalized, who seek to abolish discrimination and seek equality for all things. In addition, this article follows the understanding of God in Chunjiin ideology, which sees not only the universe as one organic unit but also a common source and rule through a relational way of thinking instead of thinking of God as an absolute ruler. Therefore, "God of Land" reveals the true nature of God, which emphasizes the relationship of all things that are all connected, well balanced and harmonious instead of monarchial and ruling.

This article argues that the model of 'God the Mother as Land' has inclusiveness and embracive-ness in its nature through the change described in I Ching, which is love emerging from the both/ and thinking from yin-yang. More specifically, in Feng Shui thinking, which is the foundation of 'God the Mother as Land', a point of intersection of yin and yang is viewed as the Ultimate Reality, which is the change itself that is God. 42 Yin and yang are opposite in character, but they are not separable nor divided in nature. They are equally united and mutually constitutive. In the theology of change based on the I Ching, change is viewed as the Great Ultimate. This change is to be characterized ontologically, however it continues changing in the balance and harmony of yin and yang without any discrimination or superiority. 43 This is because of the equal, opposite, inseparable and mutually constitutive

⁴¹ McFague, Models of God, 101-109.

⁴² Jung Young Lee, The Theology of Change, 30, 70.

⁴³ Ibid., 71.

nature of vin and yang. In this sense, the 'God of Mother as Land' pursues cosmological equality through the inclusiveness of opposites represented by vin-vang being embracive, inclusive and holistic and as such the model 'God the Mother as Land' shows the nature of love.

In addition, the nature of love of the "God the Mother as Land" can be explained in the notion of Chunjiin from Feng Shui cosmology, which is holistic, and symbolizes the ultimate unity of Heaven, Land and Humans. Within Chunjiin thoughts, the Heaven does not dominate the Land, and Heaven is not dominated by Humans, and Humans do not dominate Heavens and Land. In East Asian tradition, this relationship is typically understood as a familial one. Ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu wrote, in the Chunjiin concept, all things in the universe comprise an organic unity from a common origin and natural law.44 Following this, 'God the Mother as Land' is understood in a familial sense, which is relational rather than ontological.

Another important characteristic of 'God the Mother as Land' is mercy, based on the idea of Korean Bibo Feng Shui, which is the means for finding an optimal location for human settlement. 45 It introduces people to the intriguing concepts of harmony that are so helpful when diagnosing and balancing the surrounding environment. This is about how to read and correct problematic locations or structural features of the land. According to Bibo Feng Shui, people should build a temple or tower at the 'sick' place of the land in order to compensate the defect of the Land and maintain the environmental balance from the principle of Bibo Feng Shui. 46 In other words, Korean Bibo Feng Shui is es-

⁴⁴ Lao-Tzu, trans, Kang Nam Oh (Seoul: Hyunahmsa Publishing, 2000), 52, 57-59.

⁴⁵ Hoe Ik Chang, Science and Meta-science (Seoul: JisikSanup Publishing, 1990), 192-206.

⁴⁶ Won Suck Choi, Korea Feng Shui and Bibo (Seoul: Minsokwon Publishing, 2004), 23. See

sentially oriented towards achieving harmony between humans and the surrounding place. Thus, the land is regarded as a living maternal body, so if there is something wrong with the land, just like with a sick mother, it must be healed. As the land is regarded as a mother's body, the land has spots akin to those on the human body suitable for acupuncture or correction, and the instruments of healing are not needles but religiously significant buildings or towers. This demonstrates the way that this type of thinking represents a sense of interrelationship between humans and nature, and a relationship of caring that humans have for the land. Therefore, the essence of Bibo Feng Shui bears a heart of love for the land and for the people, which is where my 'God the Mother as Land' approach draws its characteristic of mercy, to seek correction of the beloved land, which is regarded as a body of the Mother.⁴⁷ Eventually, 'God the Mother as Land', basically pursues a harmonious and balanced life in the world. Therefore, God the Mother feels the suffering of humanity deeply and suffers with the oppressed and makes an effort to liberate them. In this way, the article argues that 'God the Mother as Land' represents the nature of mercy, of embracing the oppressed and the marginalized.

Regarding the nature of God, Western theologians argue that God is mercy itself. Matthew Fox, who is an American theologian explains nature of God is mercy. 48 Through his theology of creation spirituality, Fox emphasizes a holy relationship between humanity and nature. Accordingly, the protection of nature is considered a sacrament and

Chang Jo Choi, Korean Indigenous Feng Shui 1, 115-124.

⁴⁷ Chang Jo Choi, Korean Indigenous Feng Shui 1, 185.

⁴⁸ Matthew Fox, Spirituality Named Compassion: Uniting Mystical Awareness with Social Justice (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1999), 2-14.

an expressed mercy of God.

Thus 'God the Mother as Land' represented by the nature of love and mercy is reflected well in the life and ministry of Jesus through the perichoretic relationship of the Trinity. The nature of love and mercy in the 'God the Mother as Land' is the perfect manifestation of God the Mother. This merciful God became incarnate in the person and ministry of Jesus who is rooted in and enlivened by his intimate and loving relationship with God. Jesus' person, life, and ministry radiated merciful love and unconditional compassion toward those who suffer. The person of 'God the Mother as Land' as an active participant in history, as immanent in the struggle, and as suffering in the pains throughout the universe and its creatures. In this way, this article claims that the person of 'God the Mother as Land' seeks harmony and equality through her nature of cosmological love and mercy, as imagined from a Feng Shui perspective. The Creator, 'God the Mother as Land' pursues restoring her created world, especially the oppressed women and nature, by claiming equality and harmony for all creafures.

VI. Creator 'God the Mother as Land': An Eco-feminist Approach

Many feminist theologians claim God the Mother as Creator. It is because mother gives birth, nurtures, and forms intimate relationship with her children. Therefore, all creatures are the brothers and sisters from the same womb of one mother of the universe who dwells in bright darkness.49 They claim that the image of the Mother of God is

⁴⁹ Johnson, She Who Is, 179.

the most appropriate symbol to express the inherent performance of the immanent, receptive and fertile God.

Creation in ancient religions has been portrayed through the feminine values of nurturing and life-conception and the apotheosis of its creation has been described as a Goddess. In ancient societies, a natural female goddess was worshiped as the mother creator who births life without subordination of the masculine values, as such feminine values were more honored.⁵⁰ The female life-giving principle was considered divine, and was a great mystery in ancient religion. The female as divine is largely based on the number of carvings of female figures found from this era, with big breasts or big hips, emphasizing the physical features associated with fertility and mothering.⁵¹

Female figures that give birth and nurture all and establish order in the universe, appeared as mother imagery in the Goddess myths.⁵² However, female principles and imagery were gradually driven out of religion. In other words, Christianity gradually emphasized a fixed image of masculine monotheism, rather than the 'primordial goddess concept of God' emphasized by pantheism.⁵³ But female images of God are often portrayed in the Old Testament by metaphor of women delivering the creation of Israel.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Jung Bae Lee, 'Feng Shui and Ecology', 133.

⁵¹ Young Ran Chang, 'Images of Death and Females among Greek Myths and Philosophy', in, Korean Women's Philosophy, Vol.3 (2003): 3. See Rosemary Radford Ruether, Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 33-34.

⁵² Young Mee Lee, 'Reading of God in the Old Testament with Feminist Eyes', 194.

⁵³ Yasuo Yuasa, *Body as a Part of Cosmos*, trans. Jung Bae Lee, Han Young Lee (Seoul: Mosinunsaramdul Publishing, 2013), 264-5.

⁵⁴ God has been likened to a nursing mother who does not forget the children (Isiah 49; 14-15).

The Hebrew scripture scholars have mostly likened the image of the Creator God to the war

These are the various ways in which Western eco-feminist theologians have tried to find female aspects of God. This does not mean they are trying to regress to the Goddess era, but are trying to draw attention to the connection between the common destiny in the subordination of women and the exploitation of nature.55 Further, in the Christian church, feminist consciousness goes beyond masculine images of God, to represent feminine images of God that can reflect women's experiences. Such feminine imagery of God supports the goal of empowering women.

As eco-feminist theologians try to retrieve hidden feminine images of God,⁵⁶ this article also proposes 'God the Mother as Land', which possesses a female nature. The mother image land as *Jimo* from Feng Shui fosters a fundamentally ecological thinking process of caring for the land that Koreans innately and intuitively have. This article attempts to reinterpret the Jimo idea in Feng Shui, which has been regarded as a fertility cult in the agricultural era amongst theologists. In this way, the proposal of 'God the Mother as Land' based on Jimo or the land as a mother, is similar to the work of Western eco-feminists in proposing a model based on the feminine attributes and images.

In the outlook of East Asians, there is a wholeness, or Oneness, which sees the universe as an integrated unity with inherent corre-

gods of ancient Mesopotamia, who fought against the forces of chaos; however, the principle of creation is based on the female principle that stems from the creative womb of life. Young Mee Lee, 'Reading of God in the Old Testament with Feminist Eyes, 195.

⁵⁵ Jung Bae Lee, Feng Shui and Ecology, 133.

⁵⁶ Catherine M. Roach, Mother/Nature: Popular Culture and Environmental Ethics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 39-50. See Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 48. See also McFague, Models of God, 78-180.

spondence among existences.⁵⁷ In this way, Feng Shui thinking is shared with an ecological and organismic worldview, which posits that humans are interrelated and interdependent with the environment, in a relation of coexistence. Above all, Feng Shui cosmology cherishes land as a mother, and as a part of the human body. Accordingly, Koreans personify and animate land in a way that can correspond with human beings, and thus be seen as personal. In Feng Shui thinking, the natural environment (land) is thought to be a vast, integrated creature, which inherently communicates with humanity by vibrating with energy and cosmic resonance. A unique and new perspective from Korean Feng Shui finds the possibility for understanding the true nature of God through the image of Mother-Land. And the image of the Mother-Land manifests a unique incarnation, embodying the meaning of God's mercy and the motherly love. Therefore, all things in this world were born from 'God the Mother as Land' so we are all one, as according to the idea of Chunjiin, in the cosmic family of Heaven-Land-Humanity.58

Most importantly, the Creator 'God the Mother as Land', although represented by a female figure, includes male and female from the cosmological yin and yang principle, and a mother who embraces both women and men.⁵⁹ In other words, under the principle of change and

⁵⁷ Ole Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 174.

⁵⁸ Johnson, She Who Is, 189.

⁵⁹ Jung Young Lee suggests that another understanding of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is made possible by the yin and yang principle, given that yin and yang represent an inclusive 'both/and' mindset. He indicates that, in this way, God can be expressed as the transcendence and immanence of God, male and female, or personal and impersonal, at the same time. Jung Young Lee, *The Theology of Change*.

reverse circulation through the use of movement, 'God the Mother as Land' is represented as mother and also as father. 60 This idea represents the vin and vang symbolic thinking of 'both/and', 'is and is', which is dually affirmative. In addition, 'God the Mother as Land' has the dual characteristics of immanence but also transcendence and is impersonal but also personal, 'God the Mother as Land' holds the cosmic and comprehensive nature of love and mercy, and in this way the 'God the Mother as Land' works to liberate the marginalized and the oppressed, as the Creator. Therefore, 'God the Mother as Land' reconstructs an Asian women's theology that speaks to oppressed women in the Korean Church, 'God the Mother as Land' bears witness to Korean women's history of suffering under long-standing patriarchy. Therefore, 'God the Mother as Land' fits alongside the theological reflection in which the Bible and Christian tradition function, as a context in which to understand women's experiences from the comprehensive, inclusive, and embracive thinking of Feng Shui.

Moreover, the Creator 'God the Mother as Land' presented in this article encourages Korean women in the Church to re-imagine and portray God through their own images. As a result, I hope they will be able to form a positive self-identity. It is because the male-centered God image prevails in the Korean Church that Korean women have been ignored and treated as inferior. Some Christian feminists argue that gender equality within the Christian faith could be achieved through rethinking the portrayal and understanding of God as a female, or as a gender-neutral being.61 Therefore, the female image of

⁶⁰ Se Hyung Lee, The Theology of Tao (Seoul: Handul Publishing, 2002), 154.

⁶¹ McFague proposes metaphors of God as mother. Ruether also presents a God/ess model and suggests an ecological female Divine of Gaia. Johnson proposes God as Sophia. Carol P. Christ,

'God the Mother as Land' could help women fulfill the desire for these symbols that reflect women's religious experiences, and that could finally empower women.

VII. Conclusion

This article endeavors to reimagine the persons of 'God the Mother as Land' by alternatively renaming 'God the Father' in the Trinity of Christianity as a new effort, which suggests a theological solution to the all-pervading patriarchy in the contemporary Korean Protestant Church. Drawing on Feng Shui, symbolized by Land (Terrain), this article presents a hermeneutical approach that guides the theological doctrine 'God the Father' of the Trinity through a process of contextual and theological inculturation from an Asian perspective. Land from Feng Shui expresses an inherently feminine indwelling presence of God in the natural world, so it is appropriate for suggesting an emancipatory divine model for abused women and nature. This eco-feminist model 'God the Mother as Land' presents a holistic, immanent and comprehensive God, who is moving away from anthropocentric, patriarchal, and masculine portrayals and towards a comprehensive and cosmological view, based on an eco-feministic view of Feng Shui cosmology.

According to eco-feminist theologians, Christian theology relates human experience to the terms of men, without considering the ex-

Catherine Roach, Naomi Goldenberg, Charlene Spretnak, and others tried looking for the Goddess—that female Divine from a pre-historical era—in order to reject the notion of the exclusively male Divine.

periences of women.⁶² So the traditional image of the Christian God is based on masculine experience, and has been recognized in solely masculine images; the aim of this article has been to find a feminist alternative to these male-centered images. 63 In this way, this article is doing contextual theology from Korean women's perspectives, in the Korean spiritual tradition. In this regard, this article asserts the realities of Korean women's life experience, past and present, because the newly proposed model aims to address the problems in patriarchal Korean Christianity. The image of God without women's experience accentuates men's experience solely and cannot embrace women; this then drives them to the periphery of the Church. Therefore, this reinterpreted model from Feng Shui should be contextually understood from the particular context of Korea, and as based on Korean women's life experience.

Above all, by proposing a theological interpretation of 'God the Mother as Land' from Feng Shui, this model represents the possibility of a theological interpolation across the range of Christian theological disciplines. The eco-feminist 'God the Mother as Land' model from Feng Shui represents an inculturated, eco-feminist theology native to Korea, which reconstructs eco-feminism based on the cosmology and structures of Feng Shui thinking. More specifically, Feng Shui expresses an inherently feminine indwelling presence of God in the natural world, so it is appropriate for suggesting an emancipatory divine model for abused women and nature. Moreover, the outlook of nature

⁶² Johnson, She Who Is, 33. See Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk, 12-16. See also Ruth C. Duck, Gender and the Name of God: The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula, (Pilgrim Press, 1991), 9-10.

⁶³ Johnson, She Who Is, 33.

in Feng Shui has an organic worldview that sees the universe as a huge integrated unit that has inherently corresponding and closely interconnected relations of cosmic resonance. Therefore, the article suggests a God of cosmic significance, who is somewhat removed from anthropocentric thinking. From this perspective, the images, metaphors, and symbols suggested by Feng shui is significant for this model, as nature is viewed in common with the feminine, and each holds a spirit of reverence for nature and all forms of life.

This eco-feminist model 'God the Mother as Land' from Feng Shui represents a different dimension of understanding the cosmic God, who is immanent and comprehensive, and so opens up new prospects of overcoming traditional understandings of God, which are transcendent, exclusive, dualistic, and patriarchal.⁶⁴ The 'God the Mother as Land' model presents a holistic and comprehensive God, who is moving away from anthropocentric, patriarchal, and masculine portrayals and towards a comprehensive and cosmological view, based on an eco-feministic view of Feng Shui. More specifically, IChing's basic idea of Feng Shui describes a cosmic God who pursues balance and harmony of life, and who continues to change and regenerate. The monistic ideas of the yin and yang principle, Chi, and Chunjiin open up the possibility of overcoming the dualism that is believed to cause ecological crisis and human marginalization. This eco-feminist model replaces an 'either/or' way of thinking with a 'both/and' way of thinking, which represents its comprehensiveness. 65 The eco-feminist 'God the Mother as Land' model, which is female and cosmic as ac-

⁶⁴ Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk, 85. See McFague, Models of God, ix, and 6-7. See also Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father, 13, 19.

⁶⁵ Jung Young Lee, The Theology of Change, 26.

cording to the Chunjiin idea, eventually pursues harmony and balance in the world without any bias, by using the 'both / and' way of thinking of vin and vang. In this way, this 'God the Mother as Land' model from an eco-feministic view of Feng Shui moves toward a cosmologic vision, which considers all of the creatures in the universe to be significant.

This model, which adopts unconventional way of theological hermeneutics, represents a new eco-feminist endeavor from an Asian perspective. This inculturated, contextual model of 'God the Mother as Land' intuitively perceives the reality of the ecological crisis and women's oppression, in dialogue with the insights of Feng Shui where symbols of divine reality participate in human life and human experience, and vary according to their context. In this way, cosmic and universal dimensions of 'God the Mother as Land' expand the horizon of ecological sensibility, and provide alternative characteristics of God that could transform the contemporary Korean Church for women.

Lastly, envisioning an eco-feminist image of the divine in Land (Terrain) helps women lead to the practical outcomes of liberating them and also nature. By envisioning God through women's own image, they are able to develop a better self-identity and have a more intimate relationship with God. It helps enhancing women's dignity and identity, allowing them to free themselves from the patriarchy they are now experiencing. This practice takes Korean women one step closer to self-realization that will eventually contribute to freedom from the patriarchal environment which pervades every aspect of religious life in Korean church.

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