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Gender Relations in Korea Today in the Light of Schleiermacher's Ethics of Solidarity and the Unfolding of the Holy Spirit

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Abstract

This study examines Schleiermacher's perspective on Christian gender relations in relation to the context of Korean society, where conflicts between men and women are increasingly prevalent. It seeks to reconcile such conflicts. Schleiermacher considers gender relations in terms of the unfolding of humanity, which involves recognizing the individuality of both men and women and their collaboration. Christians bear the Holy Spirit in accordance with their individuality and express its unity through mutual communication. Christian gender relations are to be understood in terms of the unfolding of the Holy Spirit, whereby Christians sanctify each other through their communication, forming His unity and advancing through their union. With its critical reinterpretation, Schleiermacher's model of Christian gender relations, understood in solidarity for the unfolding of the Holy Spirit as the meta-perspective, highlights the necessity of collaboration and solidarity between men and women for the common good in Korea.

Keywords

Schleiermacher – gender relations – Holy Spirit – individuality – mutual communication – solidarity

1 Introduction

In recent times gender conflict among the younger generation has dramatically escalated globally. Korea is no exception. The conflict between men and women in Korea is manifested in the confrontation between so-called equalism and extreme feminism. Equalism, by abstracting women's diverse social situations, argues that women no longer perceive social inequality.¹ It labels feminism as a regressive movement sacrificing reasonable men.² In contrast, extreme feminism, represented by online communities such as Megalian and Womad,³ exclusively emphasizes the concerns of biological women. It thus refuses to engage in solidarity with other genders such as men and LGBTQ+.⁴ These conflicts between men and women intensify, especially when linked with meritocracy. Meritocracy emphasizes individual abilities and the resultant distribution of resources in the neoliberal economic order.⁵ In this context, Korean men and women often view each other as competitors in the struggle for their own survival.⁶

Until now, the Korean church has regarded gender relations as part of the order of creation: men and women are created as complementary beings. Their existence is established through the institution of marriage. Within this perspective, gender discrimination from negative aspects of Confucian culture – like the patriarchal order embedded in the ‘Three Bonds and Five Relations’, which constitutes the fundamental Confucian order, or the interpretation of gender relations based on yin-yang theory as relations of superiority and

1 For criticism regarding this viewpoint, see HyeJin Shin, ‘Criticism on Meritocracy in Korean Society’, *The Korean Journal of Christian Social Ethics*, 53 (2022), 35–78 at 62–72. The Korean essays cited here have been translated into English by me.

2 See Sooh Kim, ‘The online male-oriented community and norms of masculinity: Focusing anti-feminism sentiment’, *Culture and Politics*, 9:4 (2022), pp. 159–95 at pp. 173–80.

3 Megalian was organized in 2015 in response to the misogyny of Korean men, such as IlBe, and became known for the so-called ‘Mirroring Strategy,’ where women mimicked men's behavior to mock and humiliate them. Womad was organized in 2016 by radicalized members of Megalian. They focused exclusively on biological women and thus eschewed any solidarity with men and sexual minorities. Both movements have now disbanded.

4 See Gammi Kim, u. a., ‘Misogyny-Misandry Discourses in Online Communities’, *The Journal of Political Science & Communication*, 50 (2019), 29–54.

5 For a general overview of meritocracy in Korean society, see Bong Seok Lee, ‘Understanding of Meritocratic Phenomenon in Korean Society and Suggestion of Christian Ethics’, *The Korean Journal of Christian Social Ethics*, 53 (2022), 79–110.

6 See Bo-Myung Kim, ‘Late Modern Misogyny and Feminist Politics: The Case of IlBe, Megalia and Womad’, *Journal of Korean Women's Studies*, 34 (2018), 1–31.

inferiority or dominance and subordination – was replaced.⁷ This previous understanding of gender relations, due to its emphasis on the institution of marriage, is prone to the error of generalization – assuming that ‘all sexual acts within marriage correspond to Christian good.’ As a result, it fails to ‘clearly define Christianity’s ethical standard regarding the crime of marital rape.’⁸ Moreover, the combination of neoliberalism and meritocracy, which frames gender relations as competitive and contributes to today’s conflict-ridden and confrontational dynamics, fosters negative perceptions of marriage and child-birth. In this context, it becomes challenging for the Christian understanding of gender relations, centered around the institution of marriage, to play a significant role. The Korean church itself is also in a difficult position to propose its own solution to the widespread gender conflicts in society, as it remains male-dominated and operated.

These situations in Korea challenge the public nature of the Christian faith, on which Christian gender relations are based. ‘If Christ proves to be ‘the way, and the truth, and the life’ (Jn 14.6 ESV), then this *is* not only communicable to everyone; it also *must* be communicated to everyone since no one may be deprived of the true way of living.’⁹ Therefore, for the Christian church, its faith is not just a private matter but also a public one.¹⁰ However, the current state of the Korean church, which remains entrenched in traditional understandings and even regresses instead of offering solutions to the increasingly polarized issues in gender relations in Korea, raises questions about the public nature of

7 About the patriarchal interpretation of the gender relations in Confucianism see Richard W. Guisso, ‘Thunder Over the Lake: The Five Classics and the Perception of Woman’, in Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen eds, *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981), pp. 47–61 at pp. 48–9. Chang-Ho Lee explains in detail how the Christian interpretation of gender relations, focusing on Luther’s and Calvin’s understanding – both of which emphasize the complementary relations between men and women, implying their equality and distinctiveness in accordance with God’s creation order – replaces and overcomes the discriminatory gender relations rooted in Confucian tradition. See Chang-Ho Lee, ‘An Exploration of ‘Reformative’ Sexual Ethics of the Reformation: Focusing on Luther’s and Calvin’s Understanding of Gender Relations, Marriage and Sexual Intercourse’, *The Korean Journal of Christian Social Ethics*, 39 (2017), 161–92.

8 Hye-ryung Kim, ‘The Age of #Me Too Movement: Criminal Nature of Sexual Violence and New Criteria for Christian Sexual Ethics’, *Korean Journal of Christian Studies*, 111 (2019), 260–93 at 274.

9 Christoph Hübenthal and Christiane Alpers, ‘Introduction’, in Christoph Hübenthal and Christiane Alpers, eds, *Handbook of Public Theology* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2022), pp. 1–10 at p. 4. (Italics follow the original text).

10 See Sebastian Kim, ‘Public Theology in the History of Christianity’, in Sebastian Kim and Katie Day, eds, *A Companion to Public Theology* (Leiden and Boston: Brill 2017), pp. 40–66.

the Christian faith. Because ‘insofar as the actions and practices of local faith communities constitute an enactment of their core values,’ the church should embody its faith and demonstrate to the world that this faith is not merely a speculative idea but also real and alive, yet the Korean church is failing to do so.¹¹ To restore the public nature of Christian faith in addressing current gender conflict issues in Korea, the church must seek alternative solutions.

In this context, the theological and philosophical approach of Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768–1834) offers interesting insights. Schleiermacher unfolded his thoughts on gender relations in the context of early Romanticism, emphasizing individuality.¹² He wrote: ‘The individuality of the particular is a true forming-into-one of the universal and particular and thus represents, as it were, the primitive formula for the world.’¹³ This focus on individuality considers the respective characteristics of men and women while also emphasizing their interaction for unity with each other. Therefore, according to Schleiermacher, the relations between men and women are not static but dynamic. Schleiermacher views the dynamics of gender relations through the lens of the Christian faith, particularly through the unfolding of the Holy Spirit. For him, the Holy Spirit not only reminds them of Jesus Christ but also empowers them to live in Christ. This understanding of the Holy Spirit ultimately leads to an eschatological perspective on the perfection of the church and the completion of creation. Schleiermacher’s Christian ethics describe gender relations under the guidance of this Spirit and, therefore, it is appropriate not to portray them as competitive relations for survival but as a solidarity partnership for perfection.¹⁴

11 Elaine Graham, ‘Public Theology as Apologetics’, in Christoph Hübenthal and Christiane Alpers, eds, *Handbook of Public Theology* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2022), pp. 107–24 at p. 111.

12 In 1796, Schleiermacher began his work as a hospital chaplain at the Charité in Berlin and actively participated in the Berlin social gatherings hosted by Henriette Herz. There, he engaged with prominent thinkers of early Romanticism, such as Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Ludwig Tieck, who criticized the prevailing understanding of aesthetics based on rationality and advocated for emotion and individuality. His interactions with these early Romantic thinkers in the Berlin salons significantly influenced the writing of his debut work, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. About the detailed information on that see Kurt Nowak, *Schleiermacher. Leben, Werk und Wirkung*, 2. Aufl. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2002), pp. 79–97. The German books and essays cited here have been translated into English by me.

13 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Notes on Ethics (1805/1806)*, transl. with essays and notes by John Wallhausser (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), p. 72.

14 Solidarity must encompass two essential aspects. Firstly, the freedom and individuality of the individual. A solidarity that fails to recognize this freedom and individuality risks degenerating into authoritarianism. Secondly, it entails voluntary commitment and

This study aims to explore pathways to reconciliation and solidarity in the increasingly conflict-ridden and adversarial gender relations through Schleiermacher's consideration of Christian gender relations. First, we examine Schleiermacher's anthropology to understand how he generally understood gender relations. Next, we consider the starting point of his Christian ethics, the self-understanding of Christians, with a particular focus on his pneumatology. Then, we investigate the ethical gender relations in Schleiermacher's Christian ethics to determine how they can contribute to improving present gender relations. Finally, we assess the gender relations depicted by Schleiermacher to illuminate their significance and limitations.

2 Women and Men Unfolding Humanity Together

Schleiermacher lived during the time of the Revolution. The French Revolution of 1789, which proclaimed liberty, equality, and fraternity, overturned the Ancien Régime and simultaneously demonstrated the realization of a new political regime through reason. At that time, Germany distanced itself from the extreme political upheavals resulting from the French Revolution, such as the execution of Louis XVI and the Reign of Terror under Robespierre, and instead began to develop a state philosophy based on the values of the French Revolution.¹⁵ To achieve this, German intellectuals reinterpreted religion, ethics, and art as spiritual values which the French Revolution gave new meaning.¹⁶ This effort aimed at humanity, which, with the transformation of human inner life, fulfilled the true revolution.

To discover such humanity, Schleiermacher directs his attention to the individual. Each individual, through their unique existence, expresses the various facets of humanity.¹⁷ Morality, the complete fulfillment of humanity, is now

cooperation for common goals. Without such willingness and collective praxis, solidarity cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, solidarity is the movement in which all individuals cooperate with each other for their common purpose, with mutual recognition of each other's freedom and individuality. For this definition of solidarity, see Kurt Bayertz, 'Begriff und Problem der Solidarität', in Kurt Bayertz (Hg.), *Solidarität. Begriff und Problem* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), pp. 11–53.

15 For the interpretation and reception of the French Revolution in Germany see Miriam Rose, *Schleiermachers Staatslehre* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 30–106.

16 See Andreas Arndt, *Reformation der Revolution. Friedrich Schleiermacher in seiner Zeit* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2019), pp. 89–127.

17 '[...]; to me, all this is merely the great communal body of humanity, as the individual body belongs to the individual, belonging to it, only possible through it and given to it so that it may control it, proclaim itself through it.' Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher,

realized in this sense only through the mutual recognition and communication of each individuality, which manifests humanity in its own unique way. For this process of communication and transmission of individuality gradually blurs differences, while common humanity increasingly emerges. Thus, each individual is both the starting point and the path to the fulfillment of humanity.

According to Schleiermacher, the unfolding of humanity, the fulfillment of morality, begins with the relations between men and women, whose differences are the immediate manifestation of individualized humanity. Schleiermacher expresses this as follows: 'Sexual character is given at the same times as personality, and does not relate solely to sexual function, but extends throughout the body'.¹⁸ In other words, humanity manifests itself in various ways depending on the bodies of men and women. With his consideration of the bodies of men and women, Schleiermacher sees man as productive, whereas woman is seen as receptive. In the male body, there is a stronger muscular power capable of creating, as well as a more radiant aspect, demonstrated for example in ejaculation during intercourse. In contrast, the female body exhibits greater sensitivity and a receptive aspect, receiving the seed of the man and enabling pregnancy. Since men and women possess these different characteristics, Schleiermacher believes that they excel in different areas. Accordingly, men, due to their active and productive nature, 'predominate in the direction of public life'. Conversely, '[w]omen enter into the affairs of public life through the domestic sphere'.¹⁹ But Schleiermacher does not assert the superiority of men over women. Rather, he advocates women's participation in self-development so that their qualities can be better expressed. Because women also participate in the unfolding of the humanity in their own individuality and way.²⁰ Thus, for Schleiermacher,

'Monologen. Eine Neujahresgabe', in his, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe 1/3. Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1800–1802*, hg. von Günter Meckenstock (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), pp. 1–61 at p. 10.

18 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, ed. by Robert B. Loudon, transl. by Louise Adey Huish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 61.

19 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, 'Vorlesungen über die Psychologie (Nachschrift Sikel vom Sommer 1830)', in His *Kritische Gesamtausgabe 11/13. Vorlesungen über die Psychologie*, hg. Dorothea Meiner unter Mitwirkung von Jens Beljan (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), pp. 617–873 at p. 806.

20 In his short text titled 'Idea for a Catechism of Reason for Noble Women,' Schleiermacher emphasizes the independence and unique characteristics of women while simultaneously highlighting their collaboration with the characteristics of men to fully realize humanity. See Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, 'Fragmente', in his, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe 1/2. Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796–1799*, hg. von Günter Meckenstock (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 141–56 at p. 154.

the basis of the relations between men and women is sociability (*Geselligkeit*), which works as follows:

Now, however, a free being can only be influenced in one way, namely, by being stirred to its own activity and by being presented with an object; and this object, [...], can only be the activity of the one who stimulates it. Therefore, it can only aim at a free play of thoughts and feelings, through which all members excite and enliven each other. The interaction is, therefore, self-returning and complete; within its concept, both the form and the purpose of social activity are contained, and it constitutes the entire essence of society.²¹

In this sense, Caroline Teschmer is right to say: ‘Schleiermacher transforms the implicit hierarchy into a functional difference while considering complementary equality.’²² But is not Schleiermacher’s understanding of gender relations merely a variation of complementarianism?

Schleiermacher’s distinction from complementarianism lies in his focus on the common goal shared by men and women. Unlike classical complementarianism, which emphasizes only their differences, Schleiermacher highlights the cooperation between men and women for humanity, assuming that the union of man and woman is the complete realization of humanity while also offering its new unfolding. According to him, humanity unfolds through the differentiation of its two sides – man and woman – embodied in their respective bodies. These two sides are reunited through sexual intercourse. For him, sexual intercourse means that man and woman enter into an indissoluble relation, ‘because this acknowledges the completeness of mutual elective attraction.’²³ Schleiermacher states: ‘The act of sexual union is an absolute fusion of consciousness, in which difference is suspended and the contrasted factors satisfy each other.’²⁴ The fragments of humanity, represented by the respective bodies of man and woman, are now reunited through sexual intercourse. In sexual intercourse, man and woman transmit and receive the characteristics

21 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, ‘Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens’, in his, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe 1/2. Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796–1799*, hg. von Günter Meckenstock (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 162–84 at p. 170.

22 Caroline Teschmer, ‘„Die Seele ist uns nur mit dem Leib gegeben“. Ganzheitlichkeit und Zweigeschlechtlichkeit im Denken Friedrich Schleiermachers’, in Anne Käfer, u.a. (Hg.), *Der reformierte Schleiermacher. Prägungen und Potentiale seiner Theologie* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), pp. 125–40 at p. 137.

23 Schleiermacher, *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, p. 64.

24 Schleiermacher, *Notes on Ethics (1805/1806)*, p. 81.

of their humanity – both spiritual and physical. At the climax of orgasm during intercourse, the one-sidedness of humanity is completely overcome, and an all-encompassing and complete realization of humanity takes place. Simultaneously, conception resulting from sexual intercourse marks a new step in this realization. ‘It is true that in procreation the parents embody the pure indifference of the species.’ Thus, ‘the children, whose features are a mixture of both parents, demonstrate a free modification of that character.’²⁵ In this sense, sexual intercourse as the fulfillment of humanity and its new beginning is the holiest moment of the gender relations. The union of man and woman shows that they are freely involved in the complete realization and new progress of humanity as their shared goal. In Schleiermacher’s understanding, there is no leading role for men or supporting role for women, as argued by classical complementarianism. Instead, men and women each have their own roles, defined by their individuality, and their cooperation is essential for the unfolding of humanity.

Schleiermacher understands the relations between men and women in the context of the development of humanity. Each person carries humanity according to their respective body. The humanity expressed partially by man and woman is fully realized and simultaneously newly developed through their connection. Man and woman are free here to unite in mutual love and contribute together to the goal of the development of humanity.

3 Christian’s Participating in the Work and Development of the Holy Spirit

The process of the development of humanity addressed in philosophical ethics is reinterpreted as the process of the Holy Spirit’s unfolding in Christian ethics. According to Schleiermacher, the dividing point between philosophical ethics and Christian ethics is the Christian self-consciousness, meaning a person’s self-understanding shaped by Christian faith. In this sense, the Holy Spirit, the common spirit of Christians according to Schleiermacher can be viewed as humanity, which is reinterpreted through the lens of Christian faith. Then, how is the Christian self-consciousness established, and how is humanity understood as the Holy Spirit?

With respect to this question, Schleiermacher simply refers to Jesus Christ. This appeal to Christ is grounded in the conviction that a Christian is someone

²⁵ Schleiermacher, *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, p. 66.

who believes she or he have been saved through Jesus Christ. All their actions, which are the themes of Christian ethics by Schleiermacher, are based on the self-consciousness of Christians redeemed by Jesus Christ.²⁶ Here, salvation refers to the transformation of self-consciousness through Jesus Christ's consciousness of God, marking the beginning of a new life. Therefore, to understand the self-consciousness of a Christian, one must first understand Jesus Christ's consciousness of God.

To explain the God-consciousness of Jesus Christ, Schleiermacher describes his person as follows:

That is, the being of God in the Redeemer is posited as his innermost primary strength, from which all his activity proceeds and which links all the elements of his life together. However, everything human simply forms the organism for this primary strength and relates itself to that strength as its system both for taking this strength in and for presenting it, just as in us all other strengths have to relate to our intelligence.²⁷

According to Schleiermacher, Jesus attributed the origin of his life not to his own self, but solely to God. In other words, Jesus lived completely in accordance with God's guidance. This is the essence of piety, 'that we are conscious of ourselves as absolutely dependent, or, which intends the same meaning, as being in relation with God'.²⁸ It should not be overlooked that Jesus utilized his freedom in existence to fully comply with God's guidance. 'Now, to the extent that all human activity of the Redeemer in its every connection depends on this being of God in him and presents it, the expression that God became human in the Redeemer is justified,' means that, 'every element of his existence [...] presents this new God-becoming-human and God-having-become-human'.²⁹ The life of Jesus Christ is a life that is completely emptied and solely reveals God's guidance, a life that voluntarily obeys the will of God and fully imitates Him. In this sense, Jesus Christ is the archetype of humanity according to the divine order – the absolute dependence on God – and at the same time, the model of

26 See Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, 'Die christliche Sitte nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt', in his, *Sämtliche Werke 1/12. Die christliche Sitte nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, hg. von Ludwig Jonas (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1843), pp. 1–707 at p. 32–3.

27 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith. A New Translation and Critical Edition*, transl. by Terrence N. Tice, Catherine L. Kelsey and Edwina Lawler, ed., Catherine L. Kelsey and Terrence N. Tice (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), vol. 2, p. 590.

28 Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, vol. 1, p. 590.

29 Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, vol. 2, p. 590.

true life for those who live autonomously.³⁰ Therefore, he is the perfect fulfillment of the ethical process of humanity's development.

The humanity revealed through Jesus of Nazareth is perceived by Christians as the Holy Spirit. Christians adopt Jesus' consciousness of God as their own, living a life of free obedience to God's will and total reliance on it, just as Jesus did. Here, Schleiermacher situates the role of the Holy Spirit within the Christian community. He introduces the concept of common spirit (*Gemeingeist*), describing it as 'a unique love felt among those who form a moral person (*die moralische Person*), which does not arise naturally or arbitrarily but is united in the pursuit of a common goal'.³¹ According to Schleiermacher, the Holy Spirit is the force that overcomes differences among Christians, uniting them by reminding them of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the foundation of their self-awareness. Thus, the Holy Spirit, as the common spirit within the Christian community, also represents the humanity fully realized through Jesus' consciousness of God. 'The Holy Spirit is the unity of divine essence and human nature,' like in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, 'appears in the form of the communal spirit that enlivens the whole life of believers.'³² The Holy Spirit is also the humanity embodied in Jesus, as this humanity is gradually recognized within the Christian community. In this sense, to say that Christians live in the Holy Spirit is the same as saying they live in the humanity revealed through Jesus. This is because 'the work of the Holy Spirit within us is nothing other than the activity of God, which vividly and abundantly makes present all that Jesus Christ, in the fullness of divinity, was, said, and did as a human being.'³³

In accordance with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christians collectively move towards the fulfillment of creation by sharing their experiences with one another and fulfilling each other. The true life revealed through Jesus Christ is spread and made conscious communally. Schleiermacher does not overlook the reflection of the various individualities in this process of dissemination. He attributes this to the spiritual gift, as it signifies 'that the Holy Spirit, as one

30 See Anne Käfer, *Inkarnation und Schöpfung. Schöpfungstheologische Voraussetzungen und Implikationen der Christologie bei Luther, Schleiermacher und Karl Barth* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 85–209.

31 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, 'Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt. 1. Aufl. (1821/22)', in his *Kritische Gesamtausgabe 1/7. Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt. 1. Aufl. (1821/22)*, hg. von Hermann Peiter (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), Bd. 2, p. 189.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 205.

and the same, produces differently in all believers according to the diversity of personal nature'.³⁴ It is important to note here that the Holy Spirit mediated through the individual spiritual gifts of Christians exists in the For-Itself form. For the Holy Spirit and the resulting blessedness – defined as the state in which God's active guidance and the passive obedience of human self-consciousness are in complete harmony, or in other words, the condition of fully following the guidance of the Holy Spirit and being united with it – are brought to consciousness within the limits of individuality. In this view, Schleiermacher focuses on exchange and mutual complement among Christians. By sharing the Holy Spirit they have experienced, each one alerts others to aspects of the Holy Spirit they may not have recognized, and vice-versa. Each Christian is a mediator of the Holy Spirit based on their personality and individuality. The same Holy Spirit binds different Christians together and achieves rich unfolding as its various aspects are manifested through them. This perspective reveals that life in harmony with God is fully, and finally fulfilled, and no longer determined by external circumstances. From this insight, it becomes clear that the completion of creation consists in life being fully dependent on God alone. As each person lives in the Spirit and realizes absolute dependence on God through their life, the community of Christians, guided by the Holy Spirit, becomes perfect.³⁵ This realization in the Holy Spirit is also an eschatological perspective, indicating that the Christian community united by the Holy Spirit is perfected.³⁶

According to Schleiermacher, Christians are those who emulate the life demonstrated by Jesus of Nazareth – a life that empties itself and lives according to the guidance of God. They live in the Holy Spirit as the collectively conscious communal spirit emanating from Jesus Christ. They contribute to the diverse and complete unfolding of the Holy Spirit as their communal spirit by sharing the Holy Spirit experienced according to their personal character and individuality, complementing one another.

34 Ibid., pp. 200–1.

35 Schleiermacher asserts that the difference between Christians who live in the Spirit and those who are not yet consciously aware of the activity of the Spirit is merely temporal. Since God's Spirit is already at work in all people, the difference between them depends only on whether they are aware of this movement of the Spirit or not. Eventually, all people will recognize the Spirit of God and live according to His guidance. See Schleiermacher, 'Die christliche Sitte', p. 514.

36 See Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, vol. 2, pp. 965–98. For an analysis of Schleiermacher's eschatology see Eilert Herms, *Menschsein im Werden. Studien zu Schleiermacher* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), pp. 125–49.

4 The Christian Perspective on Gender Relations: Men and Women Who Stand in Solidarity for the Unfolding of the Holy Spirit

In his Christian ethics, Schleiermacher relates Christian gender relations to broadening action. According to Schleiermacher, broadening action is part of efficacious action, which occurs when the blessedness in which the guidance and presence of God are fully accepted and felt encounter sensual self-consciousness, that is, human existence. Broadening action arises from the pleasure that emerges when blessedness and sensual self-consciousness unite. One could say that the act of broadening is inspired by the Holy Spirit, the common spirit of Christians, spreading pleasure from Him. Then, why does Schleiermacher connect the relations between Christian men and women to broadening action? According to Schleiermacher, the gender relation is 'calculated for the propagation of the human race' and at the same time 'produces new connections of intelligence with earthly matter in the form of the organism'.³⁷ This insights means that humanity is further developed by the union of man and woman in bearing children. Therefore, the pleasure of man and woman in humanity is also spread through the propagation of the human race. Schleiermacher relates this anthropological consideration to the spread of the Holy Spirit and the growth of the Christian community. Christians denote the effect of the Holy Spirit according to their individuality through various gifts. They now consider each other as those who sanctify one another. This understanding applies also to the relations between Christian men and women. Because 'all the capacities and activities of the human soul are developed and acquired as instruments for the divine Spirit',³⁸ Christian men and women can not only see in various ways the guidance of the Holy Spirit that is revealed and manifested in each other, but also share with each other its different aspects that one or the other may not have known before.³⁹ They mutually assume spiritual responsibility for each other and simultaneously reveal the living power of the Holy Spirit and the dynamics of divine action in the world.⁴⁰ By sharing their respective pleasures with each other under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christian men and women gradually unfold it themselves.

37 Schleiermacher, 'Die christliche Sitte', p. 338.

38 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, 'Marriage (1)', in his, *The Christian Household: A Sermonic Treatise*, transl. of the 1820 and 1826 editions, with Essays and Notes, by Dietrich Seidel and Terrence N. Tice (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), p. 7.

39 Regarding gender relations as an expression of faith see Elisabeth Hartlieb, *Geschlechterdifferenz im Denken Friedrich Schleiermachers* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), pp. 329–31.

40 See Schleiermacher, 'Marriage (1)', pp. 7–8.

Schleiermacher emphasizes that the relations between Christian men and women should be based on mutual recognition. He explains that there are biological differences between men and women, leading to different societal responsibilities for men and women. However, this does not serve to support the societal superiority of men. Schleiermacher states that men do not inherently have the right to represent the home. Rather, their rights come from women. Men are attracted by the erotic power of women and strive to connect with them, but this relationship can only happen if women freely say “yes”. In other words, whether a man can become a man depends entirely on women. But women are also dependent on men because without men’s approaching them, they cannot recognize their attractiveness and erotic force. In other words, whether a woman can become a woman also depends on men. The union of Christian men and women, which forms the starting point for the spread of the Holy Spirit and witness, is based on mutual recognition, and the differences between them from biological nature, namely the activity of men and the passivity of women, remind us of mutual dependence.

From this mutual recognition, equality between Christian men and women can be realized in view of functional inequality. In his sermon on Ephesians 5:22–31, Schleiermacher offers a model of love based on the relations between Christ and the church. The Christian man, who is active in public and, therefore, represents the household, should, following the example of Jesus Christ, devote himself to his wife so that she can freely develop her spiritual abilities. The Christian woman should, like the church, accept the love of her husband and respect his representation of the family. She could only influence the public sphere through the education of children who can be active in society in the future. According to Schleiermacher, this distribution of activities does not imply hierarchy because there is no superiority between the public sphere and the household in his view. Rather, this division refers to the functional difference between man and woman in the Christian household and their equality for their common end. According to their respective characteristics, they take on different roles and work together equally to unfold the Holy Spirit as their common purpose.

In the gender relations of Christians based on mutual recognition, trust and responsibility for one another accompany each other. This understanding can be found in Schleiermacher’s argumentation regarding divorce among Christians. He argues that the ideal gender relations of Christians is based on the feeling ‘that both parties feel themselves bound to each other in a very peculiar and indissoluble way’.⁴¹ Christian couples observe the movements of

41 Schleiermacher, ‘Die christliche Sitte’, p. 352.

the Holy Spirit in each other only and make it clear that these movements are the areas they themselves need. He diagnoses the cause of divorce as 'hardness of heart',⁴² which results from a loss of satisfaction and joy in one's partner. This state is to be seen as an act of abandoning responsibility and trust toward one's partner, because both values presuppose that each partner, in forming the couple's community, decides to complement those areas of the Holy Spirit's work that the other partner alone cannot fulfill. Therefore, it can be recognized that mutual recognition in the Christian gender relations also calls for mutual responsibility and trust for one another.

The development of the Holy Spirit in the Christian household occurs through sexual union, in which the various aspects of the Holy Spirit come together in unity and its new unfolding process begins. According to Schleiermacher, Christianity does not underestimate sexual desire in sexual union because it emphasizes 'the rule of the spirit over the flesh', not the destruction of the flesh.⁴³ Rather, satisfying physical needs is the path to the formation of unity of the Holy Spirit, which is shared according to the physical characteristics of Christians. Yet Schleiermacher reminds us that sexual desire and reproduction do not merely remain at the level of bodily satisfaction but are rather an essential part of the ongoing process of the unfolding of the Holy Spirit, manifested through the birth of a new individual. Because the children born from sexual relations between man and woman not only represent the aspect of the Holy Spirit shaped by their parents but also, in the future, manifest new aspects of it in their own way. Therefore,

[b]ut the satisfaction of the sex drive without relation to generation, education, and household cannot be thought, because in the person penetrated by the Spirit of God, no impulse can be thought to set the natural drive into activity differently than in relation to the divine order.⁴⁴

In this sense, sexual unity contributes to the unfolding of the Holy Spirit, as on the one hand, Christians, who express the Holy Spirit through their individual physical characteristics, form the unity of the Holy Spirit through their union, and on the other hand, the birth of children enables a new step in the unfolding of the Holy Spirit.

42 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, 'Marriage (11),' in his, *The Christian Household: A Sermonic Treatise*, p. 23.

43 Schleiermacher, 'Die christliche Sitte', p. 104.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 344 (Vorl. 1826/27).

In Schleiermacher's understanding of how the Holy Spirit works and unfolds, the Christian gender relations are seen as the solidarity partnership for the completion of creation. According to Schleiermacher, creation, which points to the dependence of all beings on God, signifies God's rule in life itself. The complete unfolding of the Holy Spirit, which symbolizes God's guidance and rule, thus realizes God's rule in life itself – as Jesus himself showed – means the completion of creation. The equality, fidelity, and responsibility for one another, as well as the joint upbringing of children found in the Christian gender relations, are all expressions of the complete unfolding of the Holy Spirit, namely the movement towards the completion of creation. Christian men and women unite in mutual recognition and respect for their freedom and individuality, while participating together in the unfolding of the Holy Spirit and moving towards the completion of creation.

5 Conclusion

Schleiermacher views gender relations from the perspective of humanity. This view also is applied to Christians, who, depending on their individuality, grasp the Holy Spirit and reveal Him through the mutual sharing of their experiences. The Christian gender relations are also viewed with this meta-perspective of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, Christian men and women are in a solidarity partnership where they respect each other's individuality and freedom while simultaneously working together for the complete unfolding of the Holy Spirit, thus the completion of creation.

The Christian gender relations model proposed by Schleiermacher makes a significant contribution by expanding the scope of gender relations examined by the Christian church in Korea, which has traditionally revolved around the institution of marriage. However, due to temporal limitations, it still has its constraints. This model emphasizes mutual recognition, interaction, and collaboration in Christian gender relations for the unfolding of the Holy Spirit. Now, gender relations, understood as including both biological and social dimensions, are considered from the perspective of the Holy Spirit as the meta-perspective. Therefore, this model permits relations outside the institution of marriage to be understood as partnership-oriented. Furthermore, because this model emphasizes solidarity partnership from the perspective of the Holy Spirit, it can contribute to a critical discourse against the increasing spousal violence in Korean marriages and provide an ethical criterion. However, Schleiermacher defined the spirited characteristics of men and women as essential dimensions of male and female nature, restricting the division of

labor between them to specific roles. Consequently, he did not bring about social changes regarding gender relations.⁴⁵ Now, the Korean church should adopt the advantages of the Schleiermacher model while simultaneously overcoming its shortcomings to reconcile the conflict between men and women in Korea. To achieve this reconciliation, I propose two perspectives.

Firstly, the Korean church should establish an ethical foundation focused not solely on marriage as institution but on gender relations themselves, with a perspective centred on the Holy Spirit. The traditional view of the Korean church on gender relations is too narrow, mainly focusing on married couples. As a result, the Korean church's ethical attempt is not adequate to address various forms of gender-based crimes within marriages and to propose its solutions to gender conflicts arising from the pursuit of individual perspectives and interests of men and women. While Schleiermacher acknowledges the importance of marriage, he places emphasis on gender relations themselves, shaped by the influence and growth of the Holy Spirit. By applying Schleiermacher's considerations to modern times, the Korean church can respond to issues such as dating violence and violence within marriages. Because Christian gender relations, constituted around the unfolding of the Holy Spirit, focus on sanctifying one another, mutual recognition, and mutual commitment. By viewing gender relations through the meta-perspective of the Holy Spirit and thereby clarifying its ethical significance, the Korean church can help Korean men and women, currently trapped in their narrow viewpoints and self-interests – and therefore in conflict with each other – adopt a perspective that liberates them from themselves and prompts them to view others from a comprehensive perspective. Schleiermacher's model, which considers gender relations in the light of the progressive unfolding of the Holy Spirit, could not only expand the Korean church's previous focus on marriage as the core of gender relations but also serve as an alternative to the currently conflict-ridden gender relations in Korean society due to egocentric interests.

Secondly, the Korean church should apply critically Schleiermacher's emphasized differences in functions and roles as well as mutual complementarity in gender relations to all areas of society. While Schleiermacher emphasized equality between men and women, where mutual complementarity

45 See Arnulf von Scheliha, 'Die christlichen Häuser als „Pflanzstätten des künftigen Geschlechts“. Familienethische, religionspädagogische und sozialetische Grundeinsichten in Friedrich Schleiermachers „Predigten über den christlichen Hausstand“, in Elisabeth Blumrich, u. a. (Hg.), *Friedrich Schleiermacher zwischen Reform und Restauration. Politische Konstellation, theoretische Zugänge und das Berliner Stadtleben* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2023), pp. 93–105 at p. 98.

revolves around their respective spirited characteristics, he restricted the social division of gender roles according to the specific characteristics of men and women. Because, his understanding of gender relations is overly simplistic, as it relies on a reductive view of men's and women's natures. However, as Niklas Luhmann aptly noted, the social functional differentiation, associated in our context with gender-specific division of tasks, does not refer to nature or essence but to the relations or the social context between those participating in the same social reality.⁴⁶ This idea can also resonate with Judith Butler's gender theory, which asserts that gender relations are not determined by nature but by social norms and the understanding of sexuality, both of which are deeply intertwined with social power and hegemony. "The "unity" of gender is the effect of a regulatory practice that seeks to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality."⁴⁷ Social norms or standards, rooted in a specific view of human beings, can easily become a source of violence against those who are marginalized or excluded by those norms and standards.⁴⁸ This observation implies that the consideration of functional differences and mutual complementarity in gender relations must be approached in a detailed and thoughtful manner. By integrating the emphasis Schleiermacher places on gender equality with Luhmann's social observation, one can argue that all social spheres, understood by their participants as relational, can achieve full functionality by harnessing the dynamic differences between men and women to foster collaboration and a sense of complementarity. At this point, it is crucial to observe which social powers or hegemonies come into play in defining gender and its roles within society.

This approach, which critically applies Schleiermacher's concept of gender relations, can prompt the conservative Korean church – particularly those that have thus far rejected the ordination of women – to engage in self-reflection and serve as a catalyst for their reformation. All areas of church ministry

46 See Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme. Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie*, 18. Aufl. (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhr-kamp, 2021), pp. 259–65.

47 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 43.

48 Eunjung Kim, in her book *Curative Violence: Rehabilitating Disability, Gender, and Sexuality in Modern Korea*, argues that curing practices based on societal notions of normalcy, without considering the rights, desires, and agency of people with disabilities, function as a form of violence. These practices fail to acknowledge individuals with disabilities as they are, instead perpetuating their marginalization as beings caught "in-between" and alienated from both themselves and society. Notably, such curative violence extends to the point of framing sexual violence as a form of healing for the femininity of women with disabilities. See Eunjung Kim, *Curative Violence: Rehabilitating Disability, Gender, and Sexuality in Modern Korea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

should promote the unfolding of the Holy Spirit, the basis and the goal of the Christian church. All areas of church ministry, as relations, require consideration not only from a male perspective but also from a female one. Therefore, both perspectives can generate synergistic effects for the well-being of the church.⁴⁹ In this moment, one should discover which church structure disturbs those synergistic effects. Reinterpreting the model of Schleiermacher with a focus on functional differentiation according to relation and a consideration of the structure that produces a specific understanding of gender can justify to male-centric churches in Korea the necessity of the female perspective for church leadership and lead to their reflection and reform. The traditional churches in Korea, which are witnessing a decline in membership due to an aging demographic and are striving to revitalize the church through engagement with society, could find effective ways for their renewal.

Schleiermacher's Christian conception of gender relations demonstrates the public meaning of the Holy Spirit through the church. If the Korean church critically applies this model and shows that gender relations are united for the unfolding of the Holy Spirit, it could serve as an exemplary model for how gender relations in Korean society can move in a new direction. In this model, men and women are seen not as competing or opposing forces but as solidarity partners who complement, recognize, and pursue common goals. The Holy Spirit has not only religious but also public significance, promoting reconciliation and solidarity within the church and in society at large. This concept of the Holy Spirit emphasizes free interaction and collaboration for the common good, which could help alleviate the competitive dynamics and conflicts between men and women. Ultimately, Schleiermacher's Christian conception of gender relations, centred on the Holy Spirit, provides a foundation for defending the Christian faith in the public sphere. Its significance lies not only in promoting reconciliation between men and women in Korea but also in offering a new perspective on gender relations globally, opening the way for the transformative power of solidarity in society.

49 See Ho Suk Kang, 'A Feminine Theological Study for Necessity of Partnership between Men and Women in Reformed Church: Biblical and Theological meaning and Practical Tasks on Partnership between Men and Women in Korean Conservative Presbyterian Church', in *The Gospel and Praxis*, 32(2014), pp. 9–40.