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## Almost a woman prime minister

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.B.

In July, President Kim of South Korea appointed the first female prime minister in South Korea's 54-year history. Last week, the National Assembly of South Korea vetoed Dr. Chang Sang's appointment 142 votes to 100.

Legislators cited allegations of misrepresenting real estate speculation in the 1980s and issues in her personal life as reasons for the rejection. The Korean Herald editorialized, "It is a great pity that Chang, a renowned educator and theologian who served as president of the nation's most prestigious institution of higher learning for women, had to struggle in vain to clear suspicions about her integrity" (Aug. 2).

President Kim is reported to have remarked, "A female premier could have led to progress in women's issues in our country, where there is a tradition of male chauvinism and where female employment rates are below 50% and women do not properly advance to managerial posts" (Matthews Asian Funds Weekly, Aug. 3). Korean pundits speculate that Kim will nominate another woman for the post.

Dr. Chang's appointment, even though not ratified, is a turning point. It signals that the glass ceiling for women in Asian cultures may be a sunroof, opening to allow women to express their talents and abilities.

Neither history, culture, nor religious beliefs should deprive individuals of the opportunity to express their God-given qualities. Our heavenly Father-Mother endows everyone with intelligence, humility, creativity, intuition. Such qualities aren't gender-based. Men are as capable of expressing intuition as women are of reasoning. Each individual is endowed with a rainbow array of moral and spiritual qualities. Instead of fearing their expression, society should be, and in many instances is, seeing the benefits of unlocking the treasures inherent in each individual.

One person's progress needn't threaten or deprive another. Instead of seeing talented men and women as competition, shouldn't we be inspired by their examples of excellence? When someone succeeds, this shows that success is possible. When a woman achieves, it illustrates the capacity of an individual to persevere. Another's intelligence and initiative doesn't deprive you of your intelligence. Your awareness, perceptivity, brilliance, humor, individuality, are yours to use. No one is quite like you. So, unless you are living, nurturing, and developing your abilities, they will lie fallow, unexpressed by anyone else in your special way.

When society's shackles and business biases limit or deprive an individual of opportunities, divine Love ultimately removes the barriers to human progress. It's a divine power that melts egotism and fear. Love knows no bias, no restriction. Like the sun, it shines equally on all. And like the sunshine, it is an essential element for individual and societal growth.

The power of Love is revealed in the Bible through the life of Jesus. He proved the power of Love when he healed the sick and transformed sinners. This love transcended religious traditions and cultural mores.

For example, Jesus talked to a Samaritan woman at a well (see John 4). He shared profound spiritual insights with her and even revealed himself to her as the Christ, the promised Messiah. This low-ranking woman, inspired by the unbiased love of Christ, raced to her village to tell the elders the good news. A man named Jesus had come. He was the Christ! Christ's love not only opened this humble woman's eyes; it transformed her into an ambassador for Christ from harlot to herald. In fact, this is one of the first instances in the Bible of a woman preaching to men.

Monitor founder Mary Baker Eddy wrote her best-selling book at a time when tradition disregarded and dismissed women's religious and intellectual insights. She wrote, "Man and woman as coexistent and eternal with God forever reflect, in glorified quality, the infinite Father-Mother God" ("Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," pg. 516).

President Kim's desire to strengthen the role of women should be supported. Opening the glass sunroof will enable women in Asia and everywhere else to lift their heads and see their purpose and place in the world. This is each individual's divine right.