

From Feminism to Feminist Theology: Implications For Biblical Scholars

By

Bismarck Nosakhare Efe

Department of Religions

University of Benin

Benin City

E-mail- bismarckefe@hotmail.com

PHONE- 07038981451

Abstract

This study examines the history of feminism and how the process was hijacked and translated into a kind of theology by some over-zealous adherents. The aim was to investigate the implications of the theology on the church and for Biblical Scholars. Biblical theological and analytical approach were considered apt for the study which revealed amongst others that theological feminism was born out of the search for a spiritual and theological aspect of the feminist drive of the late 60s. The study also revealed that feminist theologians believe that most injustices carried out against women derive their bearing from the degrading picture that was painted about them in the Bible. Furthermore, it was recommended that the contemporary global understanding shown towards feminism should not be extended to its theological agitations known as Feminist Theology.

Keywords: *Bible, Feminism, Feminist, Interpretation, Theology,*

Introduction

Religion or theology is as old as man. The knowledge of God, the understanding of his will, his sovereignty, and the establishment of an intimate relationship with him, were some of the experiences Adam had in the Garden of Eden. As man went through different phases in life,

theology also evolved. More so, since theology, draws its source from the scripture, tradition, reason and experience (Pul-Ian 22), it means that as the tradition, reasoning and experiences of man changes, his concept of God would also expectedly experience a corresponding change. Hence, the birth of so many theological beliefs and concepts pervade the world. One of the products of such theological evolution is the emergence of the Feminist theology.

It is a theology that is firmly rooted in women's experience (king 3). Feminist theology is a movement found in several religions including Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and other new religious movements. The purpose is to re-interpret the traditions, practices, scriptures and theologies of these religions from a feminist perspective (Priesthood). King puts it like this: Feminist theology has been called an advocacy theology concerned with the liberation of women from oppression, guided by the principle of seeking to achieve the full humanity of women (3). Out of these struggle, and the quest for social and political relevance came theological reflections that gave birth to this contemporary theology known as Feminist theology. According to smith (241), theological feminism is the same effort in the context of religion, an attempt to put into practice Paul's statement in Galatians 3:26-28 which states that in Christ all human beings are one.

In response to these agitations, people who were opposed to the women movement began to use the Bible as an authority in arguing that it was not proper for women to play active roles in the church or in the public. They drew inferences from the bible, stating that women were created second, and out of Adam, meaning they were not only different but inferior (Russell 22). However, this position of the Bible amongst other biblical arguments limiting the participation of women in the church was not enough to deter them. Instead, they equally pointed to the same Bible as the source and basis of their agitation. In addition, they began the quest for a more acceptable interpretation of the scriptures. The result was the

distinction between those parts of the bible that were essential and others that were culturally relative (23). Ruther was more unequivocal with her position on the struggle when she stated that; “in short, we need to deal modestly and truthfully but also transformatively with who we are culturally and economically. We need to reject what is oppressive but also make creative synthesis of what is liberating...” (8).

The Feminist Theology started as a non-religious agitation for the emancipation of women; referred as feminism. Its recent popularity and growth is not only alarming but poses a great deal of challenge to the Bible, biblical scholars and believers. This study sets out to investigate the trajectory of feminism to Feminist Theology with the various implications it has on biblical scholarship and the Christian faith.

The Early Stages of Feminism

The story of feminism dates back to the sixteenth century. During this period, the Roman Catholic Church effectively and continuously carried out a campaign of discrimination against women. The church was of the view that women were unclean pawns of the devil that lured men to sin of lust (Smith 241). They were often subjected to unspeakable cruelty and many became victims of witch hunting. Pui-Ian (15) puts it this way; “accused as heretics and witches, many women were tortured or burned at the stake in public for allegedly having sex with the devil and serving Satan”. Some people saw these actions against women as an act of jealousy on the part of the influential clergy men because as at that time, the women were gaining popularity as healers, mid-wives and diviners of their local communities, making use of herbs and incantations to heal their patients (16). The catholic priests saw these as an affront on their pastoral roles and healing ministry. It is difficult to tell the exact number of women killed, but Pui-Ian estimated the number at that period to be between hundred thousand and several millions (16). The motives for the attack on women are not always convincing. However, it was generally believed that

“the public display of the power of the influential men and clergy to punish women in sexually sadistic ways was a form of disciplining women and a teaching tool” (16). Apart from this physical and psychological maltreatment of women, canonization was also used as an instrument of segregation and relegation against them. Canon and orthodoxy were devised in part to exclude women from positions of leadership and authority (8). Although the canon was introduced as a means of authenticating the truth as upheld by the orthodox church against heresy and also to consolidate power by the church hierarchy, it later turned out, that it had effectively left out many of the voices of women and one notable example was the exclusion of the gospel of Mary, a second century text in which Mary Magdalene received special teaching from Jesus and became a leader among the disciples (Pui-Ian 8).

The humiliation and injustice on women continued until some persons (men and women) began to voice their opposition to it. Among these were Martin Luther and John Calvin. With arguments based on the scripture, they challenged the church’s teaching on women. They also taught that “both men and women were created in the image of God and therefore stood before God as equals” (Smith 241). The foundation of resistance laid by Luther and Calvin became a base for agitation, giving a sudden consciousness to women to start asking for their rights.

One notable name among the pioneers of this struggle for the emancipation of women is Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Born into a Presbyterian family, she tried endlessly to make it up to her father for the loss of his male children (Loades 13). Though they were five girls in the family, they were still not able to console their father for the loss of his male children. This baffled her, and probably led to her becoming an ardent campaigner for women liberation. She determined in herself that the derogatory perception of women and all other restrictions on them must be addressed by someone like her. So “this ebullient, articulate, unofficially educated woman spent her life in passionate engagement for

every form of female emancipation from suffrage to the experiment with “bloomers” (16) Stanton, together with some other women, organized a lot of campaigns to create awareness for this struggle and the urgent need to free women from bondage. In one of those campaigns, they produced one of their strongest resolutions or declarations that “woman is man’s equal, it was intended to be so by the creator and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such” (13).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton also organized a team of scholars who were vested with the responsibility of attacking all those who used the Bible to condemn women (Loades 15). One of her greatest contributions to the feminist theology is *The Woman’s Bible*. Stanton’s principal motive for publishing *The Women’s Bibles* was to address the fundamental tool for the attack on women– the bible. She felt that most injustices carried out against women derive their bearing from the degrading picture that was painted about them (women) in the Bible. Russell corroborated this fact, when she echoed the words of Dorothy Brass in her book, *“Feminist Interpretation of the Bible”* “that Stanton published the woman’s Bible because the keystone of misogynist religion and of women’s oppression is the Bible (14). So Stanton believed that if the wrongs against women in the Bible were righted, then the average woman will be liberated or at least given some sense of belonging as accorded the men. She also suggested that the Bible ought to be treated like every other book since it is limited by its historical context (Russell 23). Elizabeth fought so many battles for the emancipation of women; winning some and losing others, but she would forever be remembered for her pioneering struggles which won her many tributes:

Every woman who seeks the legal custody of her children, who finds the door of a college or university open to her, who administers a post office or a public library, who enters upon a career of Medicine, Law or Theology, who teaches at school or tills a farm or keeps a shop or rides a bicycle –

every such woman owes her liberty largely to herself and to your earliest and bravest co-workers. (Loades 14)

Furthermore, it is imperative to state here, that feminist theology has gone through different phases. The history began with the struggles and account of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Bible based struggles of Martin Luther and John Calvin (though they were not pro-feminism crusaders). This phase was known as the enlightenment period.

Feminism in the Nineteenth Century: The struggle for the emancipation of women did not end with Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Other individuals also got involved in the movement directly or indirectly. One of such individuals was Robert Owen. In the early nineteenth century he pursued a vision of establishing a utopian community where all the inhabitants would live in peace and love, all on equal footing; where women will be equal with men and children enjoyed equality with adults (Smith 142). Some other activists in this movement during this period were Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Blackwell and the Grimkes.

Feminism in the Twentieth Century: The movement recorded a remarkable success within this period when women in Canada, Australia, Soviet Union, Germany, Great Britain, United States and Holland were not only given franchise, but elevated and employed as professional (242). Although the advent of the great depression and world-war II and the effect of the post-war years brought mixed blessings to the women, the struggle for liberation still continued.

The Effect of Vatican II on Feminism: Pope, John XXIII lent his voice to the struggle. He understood the yearnings of the women for equality and in 1963, advocated for equal right for men and women including the right for all to follow a vocation to the priesthood (243). This concession to women is contained in the Vatican II documents and soon other catholic

faithful added their voice to the struggle, calling for the emancipation of women in the church.

Modern Feminism: Feminism as a movement gained more awareness in the 1960s; it was initially more of a movement or struggle that had no spiritual or religious undertone. It was born out of the agitations of some aggrieved women who refused to accept the oppression meted on them by their male counterparts during the civil rights and anti-war movement of that period. These women desired and advocated for a radical change in the status quo though rejected the feminism label (244). Aspects of modern feminism include Political feminism, Liberal feminism, Marxist-Socialist feminism and Radical Feminism.

Theological Feminism

As the agitations of women against their oppression by men progressed, theologians began to investigate the spiritual and theological aspects of their struggle. The result was the birth of theological feminism or what is today referred to as the Feminist Theology. According to Pui-Ian (20), "Feminist Theology is a global resistance movement and the solidarity of women across racial, economic and religious differences". Feminists perceived that the Bible promotes an oppressive patriarchal structure and that the whole Judeo-Christian traditions were hopelessly male-oriented (Ojo19). The women in this group could not understand and accept why their roles in the affairs of mankind was being relegated, degraded, or ignored by the Bible. Consequently, some of the feminists began to ponder if the Bible is useful to them. Russell (11) puts it like this: "how can feminists use the bible if at all? How does the Bible serve as a source for Christian feminist?" This implies that deep within the heart of feminists, they would have loved to have a fresh interpretation of the scriptures to replace the male dominated one or totally reject the Bible itself. According to Russell, "as the contributions to feminists interpretations have

continued to grow in volume and maturity, it has become abundantly clear that the scriptures need liberation, not only from existing interpretations but also from patriarchal bias of the texts themselves" (11). The women argue that the cultural context, in which the Bible was written then, may no longer be applicable or tenable to this contemporary era. Hence fresh interpretations are what the contemporary community of faith needs or else the relevance of the biblical text written in the context of the patriarchal cultures as a source of authority to their faith will continue to be a contentious one. Russell affirmed this when she wrote; "thus the issue continues to be whether the biblical message can continue to evoke consent in spite of its patriarchal captivity" (12). This had led to the continuous reviews of the Bible sponsored by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America (USA). Till date, the advocates of the feminist movement are still searching for a befitting interpretation of the Bible that is "rooted in the feminist's critical consciousness that women and men are fully human and fully equal" (14). In other words, what the feminists actually demand is that; having interacted with the Bible and other Christian theological traditions, there should be a new investigation of past paradigm and a new agenda for study (Ojo19). The feminist agenda does not just end with the changing of the male-dominated structure of the Bible, but also for women to be fully and equally involved in the entire affairs of the church. They further argued that since they are part of the congregation they should also be allowed to be part of the ministry. Reuther agrees with that argument and opines that:

The church for ages, has tried to solve the problems of men and women through a ministry composed exclusively of men. This is no more adequate to redeeming the world at present than an exclusively feminine ministry would be. The church must quickly make room for trained women fitted to work on the problems of women on a Christian basis. (242)

Even today biblical feminists have attempted to use human reasoning to pick which parts of the Bible are authoritative for all times and which parts are culturally determined with the view of de-culturizing the Bible (Gwamma 47).

Types of Feminist Theology

Many schools of feminist theological movements emerged in the course of women agitation. These include: Christian Feminism, Radical Theological Feminism and Evangelical Theological Feminism.

Christian Feminism: This is an aspect of Feminist Theology which identifies the struggle and yearnings of feminists. They seek to advance and understand the quality of men and women morally, socially, spiritually and in leadership from a Christian perspective (Priesthood). Christian feminists base their faith on the assumption that God does not discriminate and so they are very liberal with the issues like ordination of women, male dominance in Christian marriages, recognition of equal spiritual and moral abilities, reproductive rights and the search for a feminists or gender-transcendent God (Feminist theology) Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Reuther are some of the prominent authors who have helped to expand the horizon of this theology.

Radical Theological Feminism: The perception that the church aids the oppression of women instead of liberating them had caused many feminist to reject the church. They also regard the Bible as non-authoritative (Ojo19). To them the issues of conceptualization, nomenclature and images concerning God has to be redefined to suit or accommodate the interest of women. To this effect, radical feminists have shown their unwillingness to worship this God who is patriarchal in nature. Smith, quoting Collins suggested that, “we can no longer limit God’s work in history to the deliverance of the Hebrews from bondage or to the incarnation in Jesus

Christ, that lens is too narrow" (254). So they went ahead to use the word goddess to denote the ultimate reality (257).

Evangelical Theological Feminism: this group continues to profess the Christian faith though combining it with the agitation for women's rights. They accept the authority and inerrancy of the bible but vehemently kick against the oppression of women in the church. They suggest that if women are equal in creation they should also be equal in functions (Smith 254). They want to be given the right to fulfill their full human duties or obligations just as God intended it to be.

Distinctive Traits of Feminist Theology

The following are some distinctive traits of the Feminist Theology and demands/ways they want the scriptures to be interpreted.

- i. Increase the role of women among the clergy and religious authorities.
- ii. Re-interpret the male dominated imagery and language about God.
- iii. Determine women's place in relation to career and motherhood.
- iv. Study images of women in the religions sacred texts and matriarchal religion
- v. Reject the notions that women are spiritually inferior to men; that they are sources of temptation; only dedicated to childbearing, their homes and husbands. (Feminist Theology).

Basic Tenets of Feminist Theology

The basic principle of feminist theology is the affirmation and promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore to be appraised. The following have been identified as contributory factors to the sub-human status of women:

Interpretation of Scripture: The crux of the feminist's hermeneutics is that, men and women alike must realize that the essence of the Christian faith is the prophetic call for the liberation of the downtrodden" (Smith 247). Hence, they resist androcentrism and misogyny of patriarchal theology. Feminist Theology identifies and consequently rejects two flaws that most misogynists hinge their theology of segregation on. They are the consistent hatred showed towards women by their male counterparts and the male-dominated or centered Bible. They strongly disagree with Paul's stance concerning women in worship; "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, she must be silent" (1cor 14:34). This stance is unacceptable to the feminists. Smith, quoting Reuther referred to this as the androcentrism and misogyny of patriarchal theology (248). Feminist have different ways of addressing their perceived biasness towards women. Some believe that identifying a particular biblical text that can then act as a basis or norm by which other biblical texts are judged determining which biblical text is authoritative and the one that is not. Smith refereed to this as the "canon within the canon" (248). Some other feminists are of the opinion that passages overlooked or distorted by patriarchal hermeneutics should be regained (248). Yet another opinion is that the canon is rejected completely and the biblical history of the Judeo-Christian era is re-appraised to show the impact of women as against the passiveness that the writings suggest (248).

Concept of God: It is claimed that biblical references to God as masculine can only be attributed to the cultural context of its writers (248). They

assume that the writers lived in a world that was completely dominated by men and therefore, their writings must be male-inclined. They draw people's attention to the fact that there are many female images of God in the Bible which shows that God is not limited to sex. Isaiah 49:15 for example, pictures God as a woman breast feeding her infant while Psalm 123:2, Luke 15:18 also contain similar narrative. Feminist theologians have gone as far as retranslating the name of God to have feminine characteristics. For instance, El-Shaddai, which refers to God as the Almighty, has been retranslated to mean God of the breast. They have also made substitutions for key biblical words and concepts. A special case is the addendum to the phrase 'God the Father'. According to them He should be referred to as 'God the father and God the mother'.

Feminist theologians have also supported the use of non-or multi gendered language for God, arguing that language powerfully impacts beliefs about the behavior and essence of God (Feminist). Despite these diverse opinions, the historical Jesus appeals to many women because he rejected the patriarchal establishment of his days. He openly accepted the oppressed and the outcasts, tax collectors, prostitutes, Samaritans, lepers and women (251).

Christ: Feminists have diverse views about Jesus Christ; some see him as God's representative. Others reject him entirely along with God for being too patriarchal in nature (245). While others accept him as the one that liberates human beings, therefore being able to liberate the women from political, social, personal, racial and sexual bondage brought about by misogyny.

Salvation: There are also diverse opinions concerning salvation. Some perceive Christ as a source of liberation from oppression experienced in a male-dominated world. Others are 'Universalists' seeing in Christ, Gods acceptance of all the oppressed" (250). Yet some others have a worldview of Jesus as a mother who constantly seeks, finds and heals her children.

Holy Spirit: Feminists are more comfortable with the person and use of the Holy Spirit because, the Holy Spirit is often portrayed with feminist characteristics. The Holy Spirit guides, comforts and nurtures, just as a caring and loving mother does.

Sin: Sin is perceived as that which estranges relationship and consequently destroying it. This buttresses the point that men's attempt to segregate women is a sinful act that estranges them from women and therefore working against God's will for a peaceful co-existence between male and females. This is why a certain group within their ranks advocates that; "we do not need to be liberated from original sin but to be liberated from the abusive patriarchal system" (Asamoah-Gyadu 236).

Church: The church is regarded as the typical center of oppression of women. They claim that "after two thousand years the church remains an institution structured by men for men" (smith 252). They claim that even though the men preach liberty for humanity they still continue to subject the women to bondage with their degrading perception and treatment. Furthermore, the ordination of women has been a contentious one for some time. The women believe they should be ordained into full time ministry claiming that people like Phoebe, Junia (Apostle) and Priscilla were all prominent leaders in the New Testament Church.

Implications for Christianity

No doubt this brand of theology poses significant threat to the Christian doctrine and practice. It equally holds out vistas for faith. We begin with the challenges Feminist Theology poses on Christianity.

1. **Questions the Authority of the Bible:** Considering the patriarchal nature of the Bible, most feminists ponder if the Bible is of any use to them. To them, for the Bible to be credible and authoritative, it must be freed from "existing interpretation and from its patriarchal bias". This is a deliberate attempt to question the authority and the historicity of the Bible. The call for the scriptures to be liberated from its conventional interpretations and

its supposed patriarchal bias undermines the very fundamental spiritual power behind its writing. This should not be allowed to sink into the church and sway faithful women and their male sympathizers away from the truth.

2. Selective and Selfish Interpretation of the Bible

The feminist hermeneutics tends to lean towards a selfish interpretation of the scriptures which distorts biblical truth. They reject passages of the Bible that does not favour their ideology. An example of such selective and selfish interpretation is the high regard they place on Paul's comment in 1 Corinthians 14:34

More so, biblical feminists have also used human reasoning to divide the Bible. They selectively determine for themselves which parts of the bible are authoritative for all times and which parts should be interpreted as culturally influenced passages. The danger of this is that the Bible is not consistent in its theology and should not be overtly depended on for spiritual enrichment at all times except only when it supports a particular view. This poses a great threat to Christianity which depends on the inerrancy of the scriptures for its faith and practices.

3. Promotes Anarchy in Marriage Institutions

The Feminists Theology advocates for a distortion of divine order in marriage. The quest for equality in marriages is against biblical injunctions meant to maintain a state of harmony among couples. The Bible made it explicitly clear in its teachings on marriages that the man is not only the head of the woman but of the home even as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). There is no equality between the man and woman in God's plan. The quest for equality among husbands and wives can only create a state of anarchy and increase the already soaring rate of

divorce together with its implications for the society. The Christian feminists for example base their argument on equality on the presupposition that God does not discriminate and therefore, does not support the idea of male dominance in Christian marriages. Due to this belief, they become very liberal on issues that seem to promote inequality amongst women and men. However, statistics reveal that more and more numbers of marriages collapse annually. This is not unconnected with the tides of feminism which finds expression as Feminist Theology in the church (Efe 2018).

4. God is blasphemed

Feminist Theology rejects what it calls male dominated structure of the Bible and therefore, seeks to create certain nomenclature and images of God to accommodate the interest of women. More so, the Radical Feminists have voiced their displeasure and unwillingness to worship a God who they claim is patriarchal in nature. This no doubt portends danger to the Christian faith and scriptures. To designate God as goddess would amount to taking Feminist Theology too far. Caution is therefore needed. .

5. God the father and God the mother claim

One of the claims of this theology is that it is more appropriate and complete to qualify God as God the father and God the mother. They even go as far as calling Him the God of the Breast. These are derogatory ways of addressing the ultimate reality that the Christian faith teach and adore. The attempt to recast the personality of God amounts to treating the Christian scriptures as an insignificant piece of material.

Distortion of Christology

Most of the feminist theological views on Christianity are at best distorted and misguided construction of the person of Christ.

Positives

It is pertinent to state here that despite the threat Feminist Theology poses to the Christian faith, some of its demands could be beneficial to the church and larger society. The following are some of the areas Feminists Theology could be beneficial to the Christian church.

1. Increased Role of Women in the Church

Women are believed to be more committed than men in the affairs of the church. They attend church programmes more than men and are more committed to evangelism and in committing their time and money to the church. The call for more roles for women in the church is not misplaced.

2. Women not spiritually Inferior:

The notion that women are spiritually inferior to men deserves condemnation. Such beliefs have no place in a modern society and in the church. More so, Christian Feminists frown at the perception that women are seen as sources of temptation whose only duties should be confined to childbearing and taking care of their homes and husbands. The Christian faith does not welcome such notions for it is discriminating and prevents the average woman from exercising or fulfilling her spiritual responsibilities in the church.

Conclusion

This study showed that Feminist Theology which was born out of feminism is a very dangerous teaching which if not adequately curtailed can have an equally dangerous effect on the church. This theology through its misplaced demands is an attempt to rubbush the years of fruitful and positive agitations of some historic feminists who dedicated their life to the struggle for the emancipation of women. It was established that though feminism drive is understandable and quite different from the Feminist Theology, its transformation into the shape of theology should be

rejected. More so, most of the demands of this theology can best be described as heresies, lacking respect for the authority of the Bible and therefore should never be allowed to find its way into the church.

Recommendations

- (1) In this twenty-first century, feminist drive is a welcome and acceptable development; however, the push towards a Feminist Theology should be discouraged by the church.
- (2) Feminist Theology is not yet a popular belief in Nigeria today; however, efforts should be made by all relevant stakeholders to prevent it from penetrating our homes, culture and society.
- (3) Adherents of this theology who anchor their belief on the Bible are hereby advised to respect the accuracy and inerrancy of the scriptures and put an end to their biased biblical interpretation.
- (4) Women should be given increased roles in the church due to their extra zeal and commitment to service.
- (5) The term Feminist Theology should not be confused with feminism for they are different ideologies though the stem from the same root.

Works Cited

- Christ, Carol P. *Why Women Need a Goddess in Women Spirit Rising*. ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. New York: Harper and Row, 1979.
- "Feminist Theology" www.artandpopularculture.com accessed 24/3/11.
- Gwamma, Je Adayibe O. *Perspectives in African Theology*. Plateau: African Christian textbooks, 2008.
- King, Ursula. *Introduction, Feminist theology from the Third World*. New York: Orbis press, 1994.

- Loades, Ann. *Introduction. Feminist theology: a Reader*. Louisville: west minister/John Knox press, 1990.
- Ofori, Emmanuel. "The Challenge of Emerging Feminism in African Today. A theological Reflection". Christianity Missions and Ecumenism in Ghana. ed. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. 236-256
- Ojo, John. *Notes on Contemporary Theology*. Ogbomoso: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011.
- Page, Ruth. "Elizabeth Cady Stanton's The Woman's Bible" Feminist Theology: A Reader: ed. Ann, Loades. Louisville: West Minister John Knox, 1990 p.16-23.
- "Priesthood of Woman". www.en.wikipedia.org. accessed 24/3/11.
- Pui-lan, Kwok. *Post-Colonial Imagination and Feminists Theology* Louisville: west minister John Knox Press, 2005.
- Reuther, Rosemary R. *Introduction. Women Healing Earth*. New York: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Russell, Letty M. *Feminists Interpretation of the Bible*: Philadelphia: the West Minister Press, 1985.
- Smith, David L. *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology*. Illinois: Victor Books, 1992.
- Zikmund, Barbara B. "Feminists Consciousness in Historical Perspective" *Feminist Interpretations of the Bible* ed. Letty Russell. Philadelphia: The West Minister Press, 1985. 21-29.

Feminist theology is a movement found in several religions, including Sanatan Dharma (old form of Hinduism), Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and New Thought, to reconsider the traditions, practices, scriptures, and theologies of those religions from a feminist perspective. Some of the goals of feminist theology include increasing the role of women among the clergy and religious authorities, reinterpreting male-dominated imagery and language about God, determining women's place in relation to career Feminist biblical studies, as a fundamental component of the feminist movement in theology and religion, has accomplished much in the last thirty years worldwide. Its influence on scholarship and on church and religious history is a source of pride, and its contributions must be recognized. It is particularly important in times of conservative reaction not to retreat behind what has been accomplished. The goal of this contribution is to collect some of the fundamental components of the institutionalization of feminist biblical studies. My primary focus is on institutions rather than persons, b Amid the varieties of feminist interpretive methods in biblical scholar-ship, this article suggests a general typology of approaches: rejection of the claims of biblical authority; acceptance of those claims with critique of oppressive interpretations; revisionism, which holds to the possibility of reconstructing the lost experience of women in the texts; reliance on symbol and image of the feminine to convey meaning; and. finally, the liberation critique of oppressive structures. An appreciation and critique is offered for each alternative. Discover the world's research. 19+ million memb Contemporary feminist philosophical scholarship emerged in the 1970s as more women began careers in higher education, including philosophy. As they did so, they also began taking up matters from their own experience for philosophical scrutiny. These scholars were influenced both by feminist movements in their midst as well as by their philosophical training, which was anything but feminist. Until recently one could not go to graduate school to study â€œfeminist philosophyâ€. While students