

## Feminist Study of Religion: Various Hermeneutical Approaches

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore various feminist interpretations of the text of revealed faiths for presenting new appropriate meanings of equality and debates upon gender relations made in lieu of contemporary social needs and circumstances. This paper follows the hermeneutical strategies of twentieth century which throw the prestige of traditional structures into confusion. It also discusses how feminists used the religious frame to make their work influential and transformed it into an academic field of study? What modules constitute this interpretive discipline? This article revolves around the struggles of feminist scholars who strived to introduce new ways of study of Quran being isolated from its classical literature. The discussion also incorporates the ideas of allegorical reading of Quran to manage the tension of adheres of misunderstanding and to discover the intended meanings applied by male scholars in the course of gender equality.

**Key Words:** Feminism, Feminist Hermeneutics, Feminist Approaches, Muslim Feminist Methodologies

### The Endeavor of Feminist Hermeneutics

The aim of feminist hermeneutics<sup>1</sup> is to establish a feminist theology through interpretation of classical traditional text from feminine viewpoint in order to determine the true status of women. Feminist provides women a ground to compete men to gain their due position in all fields of life by studying religion with new methodologies as the text interpreted so far is the effort of male scholars and it carries their specific biased pattern of reasoning. That's why the religious traditions must be subjected to alteration to make it free from the discrimination casted by male interpreters. For feminists it would be better quest to navigate their own hermeneutics aiming at the revitalization of the essence of the status of woman and hence the true dimension of religion.<sup>2</sup>

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### **The Inward Mode of Feminist Hermeneutics in Judeo-Christian Literature**

The method of feminist theology for developing a justified humane concept of equality using religious interpretation is based upon "deconstruction" of the existing views at first followed by the "reconstruction" of new model for latest theological studies. This ideology emerged when the feminist detected that the three revealed faiths carry biased tradition for text explanation which ignores the real status of women.

The goal of feminist Judeo-Christian theologies is to reconsider the image of God and to retrieve the position of women in the Holy Bible. Jewish-Christian theologians are in favor of concerning the text directly to reconsider the image of God and to retrieve the position of women in the Holy Bible. They believe that the comprehension of the Holy Bible portrays the prejudiced male views.<sup>3</sup> The feminists argue that male being the recipients of revelation and dominant in interpretations not only influenced the traditions but even the text which eventually rejected women's thoughts.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, many questions are raised upon the text of Bible and its authority as male figure remained prominent through its assembling, composing and transmitting. This gave strength to the criticism upon the classical literature including all those figures who took part in its compilation.<sup>5</sup>

The feminist raised a severe objection upon appearance of God as a masculine entity such as usage of male mode of speech which is totally male supremacist and incites adulation in them. Hence, a proposition emerged that the prophets are the fathers of human race. On account of this supposition, Christians reckoned Christ as male.<sup>6</sup>

Rosemary Radford Reuther pays attention to explaining the reason behind exclusion of women's experience from the surface of biblical interpretations. She states that women voices are not coincident for Christian tradition. The prestige has given to men experiences and so the charge of interpretation. This kind of attitude had made the entire proceedings to some compelled consequences that put the women in realm of suppression and subjugation.<sup>7</sup> Men got the advantage of explaining the biblical text through their experiences which resulted into suppression of

women as their views were not consistent with the Christian traditions.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, male normativity came in view when the women experiences were ignored totally, and men's experiences were presented as virtually equivalent to human experiences.<sup>9</sup> The problem would have not occurred if the word "man" was taken instead of gender specifications. According to Rosemary, hindrances in women's experiences arises due to the usage of language in interpretation of biblical text. Consequently, the interpretations depicted normativity of one aspect while the women's aspect went in vain.<sup>10</sup>

Mary Daly debated well upon the male dominance in Christian theology by arguing that commodification of women is not mere "marginal and accidental" presented by individuals rather the traditions that overall denominates the Jewish-Christian theology. The patriarchal way of studying the Bible is termed as "methodolatory" by Daly (which was the probable instrument of female status from an acknowledgeable domain).<sup>11</sup>

Phyllis Tribble objections are coherent with Riffat Hassan arguments upon the creation story of Adam and Eve in which the interpretations mainly focus on men and discuss women being inferior to them. In these stories, Adam is openly declared as 'primary' creation whereas Eve the secondary. Eve is also declared accountable for the sin committed by Adam. All these believes developed the ideology that man is superior, and woman has been created for his service.<sup>12</sup> Tribble refers to Genesis in the Bible and explores that men and women were created at the same time and the word Adam is not 'gender neutral' rather it is a proper noun. God created both genders for each other but what led to patriarchy later was the sin of eating from forbidden tree in Eden and the gender discrimination arose after the Fall.<sup>13</sup>

Another Christian theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza came forward during the second wave of feminism and proposed seven hermeneutical strategies<sup>14</sup> which are; hermeneutic of experience, hermeneutic of domination hermeneutic of suspicion, hermeneutic of assessment and evaluation, hermeneutic of reimagination, hermeneutic of reconstruction and hermeneutic of change and transformation.<sup>15</sup>

The pattern of her study highlights women experiences for interpretation of Bible using the above mentioned seven strategies.

She began with her personal experiences and made them significant because of its unavailability during the dominance of masculine encounters.

Hermeneutics of domination comes up with the unfamiliar aspects of her method which abandoned the reaction to religious stories. The difference of response upon slavery in biblical interpretation among White and Black Americans depict this dimension.<sup>16</sup>

In the light of hermeneutic of suspicion, that outlines the strategy of suspecting the text rather than trusting, she directs the scholars to "avoid taking its claim to divine authority" rather the biblical text should be looked through ones "emotions, anxieties and fears" and "explore what good comes of upholding a hermeneutic of appreciation and consent."<sup>17</sup> It is very important to resolve personal matters using the questioning way upon Biblical authority.<sup>18</sup>

The hermeneutics of assessment and evaluation develops the strategy of extracting contextual meanings along with the analysis of effective and persuasive traditions.

To highlight the categorized subjugation and suppression she coined the term "kyriarchy" to follow the cultural-religious internalizations of patriarchy and to inspect those values and norms that are incorporated in opposition to the mainstream culture.<sup>19</sup> In spite of justifying patriarchal elements, this strategy aims confinement of these elements.<sup>20</sup>

The strategy of reimagination put things in order to ensure the better future by understanding other's perspectives. It lays the foundations for the study of past unsung history of women's struggles and its link with present to fortify the future.<sup>21</sup>

The hermeneutics of remembering and reconstruction considers the absence of women from biblical text despite of her appearance in all human matters and her presentation as a historical source and not a historical fact. Fiorenza debates that this deprivation should be reinstate by reconstruction of the text in accordance to the religious-social situations.<sup>22</sup>

The last strategy of hermeneutics of change and transformation aims for the construction of just future by transforming the present situation of dominance. Schüssler suggests that it can only be done by examining the unacknowledged past experiences so that a novel alive and

influential future dawns upon the universal ethology and religious society.<sup>23</sup>

Hence Fiorenza provides basis for criticism on biblical studies by proposing the course of deconstruction<sup>24</sup> and reconstruction<sup>25</sup> through above mentioned strategies and consequently proclaims freedom and liberation.

Another theological method that depicts in Fiorenza's work is related to linguistics which stems from patriarchal perspectives. She comes up with exclusive examples of English words (gender-neutral) which shows the genderization of words on biological standards eliminates the distinction between grammatical and neutral words.<sup>26</sup>

Some Jewish scholars talk about Torah deficiency in reflecting God's revelation because it is being limited by the human language. Judith Plaskow, who belongs to the same group of scholars, comments that Torah comprises of narratives of "God interaction" with certain Jewish people hence it is particularised by masculinity with the situations they lived in. Therefore, Torah appears to be a revealed book confined to its transmitters and interpreters who got the benefit of elucidating it.<sup>27</sup> Due to its deficiency in having all the essential parts and flexibility of the text, it widely welcomes new embellishments in it or the portions that are missed from being transmitting. Thus, it provides grounds to feminists to retrieve the convenient meanings of text and they also got the benefit of using Midrash<sup>28</sup> practise to make the women experiences part of the text.<sup>29</sup>

The feminist theology in Christianity is probably more about conveying the true apprehension of their faith instead of going for new theologies and it is clearly manifested in Letty M Russel's action-reflection strategy in which she portrays her learnings and experiences being a feminist activist.

The action reflection model is an inspiration for women to attain her deserved status by applying her own experiences. It provokes her to raise her voice for equivalence in the light of reasonable understanding and knowledge of the religion. By pondering upon the action taking place, a theological reflection will emerge which will enhance the understanding of Christian faith. She goes on to say that:

*"-Out of the reflection on tradition in light of concrete situations come new models of thought and*

*action. Such a methodology does not lead liberation theology away from the basic paradoxes, the discovery of the presence of living tradition and sets people free to take risks in shaping the future. -”<sup>30</sup>*

### **Approaches of Muslim Feminists in the Interpretation of Religious Text<sup>31</sup>**

Muslim feminist scholar's interpretative works shows an equal intention of interpreting the Quran in lieu of women's experience as did by Jewish and Christian feminists.<sup>32</sup> Amina Wadud gives an account of Male scholars whom interpretative works intended towards the men experience and their psyche.<sup>33</sup> And it was not appointed just to emphasize on the patriarchal nature rather to enrich the authority of men and their supremacy on women. This bewildered the very true nature of women psyche and possibly it can only be confirmed once the interpretive task initiated in accordance to the expertise of women.<sup>34</sup> In this scenario Muslim feminists are seen very often to associate their works with Jewish and Christian feminist on the issue of exclusion of women's experience from the traditional interpretational structure of the Quran, as emphasized by Amina Wadud to describe the work of Mary Daly in her application of the term “Methodolatary.”<sup>35</sup>

In the same manner Asma Barlas associates her work with Rosemary Reuther while debating upon the topic of representation of God as male entity which resulted into the elevation of status of man over woman. Such authoritative factor has been well formulated in patriarchal Christian paradigm, where women would relate to God via men indirectly not directly as man.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, Barlas has also criticizes the representation of God as male in Quranic exegetical work which is not absorbing the actual Quranic injunctions but relying on footsteps of Christian ones.<sup>37</sup>

One of the distinct elements in textual hermeneutics is the understanding of the accurate meaning of the text as stressed upon by Riffat Hassan in her variant amount of work. The factors of description and prescription are the central concerns of determining the meaning in scriptural hermeneutics. Literally the determinacy of meaning stems from the process of development of interpretation of the text, intent of the interpreter and nature of the text along with its context.<sup>38</sup>

Scriptural hermeneutics becomes more proportional once to lens out the art of deducing meaning from the text as well as determining the factors involved in its constitution. This process of derivation is overwhelmed by the author, due to his intention. Because intention of the author, centrality of the interpreter becomes a decisive element in meaning creation while taking into count the factors which are influential in entailing the meaning creation. Hence it turns into a designated method called an “interpreter centered hermeneutics.” For a Muslim feminist hermeneutics, it played a vital role while proclaiming that Quran was read under the patriarchal nature of interpretation. Muslim feminists have investigated the domain and delegated charge made available to the interpreter in absorbing the consequences of meaning creation. Karan Bauer has explored the influential factors involved in meaning creation likely in the Quranic verses related to gender relation as in (4:1, 4:34). She is of the view that meaning of such verses have been originated by the impact of reciprocal cultural understandings, enumeration of history and contemporary patriarchal context.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, Amina Wadud indicates towards the same approach or pattern for meaning derivation by highlighting the model of “prior text.” To her the aim of interpreter originates from understanding the text as the “prior text” which become the integral part of the context of interpretation that act according to the sources of language produced by the reader.<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, Ayesha Chaudhry goes on to conceptualize the interpretation of the verse 4:34 in prospect of the precise community to which it directly addressed. She pins out the opinion that description of the verse is belonged to the pre-modern community which was naturally patriarchal. She remained confined to the said verse in her book that was undermined through inclusive historical factors integrated towards the determinacy of meaning. Eventually those factors were considered in rest of the Quranic interpretation enriched in the societies where most of the interpretive work is made.<sup>41</sup>

Khaled Abou El Fadl made a concise but fluctuating point that project of interpretation of the Quran was remixed totally under the shakes of Arabian male scholars that intentionally establishes the credible amount of superiority to male scholars for the task of interpretation. He takes a remarkable note of prejudices

made by Arabian scholars for being precarious in establishing relation between author, text and the reader once managing the determinacy of meaning. Conclusively, it would likely be unjust to settle the intention of author with reader who demolish the hermeneutical principles described in the Quran and the whole standard of religion.<sup>42</sup>

In this regard, Farid Esack goes on to highlight the patriarchal biasness comprehended in Quranic interpretational work. He discusses that attentively meanings of the Quran are almost undergone through effects of biasness that factually distorted any figurative amount of universality in the interpretation of the Quran. Therefore, he attracted toward the contextual hermeneutics to liberate the task of interpretation and hence it can be used as a key for the cause interpreter-based hermeneutics.<sup>43</sup> This kind of approach is shown by Karen Baur in the work of Zamakhsharī in his classical *Tafsīr* in verse 4:34, where he emphasizes on the superiority of men over women as God bestowed them honor for authority because of their advantage in arranging the affairs of life in terms of property and modality.<sup>44</sup>

Muslim feminists have found the way for a precise and accurate meaning derivation through the application of “historical contextualization method.” As explored by Ayesha Hidayatullah, this approach necessitates the exact understanding of the enquiry of occasions and circumstances of the revelation, with a focus to set apart between descriptive and prescriptive verses of the Quran. This method provides the interpreter a capability to differentiate between described pursuit, customs and practices of Arabian audience and prescribed pursuit, customs, practices of the general audience. Hidayatullah demonstrates that through this method feminist interpreters generalizes the precise meaning of the Quran, made in lieu of contextual revelation to every changing historical occasion. It is this clue that furnishes to the feminist permissiveness to criticize the classical heritage of interpretation of the Quran, and further sensualizes scarcity to read the Quran in its content of historical circumstances which by default minimize the universal objectivity of the Quran according to them. As Wadud mentions that the prescribe message of the Quran which is addressed towards Arabian audience directly cannot be synchronized as a Divine message towards all humans in general. Hidayatullah categorically debates that feminists like Wadud,



Barlas, and Azizah al-Hibri who reduce historical contextualization method to only those verses that reflects patriarchalism or gender linked matters. Conclusively their intent from the application of this method is to symbolize that social and cultural circumstances of the Arabian audience have established the basis for patriarchal verses probably which meanings may not be prescribed to general audience.<sup>45</sup>

Some feminists like Riffat Hassan used *Hadīth* traditions while applying historical contextualization method for reading the Quran. In this regard she criticizes the male interpreters who understood Quran based on questionable *Hadīth* reports. Such reports in her view have immersed the pioneered exegetical work of the Quran as well the Islamic history. She denies any use of doubtful *Hadīth* reports in Quranic Interpretation. Because such reports had disappeared with the passage of time and if anyone find a clue that early commentators have consulted those *Ahādīth* reports, must realizes that those reports were used just to support their opinions. It is because of such *Hadīth* reports that women had found her place inferior in the interpretative tradition of the Quran. The male interpreters paid much attention to those narrations wherein chain criticism was importantly made than content criticism by *Hadīth* scholars according to Riffat Hassan.<sup>46</sup> It is matter of fact that whenever feminist finds any *Hadīth* reports unfavorable to their voice, they start questioning its reliability just to rule out the historical context. As argued by Hassan she disapproves *Hadīth* tradition that have any sort of conflict with the Quran and should not be determined. She bears the opinion that Quran is supreme book and has preferable authority over everything. She referred to scrutiny *Hadīth* reports on woman creation from rib of man, reports that instruct women to obey their husbands as to accomplish the duty of God on them. She disapproves them all because of below standard of transmission. Their chain was not up to the mark as required for reading the Quran and a streamlined by them via Historical contextualization method.<sup>47</sup>

Another feminist approach which is very much adjacent to the previously mentioned is termed as “Comprehensive and Dialogical Nature of the Quranic Discourse” targeting at relative discourses whether those were social, cultural, political or economic operating at the time of revelation of the Quran.

Feminists follow those discourses seriously to examine their context. Because such discourses had a vital role in shaping the overall content of the Quran that encompass the dialogical nature of the Quran. In this process the inspection of grammatical and syntactical structure of the Quran is made which inscribe the content of the Quran. Feminist by fact sensualized that operational discourses of that time have been produced by patriarchal society. Therefore, the dialogical nature of the Quran pave the way for feminist scholars to understand the Quran by doing their own hermeneutics to fully free it from those patriarchal discourses which were superficial at the time of revelation, and hence to convey the factual aspect of the normative religious scripture. Through this method they also aimed at saving the rights of deprived women that initiated by the Quran universally.<sup>48</sup>

Likewise, the same hermeneutical pattern is presented by Nasr Abu Zayd who articulates that social tendencies of the Holy Quran reflect merely the seventh century civilization which has no conformity to the inceptive quality of the Quranic injunctions. For instance, the issues like inheritance, divorce, polygamy and witness are taken as historical understood entities for the purpose to equip the Quran with foremost and procedural motives for the initiation of its directives. As a result, they are general injunctions by nature and cannot be utilized as basis for the establishment of other regulations and laws. Abu Zayd supports the view that seventieth century civilizational traits inverts the patriarchy which was dominant at that time. It had submerged the dialogical nature of the Quran. Abu Zayd employed the same method to the Sunnah as well.<sup>49</sup> For example, in divorce situation Quran directs husbands to permit their wives staying up till the time of maturity of period (iddah), and to divorce them with its expiry. Perhaps most of the early interpreters of the Quran considers utilization of divorce is to be the power and extensive right of men. Medieval interpreters had harmonized the level of the usage of divorce confined to the period of maturity (iddah) except in casual situations as mentioned in the divorce verse of the Quran, which is in turn mirrors the social standards of seventh century.<sup>50</sup> Ayesha Chaudhry assumes the Quranic interpreters and scholars of Islamic Jurisprudence present it suspect fully the right of men to take the corrective steps for disciplining his wife even if she undergoes the process of hitting.<sup>51</sup>

Kecia Ali terms “problematic” verses (2:223 and 2:237) that comprises of male agency over women in case of sex initiation. Hidayatullah calls them as “Hierarchy verses” sanctioning male authority over females in connection with hierarchical male-female relations. Hidayatullah convincingly assumes that hierarchical verses are the actual elements of the Quran that preserves the gender inequality, and the whole feminist project is established to deal such verses in their way of interest. Although Muslim feminist tries to search out any favor for gender equality in the Quran which they could not. Text does not support their voice and they face a problem of textual fundamentality. In alternative means for searching the method feminist attempts interpret the Quran in such way that expand the necessity of extra-textual hermeneutical method through their hermeneutical patterns to serve their goals.<sup>52</sup>

Another approach namely “thematical-holistic approach” identified by Adis Duderija that elaborates that any concept needed to be endorsed from Quran and Sunnah will only be confirmed when understood through subjectively precise verses in larger paradigm produced on corroborative induction. This method exposes the deficient part of traditional Islamic hermeneutics that reduced the incorporative concepts which can be derived from the verses that are not applicable to all concerned situations and hence not competent to “thematical-holistic approach.”<sup>53</sup> The purpose of this approach is to understand the underground meanings of the text by using the corroborative inductive approached to textual evidence. All relevant verses to one topic should be analyzed through a broader frame of textual evidence by means of corroborative inductive approach. This approach will use the comprehensive content of the verse to uncover mostly the textual evidences that provides landmark for feminist movement to harmonize the access of women to the society more than its remarkable admonitions made in the Quran and Sunnah. Resultantly this approach does not only underline the weaknesses of the traditional interpretations of the Quran but unleash the campaign of feminist interpretation from male normativity.

Riffat Hasan penetrates the incentive for holistic reading while treating the portions of the Quran addressing the creation story of human beings. In the course of women creation feminists holds an opinion that she had been created from one single origin

which provided the impetus for feminist interpreters to challenge the campaign of gendered equality in general epistemology. Hassan remains incurious to the portions of the Quran that provided classical interpreters to present the women inferior than men. According to her male interpreters settled a course for male supremacy by inflicting assumptions that prime creation of God was man, Adam became descendant due to women, and tempted by her, in all three cases women has been stigmatized. Thereafter, Hassan makes a point after surveying the selective portion like (4:1), that classical male interpreters have borrowed the biblical accounts in proportionate amount of view in support of male dominance. She also pins a point that male scholars have used some integral parts of *Hadīth* that overturn the actual intent of the Quran. While explain the verse (4:1) she debates the word (*nafs*) which is feminine and ascribed to the substance of all human beings, pursuing it by the next word (*zawj*) bears none of the recognition of any gender. So, no clue is available in the Quran to engender maleness of the word (*nafs*). Therefore, she discredited male interpreters of making complicative understanding from such verses which is an obvious implication of reading the Quran into piecemeal or separately rather than in larger series and sequence of its meaning progression.<sup>54</sup>

To restrain the critical threshold on traditional exegetical framework of the Quran by male scholars, feminists inward their interpretive project to the “*Tawhīdic* Paradigm”, grading human’s role to an extent that befits exclusively to God. One of the most auspicious reward of the Islamic belief on oneness is to act according to God’s will. In this regard, it is duty of interpreters to read the Quran according to the disclosure of God, or otherwise any other understanding that dignifies men over women will amount to act of (*Shirk*) and hence it would cause the demolition of the creed of (*Tawhīd*). On this principle no interpreter can declare his reading of the Quran is final or in other way no one can outrage himself to the position of God. Feminists stress on the continuous reading of the Quran because it has been revealed in human language which may not portray the factual image of God.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, *Tawhīdic* paradigm avoids hierarchy of androcentric tendencies, traditional exegeses. Riffat Hassan professes that male interpreters have arrogated to themselves the task to fix the intermediate platform for women to relate with God

which is not admonished to them according to the doctrine of *Tawhīd*.<sup>56</sup>

To summarize the methodology of Riffat Hassan altogether firstly, she concentrates on linguistic accuracy which gets the factual comprehension of the meanings of the verse with the help of exact understanding of the background of the revelation of the verse considering its substantial context, which may not be restricted to the any precise phase of history. It is very much similar as “historical contextualization method,” mentioned before. Secondly, she seeks to draw the concepts from the Quran in connection with all other relevant passages as she did in her theology about assumption regarding to creation passages embodied in Adam and Eve. She calls this approach as the “criterion of philosophical consistency,” which is again like the “holistic approach” settled by Wadud and Barlas, where Hidayatullah identified it as “Intra-textual method.” Thirdly, she pronounces “ethical criterion” by which she aims at paying attention to the normativity aspect of the Quran while interpreting those passages which seemingly does not look as much as just like the case of equality of male and female. In this case the interpreter is required to keep the normative aspect of the Holy Quran to interpret it according to God’s disclosure. Otherwise it would be against the prescribed intent of God which count the involvement in act of polytheism as discussed earlier in the elucidation of the method “*Tawhīdic Paradigm*.”<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusion

It is seen through this article that feminist scholars of the three revealed faiths commonly share the opinion that historical and interpretative tradition of their respective traditions by at large is patriarchal, and mainly responsible for the inferiority of women. They refer to historical passages of Sarah-Hagar when transmitted through the intent of patriarchal nature of interpretation who negated its wide impact in the construction of traditional structure of religion. Due to the hermeneutics of suspicion, it is found that Judeo-Christian feminists denounces the text that denotes any suspicious concept of equality between man and woman, may not be considered as divine one. For this purpose, they discover new ways of interpretation with the support of modernity. It is totally interwoven the western methodological ways of interpretation. They mostly concentrated on the general passages of the Quran

covering potentially the specific Quranic passages especially related to gender issues. Their perceived problematic meanings of the Quran are displaced with meta-narratives of harmony, justice, and unity of God (*tawhīd*). It is also noted that feminist interpretation coincides with modernist trends in tafsīr that turns off the traditional body of work. The general modernist trends in the Quranic interpretation looks at the Quran afresh according to the need of the time through tool of ijtihād, which is widely advocated by feminist interpreters. Both ordinary modernists and feminists adopt an open-ended approach to the Quran and consider its interpretation for the cause of larger interest of justice as an unfinished project.

### References:

<sup>1</sup>The term Hermeneutics is Greek work meaning in literal sense “to explain” or “interpret or art of understanding”, generally focuses on the organization of thought in frame of elucidated words. In technical sense it is about the theory inculcate the complexities pertained to realization of the meaning of the text. See Badick Chris, “The Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms”, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 97.

In theological framework it is employed to read the Bible to endorse it with Christian biblical studies. Hermeneutics as an art passed through various modification in western terrain due to modernity and philosophical religious discourses. In modern phase the historical criticism has been applied on the bible which examine its content and linguistical syntactic in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The movement of enlightenment and progressiveness has let in the opportunity for modernist to take the biblical text into critical account. Eventually the subjective interpretation and understanding were neglected and rational and objective enacted especially due humanism. In 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the hermeneutical movement had given the dominance to liberation that became its instrument in later progress in the textual interpretation. For further reading please see “Al Qawl fī al- Tajdīd” in the Essay on Renewal of Islamic Discourses (in Arabic) by Shaykh Hassan Mahmūd Abdul Latīf al- Shafī. (Cairo: Dārul Quds al-Arabī, 2016) 145-58.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmed Muhammed Gad, “Al\_Manāhij Al-Nasawīyya Fī Dirāsāt al-Adyān (Feminist Methodologies in the Study of Religions),” *Islamic Research Institute: Islamabad* 44, no. 2 (2009): 62.

<sup>3</sup> Pim Valkenburg, “Does the Concept of ‘Abrahamic Religions’ Have a Future?” in *Islam and Enlightenment*, ed. Eric Borman and Pim Valkenburg, New Issues 5 (New York: Concilium, Maryknoll, Orbis, 2005), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Natalie K. Watson, *Feminist Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Sexism and God Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Rosemary Radford Reuther, "Feminist Interpretations: A Method of Correlation," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 123.

<sup>8</sup> Rosemary Radford Reuther, "Patriarchy and Creation: Feminist Critique of Religious and Scientific Cosmologies," *Sage Journals* 1, no. 2 (1993): 391.

<sup>9</sup> Rosemary Radford Reuther, "Methodologies in Women's Studies and Feminist Theology," in *Methodology in Religious Studies: The Interface with Women's Studies*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Albany: SUNY press, 2002), 193.

<sup>10</sup> Reuther, "Feminist Interpretation."

<sup>11</sup> Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

<sup>12</sup> Phyllis Trible, *Text of Terror: Literary Feminist Readings and Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Clifford, *Introducing*.

<sup>14</sup> Fiorenza also mentions that these are ten methods but seven of them as discussed above are very common. Those are: "revisionist interpretation, text and translation, imaginative identification, women as authors and Biblical interpreters, historical interpretation, sociocultural reconstruction, ideological interpretation, women as subject of interpretation, sociopolitical location in the context of Biblical texts and a critical feminist interpretation", quoted from Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, *But She Said*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 30-34

<sup>15</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Orbis Books Maryknoll, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>19</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Women Church: The Hermeneutical Center of Feminist Biblical Interpretation" *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*. 177

<sup>21</sup> Fiorenza. 185.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 186

<sup>23</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Will to Choose or to Reject: Continuing Our Work," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 129–32.

<sup>24</sup> Amounts to apply the hermeneutics of experience and suspicion.

<sup>25</sup> Amounts to employ the strategy of re-imagination and change

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 115

<sup>27</sup> Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Midrash: Method of Jewish Biblical Interpretation

<sup>29</sup> Judith Plaskow, "Jewish Theology in Feminist Perspective," in *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Donna Berman (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 79.

<sup>30</sup> Letty M. Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective: A Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974).

<sup>31</sup> Various body of literature exists on the study about women which can be distinguished between two major kinds: one is linked with defining the status of women within the Muslim society from the perspective of Islamic legal theory, and the second is understanding the religious text from prospect of women.

<sup>32</sup> Judith Plaskow and Coral P. Christ, eds., *Weaving the Vision: New Visions in Feminist Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989). 53.

<sup>33</sup> Amina Wadud, *Quran and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). 113.

<sup>34</sup> Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006). 76.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Reuther, *Sexism and God Talk*.

<sup>37</sup> Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Un-Reading Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Austin University of Texas Press: University of Texas Press, 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Riffat Hassan, "Riffat Hassan: Muslim Feminist Theologian," in *Transforming the Faith of Qur Fathers: Women Who Changed American Religion*, ed. Palgrave Ann Braude (New York: MacMillan, 2004), 173–97.

<sup>39</sup> Karen Bauer, "Room for Interpretation: Quranic Exegesis and Gender" (PhD Diss, Princeton University, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Wadud, *Quran and Women*.

<sup>41</sup> Ayesha Chaudhry, *Domestic Violence and the Islamic Tradition: Ethics, Law, and the Muslim Discourse on Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Adis Duderija, "Constructing the Religious Self and the Other: Neo-Traditional Salafi Manhaj," *Routledge* 21, no. 1 (2010): 79.

<sup>43</sup> Farid Esack, *Quran, Liberation, and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> Jar Allah Mahmud b. Umer Al-Zamakhshari, *Al Kashshaf*, ed. am-Munir al-Iskandari (Beirut: Dar al- Kitab al-Arabi, 1995).

<sup>45</sup> Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges*; Leila Ahmed, *Women Gender in Islam: The Historical Roots of the Modern Debates* (London: Yale University Press, 1992); Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Un-Reading Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'an*; Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad*.

<sup>46</sup> Riffat Hassan, "The Issue of Woman-Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition," *Women's and Men's Liberation: Testimonies of Spirit*, Leonard Grobb, Riffat Hassan, and Naim Gordon (Eds). New York, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1991.

<sup>47</sup> Riffat Hassan, "An Islamic Perspective on Domestic Violence," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27.1, 2003, 195–219.

<sup>48</sup> Bauer, "Room for Interpretation." 71.



<sup>49</sup> Abu Zayd Nasr, "The Nexus of Theory and Practice: In the New Voice of Islam," in *Rethinking Politics and Modernity*, *A Reader*, ed. Mehran Kamvava (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 67–80.

<sup>50</sup> Adis Duderija, "The Hermeneutical Importance of Quranic Assumptions in the Development of a Values-Based and Purposive Oriented Quran-Sunnah Hermeneutic," *Brill* 1, no. 11 (2013): 57.

<sup>51</sup> Ayesha Chaudhry, "Wife Beating in the Pre-Modern Islamic Tradition: An Inter – Disciplinary Study of Hadīth, Quranic Exegesis, and Islamic Jurisprudence" (PhD Diss, New York University, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Quran, Hadīth, and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006); Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges*.

<sup>53</sup> Mabrook Ali, "A New Historical Discussion in Islam," in *Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*, ed. Ibrahim abu Rabi (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 271–83.

<sup>54</sup> Hassan, "The Issue of Women."74.

<sup>55</sup> Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges*.

<sup>56</sup> Riffat Hassan, "Muslim Women and Post-Patriarchal Islam," in *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformation of the World Religions*, ed. Paula M. Cooley, William R. Eakin, and Jay b. Maryknoll McDaniel (New York: Orbis books, 1991), 39–64.

<sup>57</sup> Riffat Hassan, "Islamic Modernist and Reformist Discourses in South Asia," in *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity*, ed. Shaheen Hunter and M.E Sharpe (Armonk, New York, 2008), 177; Amina Wadud, "Islam beyond Patriarchy Through Gender Inclusive Analysis," in *Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family*, ed. Zainah Anwer (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Musawah/Sisters in Islam, 2009), 103–6; Asma Barlas, "Does the Quran Support Gender Equality?" Or, Do I Have the Autonomy to Answer This Question?," (Key Note Address, Nov 24); Ayesha A. Hidayatullah, "The Quranic Rib-Ectomy: Scripture Purity, Imperial Dangers and Other Obstacles to the Interfaith Engagement of Muslim Feminist Hermeneutics," in *Women and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille and Jillian Maxi (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 150.