

AN EVALUATION OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY

BY

FAITH O. ADEBAYO

Assistant Lecture, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso

ABSTRACT

The discourse about the marginalization of women or female-gender is a general phenomenon that cut across culture, races, and generations. One major loud response to the marginalization of female gender is feminist theology which starts as an offshoot of liberation theology that began in the 1960s among the Latin Americans. Hence, the writer in this paper attempt a discussion of the meaning of feminist theology, how feminist do theology, shades of feminist theology, the basic teachings of the feminist theologians, and an evaluation of the core teachings of feminist theologians through a grammatical method of hermeneutics.

INTRODUCTION

The discourse about the marginalization of women or female-gender is a general phenomenon that cut across culture, races, and generations. Although the loud responses to the marginalization of female gender starts as an offshoot of liberation theology that began in the 1960s among the Latin Americans. However, Sheila Davaney claimed it has had its root deep in the first women's movement of the nineteenth century.¹ She furthered her proposition that, the article by Valeric Saiving entitled *The Human Situation: A Feminine View* leads to the emergence of women's experience as an explicit issues for theological reflection.² Hence, feminist theology can be termed a liberation movement that seeks for the appropriate view and reaction to the humanness of the womenfold. The liberation theology is a theology that advocates for the right of the poor and the marginalized in the society. The female-gender being part of the marginalized in the society, hence, a movement that advocate for the right and proper recognition of the women in the society of the world- Feminist Theology.

In the 20th century women's studies appeared as part of the academic curriculum. Women's studies stressed the need to include what had been left out - that part of history that is women's which, though different to men's, needed to be added so that together his-story and her-story could present a more complete picture. Women's studies, an interdisciplinary venture, tended at first to be remedial, but ultimately resulted in expanding the body of knowledge and of raising women's consciousness.³ It was this raised feminist consciousness that paved the way from women's studies to feminist studies and then to feminist theology. According to Zikmund, two things happened:

. . . first, the new material and methods cultivated in women's studies became the basis for a critique of past assumptions and paradigms. Enthusiasm about new knowledge turned into critique of old knowledge. Second, a feminist critical consciousness, in relationship with other liberation movements, began to shape an entirely new interpretative framework.⁴

Feminist theology arises from the historical reality of sexism in human society. Sexism, according to Rosemary Ruether, is "gender privilege of males over females".⁵ It is almost a cliché to say that the

¹ Davaney, Sheila *Trends in Feminist Theology* www.Christian theology.wordpress.com P.17

² Ibid 19

³ Zikmund,B. "Feminist Consciousness in Historical Perspective", in L.M. Russell (ed) *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985 p. 23

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ruether, R.R. *Sexism & God-Talk*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1973 p. 165

subjugation of women is the oldest form of oppression. However, when the private and corporate pain of sexist oppression is reflected on critically and systematically in the light of faith, feminist theology is born.⁶ Hence, the writer in this paper attempt a discussion of the meaning of feminist theology, how feminist do theology, shades of feminist theology, the basic teachings of the feminist theologians, and an evaluation of the core teachings of feminist theologians through a grammatical method of hermeneutics.

I. FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Etymologically, the word feminine is derived from the Latin root *femina* meaning woman. It simply means a being having female qualities. The contemporary development of the word according to John Pobe, signal issues of sexual equality and women's rights and advocacy of women's rights.⁷ Feminist Theology has been termed advocacy theology because it is concerned with the liberation of women from oppression, guided by the principles of seeking to achieve the full humanity of women.⁸ Thus, feminism emerged as a reaction and/or response to sexism inequality, the denial, and subjugation of women's right by the society. As a concept, feminism developed due to women's rejection of treatments meted to them in the society. Three levels of feminism were identified by Oyeronke Olademo: Feminism as an academic method, Feminism as a value system and a social vision, and Feminism of insider's discourse.⁹

1. Feminism as an academic method- this signifies a definite transition from androcentric to androgynous models of humanity and language for the Supreme Being.

2. Feminism as a value system and social vision- viewing sexism and patriarchy as immoral and proposing alternative social arrangements that foster equity, Thus agitations for women leadership in the society seeking to make the leadership cadre in society open to both male and female

3. Feminism of insider's discourse- this is an attempt to move from the prescriptive to the descriptive, so that women' lives become the textbook for roles expected of them in the society.¹⁰

These levels feminism levels as identified by Oyeronke are base on the vary connotations of the concept in different context.

⁶ Ackermann, Denise. "Feminist Liberation Theology" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 1985, no52, p.33

⁷ John Pobe (2012) *Biblical Studies and Feminism in the African Context*. National Association of Biblical Studies (NABIS Western Zone), Ibadan: Nigeria p23.

⁸ Ursula King (1994) *Feminist Theology from the Third World*. Orbis Books: New York, 1994. p.3

⁹ Oyeronke Olademo(2012) *Biblical Studies and Feminism in the African Context*. National Association of Biblical Studies (NABIS Western Zone), Ibadan: Nigeria p 35-36

¹⁰ *ibid*

To best understand this concept, Feminist theology must be situated within the broader strands of contemporary theology. First of all, all theology, which is the study of God in relation to man, and man to the world, takes place within a particular historical and cultural context. The context has been termed by O.B. Oladejo as the 'colouration' with which every interpreter of the sacred text approach their interpretations. That is, every theology is historically and culturally influenced. This assertion claims no theology is neutral. Its either speaks for or against, based on the dynamics of the context for which it evolves. For example, liberation theology evolved as a voice against the oppression of the poor in Latin America and to the rest of the world. In like manner, feminist theology according to Abogunrin emerged as the response of women to the male dominated society, which most often than not has been unjust to women.¹¹ Therefore, feminism evolved out of the liberation context crying for the release of the poor and the marginalized.

Feminist theology takes feminist critique and reconstruction of gender paradigms into the theological realm. They question patterns of theology that justify male dominance and female subordination, such as exclusive male language for God, the view that males are more like God than females, that only males can represent God as leaders in church and society, or that women are created by God to be subordinate to males and thus sin by rejecting this subordination.¹²

Feminist theologians also seek to reconstruct the basic theological symbols of God, humanity, male and female, creation, sin and redemption, and the church, in order to define these symbols in a gender-inclusive and egalitarian way. In so doing they become theologians, not simply critics of the dominant theology. Feminist theologians engage in this critique by reclaiming nascent egalitarian and positive female themes in the Christian tradition and developing them in new ways to apply to gender relations such as: female symbols for God (the Wisdom tradition); humanity, male and female, both created in God's image (Genesis 1: 27); the distinction of male and female overcome in Christ in a new inclusive humanity of redemption (Galatians 3:28); and both males and females called to prophecy (Acts 2:17).

But the mere presence of such themes in the tradition does not constitute a feminist reading of them. For the latter to come about, certain cultural and social conditions are necessary. There needs to be a

¹¹ Abogunrin, S.O. (2003) *Biblical Studies and the Gender Problem*. Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies: Ibadan, p. 6

¹² Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* Boston: Beacon Press, 2000 p. 58

new stance towards knowledge that recognizes that symbols, including theological symbols, are socially constructed, rather than eternally and unchangeably disclosed from beyond. Those in power construct cultural symbols to validate their own power and the subjugation of women; social relations, such as class, race, and gender, are not eternally given by God as the ‘order of creation’, but are social constructs, and, as such, can be changed.

Conversely, feminist theology puts great emphasis on doing theology. That is, theology of action. It is the theology as an activity, as an ongoing process rooted in praxis, interdependent with and compassionately committed to life, justice, and freedom from oppression.¹³

III. HOW DO FEMINISTS DO THEOLOGY?

Elizabeth Fiorenza has articulated the method as it applies to her work in the field of scripture, and feminists have found it widely applicable in approaching any theological text. Feminist theological method involves a mode of interpretation marked by *suspicion, proclamation, remembrance and revisioning*. First, all texts and interpretations of Christian belief and life, should be approach with suspicion, being cautious of the underlying prejudices and presuppositions which have excluded the perspective of women. Fiorenza states her rationale thus: A feminist hermeneutics cannot trust or accept Bible and tradition simply as divine revelation. Rather it must critically evaluate them as patriarchal articulations, since biblical texts are not the words of God but the words of men.¹⁴ In other words, new sight demands new perspectives with which to see and respond. The journey of transformation envisioned by feminists begins with the suspicion that an androcentric bias pervades even the holiest of words, and that hidden in the shadows of the scriptures, ready to emerge into the light, is the invisible figures of our mothers and sisters in faith.

The second step in feminist theological method is that of critique. Having donned new lenses, one begins to recognize the distortions which one mistook for reality. Sharon Ringe, borrowing from the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether, outlines a number of such distortions, noting that feminists find oppression at the heart of the Christian tradition: in the exclusively masculine symbolism for the divine; in a dualism that devalues the body and the historical; in a hierarchical understanding of power and the

¹³ Ursula King, p.16

¹⁴ Fiorenza, Elizabeth S. (ed) *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*. New York: Crossroad, 1994.

order of creation; in an imperial concept of divine power; in a triumphant, absolute Christology; in definitions of sin as pride and rebellion-definitions that prevent revolt.¹⁵

Many of the faults which feminists find in Christianity are similar to those noted by other theologians of liberation. They ask: how Christian theological tradition, almost exclusively the work of western males, can claim to express universal human experience? Critiquing even the criteria by which theology is judged truthful, feminists apply another norm to the bible and to the Christian tradition as well as to contemporary experience. They question how that tradition or that experience functions, that is, whether or not, it serves to oppress or liberate people,¹⁶ especially women.

Thus, critique becomes prophetic proclamation, as distortions in the liberating word are named and false idols unmasked. But the task of feminist theological re-visioning does not end with critique. It moves toward rebuilding theology into a more adequate reflection of a human experience which includes women.

IV. SHADES OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY

The different subgroups among feminists have been categorized variously. Ron Rhode has classified them as secular feminists, New Age feminists, liberal Christian feminists, and evangelical feminists. Before attempting to deal with their differences it is necessary to note that all feminist theologians agree on at least one issue: the patriarchal model for doing theology, developed and maintained over almost two thousand years can no longer be tolerated.¹⁷ Another point, on which most feminists agree, is the central role of experience in their theologizing.

Secular feminists are humanists who disallow God, revelation, and religion in the discussion of feminism. They view the Bible as a major source of chauvinist ideas and a relic of antiquity that has no relevance to the ongoing debate over the roles of men and women in modern society.

New Age feminists have been termed pagans by Rhodes since they are typically involved in the worship of a feminine deity or goddess.

¹⁵ Sharon Ringe. "A Gentle Woman's Story", In *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Letty Russell (ed) Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984 p. 66

¹⁶ Fulkerson, M. Mary, *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994 p.51-54

¹⁷ Ron Rhodes, The Debate Over Feminist Theology: Which View Is Biblical?www.CRL.org accessed 1/9/2014

Liberal Christian feminists operate within a Christian framework but approach feminism (and theology in general) from a very liberal perspective. They believe the Bible writers were simply men of their times and were limited in their perspectives.

Evangelical feminists are those who generally (not always) hold to conservative views on the Bible and theology but who nevertheless embrace the feminist ideal of abolishing gender-based roles in society, church, and home. They believe the Bible is authoritative and, rightly understood, supports their feminist views.

IV. BASIC TEACHINGS OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY

a. Feminist Approach to the Bible

Feminist biblical work today is marked by continuity and discontinuity with traditional hermeneutics. Feminists are another link in the long chain of those who with dedication have read the Bible from ancient times up to the present and who have tried to liberate the Bible from the captivity of the past so that it can speak to contemporary people.¹⁸ What then makes the feminist Biblical work radically new and of a discontinuous nature? Historical research has taught us that the Bible is the human work of people who throughout the centuries have registered their own and other people's experiences with God. They did it in the language and in the way of thinking of their times. The experience with God was going through the prism of the human eye, human mind and human heart. The biblical message was seen through the prism of male experience and it bears visible signs of this reality. We have to go further: all the biblical authors have lived and written in a patriarchal, androcentric society. Men were at its centre, Women and children on the margin. This reality is also clearly noticeable in the biblical writings in their use of androcentric language.¹⁹

Therefore, a differentiation of biblical voices is necessary. Schussler Fiorenza defends the principle of critical examination and evaluation of all biblical texts. She asserts that: "a feminist interpreter approaching any text should ask whether the text contribute or not to a wholesome healthy being, to a good life and freedom for women."²⁰ According to this criterion it is possible to find God's revelation and

¹⁸ Zhang, Li. "Religious Affiliation, Religiosity, and Male-Female Fertility" *Demographic Research Volume 18 Article 8*, p. 233-262 April, 2008. www.demographic-research.org accessed 2/9/2014.

¹⁹ Ursula King. *Feminist Theology from the Third World* New York: Orbis Books, 1994.

²⁰ Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origin*, New York: Crossroad, 1984 p. 286.

truth only in the texts and traditions which transcend and criticize the patriarchal culture and the religion of their times. Only the non- sexist biblical traditions can claim that they are God's revelation.²¹ In the view of feminist theologians it is necessary "to defeat the Bible as a patriarchal authority by using it as a liberator" That is not easy. It is not easy to bear this paradox: to read the same book as an enslaver and a liberator But it can be done and it must be done.²²

b. Feminist and God

The feminist acclaims that all our human talk about God is very untruthful, in fact, it is always mere stammering. Our images and metaphors cannot do justice to God's reality. Besides calling God Father, it is proper to see and to call God's reality a mother, a sister, a friend, etc. Metaphors from the area of nature as they were used by medieval mystics: God as an ocean, as fire and so on is applicable. It is just abstract designations: God as source, as death and foundation of our existence.²³ Feminists react against the idea that the male of the human species is most truly representative of God. Margaret Howe, one of the more prominent feminist theologians today, notes that this idea is largely based on Old Testament imagery that represents God as "Father," and ignores the Scriptures which typify God as "Mother." The Lord, for example, is portrayed as a nursing mother (Isa. 49:15), midwife (Ps. 22:9-10), and a female homemaker (Ps. 123:2).²⁴

In view of the tendency to view God as a male, Howe says the sexuality of God has often been stressed rather than His personhood. But "we are in the realm of mythology," she retorts, "when we conceptualize God as male, rather than female, just as we would be if we considered him to be female rather than male. The being of God transcends the limitations of sexuality."²⁵

According to Martin Joan "The Divine must be understood in categories of a relationship of opposites which are harmonious and dynamic in themselves: present and hidden, powerful and powerless, suffering and confronting, Mother and Father, punishing and saving"²⁶. And still one voice:

²¹ Amba Oduyoye. *Hearing & Knowing: Theological Revelations of Christianity in Africa*. New York: Orbis, 1986

²² Kwok Pui-Lan *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2005.

²³ Jana Opocenska, "Feminist Theology" www.WCCGeneva.com accessed 28/8/2014.

²⁴ Margaret Howe, *Women and Church Leadership* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982, 139.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Martin Joan, *Is Leadership Male?* Milton Keynes: Nelson Word, 1996, P. 41

“The last word as well as the first word in theology is surrounded by silence. We know ... that when we try to speak of God there is nothing which resembles what we can conceive when we say that word,”²⁷ hence, God should not be represented as male for He is all inclusive.

c. Feminist and Christology

Marcella Althaus-Reid states: “The fact is that the Christological process starts not with the first meetings of church councils but with the construction of the Christ, the Messiah, a process that depends on the interrelationality between a man called Jesus and a community of women, men and children”²⁸ Leaping over the dualistic division male-female, the feminist believed that the Divine – also not male, nor female, or both – was incarnated in a human being and as such, in humanity in this world. Jesus as incarnation happened to be male. But it is not Jesus as divine person, being the only Son of God who saves or liberates. Jesus is an icon, a shining example of persons who, in the course of history, have lived in a way that shows others how the Divine is, and what humanity really is and can be.²⁹ This gives way to female imagery of the Christ. Edwina Sandys sculpted the first contemporary Christa, a female hanging on the cross, in 1975. Many women were touched and empowered by this image. Many persons were disgusted, finding a crucified woman an inappropriate image as a Christian icon

Taking the embodiment, the humanness of Jesus seriously, draws attention to Jesus’ relationality, his touching and healing of people. Mary Grey can be an example of feminist thinkers who apply the ideas of Process Theology and relationality to Christology. According to Grey, if one accepts that interrelationality and mutuality in equality are “at the heart of reality, at the heart of the great divine creative redemptive dynamism, participating in this must be ‘holiness’ ... Sin must therefore be acting against the relational grain of living.” Jesus is the icon of relational living and dying. He stands for Sophia, the Wisdom of Fools³⁰, who reveals to us who God is.

Several feminist theologians have taken up important issues of feminist Christology and taken them together in the image of Christ Sophia, or, as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza says: Jesus, Sophia’s prophet

²⁷ Sallie McFague Metaphorical Theology, www.academicroom.com/article/sallie-metaphorical-theology accessed 16/9/2014.

²⁸ Marcella Althaus-Reid, “What is Feminist Theology?” www.voicesof Sophia.wordpress.com p. 68

²⁹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism*, New York: Crossroad, 1981, p. 47

³⁰ Grey Mary. *Patriarch as a Conceptual Trap*. Massachusetts: Roundtable, 1982, p.36

(Sophia is the Greek word for wisdom). Sophia is Divine Wisdom. Her role and position are described in Proverbs 8. She is the first attribute of the Divine, Co-creatix. She is the spokeswoman, the Voice of the Divine, voicing the Divine's passion for just relation. In the period between the Testaments חכמה (wisdom), was personified in femininity.³¹ Elizabeth Johnson is convinced that the early church used many of the traditions about the personified Sophia in order to come to an understanding of who Jesus was. For Johnson the identification of Jesus with personified wisdom illustrates the importance of everyday living in the unfolding of the kingdom and it offers female metaphors as part of the divine process.³² Inclusion becomes the central element of salvation: those who are normally excluded are counted as friends, loved, not only tolerated or forgiven.

The stories of the resurrection illustrate how Sophia rises again and again in unimaginable ways, asserting that the gift of life cannot be overcome even by extreme torture and death. Johnson, as is typical for feminist theologians, takes incarnation as a key concept in Christology. In the Christ/Sophia we see the Divine. In incarnation we witness the Divine in human flesh as an illustration of a core-characteristic of the Divine: S/He lets herself be known and met in all creation.³³ The passion for just relations and inspiring, caring and sustaining community can alter this world if Sophia/Christ is allowed to rise in everyone's life. Sophia is practical wisdom, embodied, in Her flesh can become Word.

d. Female Subordination in Marriage: A Result of the Curse.

Feminists argue that male headship and female subordination in the marital relationship is a part of the curse. Indeed, in Genesis 3:16 God pronounced judgment against the woman: "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Mollenkott argues that "sin enters the human condition in Genesis 3. Only after Adam and Eve have substituted their will for God's will does the specter of male supremacy and female subordination enter the picture."³⁴ Feminist Gilbert Bilezikian thus argues that "it is proper to regard both male dominance

³¹ Fiorenza Elizabeth S. *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*. New York: Orbis Books, 1996

³² Johnson Elizabeth, *Feminism in Faith* [www.catholic.com/authors/Elizabeth Johnson](http://www.catholic.com/authors/Elizabeth%20Johnson), 120-134

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Mollenkot, Virginal Ramey. *Sensuous Spirituality: Out from Fundamentalism*. New York: Crossroads, 1992

and death as being antithetical to God's original intent in creation. Both are the result of sin, itself instigated by Satan. Their origin is satanic.³⁵

The good news, feminists say, is that in Christ "the life-giving law of the Spirit has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). Theologically speaking, Howe argues, "the death of Christ released humanity from the curse brought about by sin. Woman is no longer to be subjugated under male headship. The mutual and complementary relationship that Adam and Eve enjoyed before the Fall may now be restored."³⁶

d. Equality in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

One might say that the theme verse for Feminism is Galatians 3:28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Feminists argue that Paul is not speaking in this verse about the equality of men and women in their spiritual standing before God, but of the practical outworking of that standing in society. Richard and Joyce Boldrey assert that "Galatians 3:28 does not say God loves each of you, but stay in your places; it says that there are no longer places, no longer categories, no longer differences in rights and privileges, codes and values."³⁷ Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty suggest that in view of Galatians 3:28, "all social distinctions between men and women should be erased in the church."³⁸

AN EVALUATION OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Feminist liberation theology has without doubt made some important, positive contributions. Few of the more notable are mentioned here. First, feminist theology has called attention to the invaluable role women have played in the church throughout Christian history. Second, feminist theology has rightly pointed to the failure of many men in fulfilling their God-appointed roles of loving their wives as Christ loved the church. If Christian husbands through the centuries had been consistently faithful in following this one injunction, the controversy over gender-based roles in the church could have been avoided (or at least substantially diminished). And third, feminist theology serves as an indictment

³⁵ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985, p. 56.

³⁶ Howe, 273

³⁷ Richard and Joyce Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976, p. 33

³⁸ Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be*, Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974, p. 72.

against the abuse and oppression that women have all too often suffered at the hands of chauvinist men. These contributions are important and extremely relevant.

Despite these contributions, however, there are some serious problems that must be addressed. Therefore the critique shall be handled upon the biblical premises pivotal of feminist theology - that is, that female subordination is a result of the Fall, and that in Christ all social hierarchy has been obliterated. If this premise is shown to be in error, then the feminist position on many New Testament passages - including 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36, Galatians 3:28, and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 - is in serious jeopardy.

Feminists appeal to God's judgment against the woman in Genesis 3:16 –“man will rule over you” - in their attempt to prove that female subordination was caused by the Fall. A grammatical look at the text reveals, however, that this is not the case. Male headship is not established in the judgment, male headship based on this verse is not true to the text. For the text in its original manuscript reads $\alpha\beta\gamma\delta\epsilon\zeta\eta\theta\iota\kappa\lambda\mu\nu\xi\omicron\pi\rho\sigma\tau\upsilon\phi\chi\psi\omega\pi\alpha\beta\gamma\delta\epsilon\zeta\eta\theta\iota\kappa\lambda\mu\nu\xi\omicron\pi\rho\sigma\tau\upsilon\phi\chi\psi\omega\pi$ (he will rule in/by/with you). The $\beta\gamma\delta\epsilon\zeta\eta\theta\iota\kappa\lambda\mu\nu\xi\omicron\pi\rho\sigma\tau\upsilon\phi\chi\psi\omega\pi$ preposition translated ‘over’ in the English translations was actually a coloured interpretation. Hence, both the Feminist and the Patriarchist are wrong in their usage of the text. God's judgment in Genesis 3: 16 is never a justification for oppression.

Equal in Christ (Gal. 3:28). When Paul says “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” in Christ (Gal. 3:28), he seems to be alluding to the morning prayer of Jewish men in which they thanked God that they were not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. And thereby establishing the positional equality of all human race before God, so far they have accepted Christ. Contextually, the verses that precede Galatians 3:28 pertain to justification by faith and how a person comes to be included in the blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 15-25). Then, in verse 26, Paul says “you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” In this text, the term son implies heir (cf. 4:7, 31). All our (he/she) heirs in Christ Jesus, God relates with no person base on his/her gender. However, the text does not advocate elimination of gender-based roles. Ontological equality and social hierarchy are not mutually exclusive. The doctrine of the Trinity illustrates this: Jesus is equal to the Father in terms of His being, but He voluntarily submits to the Father's leadership. There is no contradiction in affirming both an equality of being and a functional differential in role should not be termed subordination rather, complimentary.

CONCLUSION

The writer in this paper has examined the meaning of feminist theology, the methods of doing feminist theology, its basic teaching, and evaluated some of the feminist positions, using a grammatical hermeneutics method of interpretation. It is deplorable that so many men throughout history have misused and abused God's ordained authority structure by oppressing and dominating women, sometimes justifying their actions by misapplications of the passages discussed in this article. Such misapplications must be condemned as a gross distortion of God's original design for man and woman. However, liberation from men's domination is not a justifiable ground for Feminist distortion of the sacred text -the Bible. A correct interpretation of the Bible, taking into consideration its grammatical-syntactical context, and the appropriate application thereof, will bring about harmonious relationship conquering the male-female sexism battle in the contemporary world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abogunrin, S.O. *Biblical Studies and the Gender Problem*. Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies: Ibadan, 2003.
- Ackermann, Denise. "Feminist Liberation Theology" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 1985, no52.
- Amba Oduyoye. *Hearing & Knowing: Theological Revelations of Christianity in Africa*. New York: Orbis, 1986
- Davaney, Sheila *Trends in Feminist Theology* www.ChristianTheology.wordpress.com
Accessed 2/9/2014
- Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origin*, New York: Crossroad, 1984.
- Fiorenza, Elizabeth S. (ed) *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*. New York: Crossroad, 1994
- _____. *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*. New York: Orbis Books, 1996
- Fulkerson, M. Mary, *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
- Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985
- Grey Mary. *Patriarch as a Conceptual Trap*. Massachusetts: Roundtable, 1982.
- Jana Opocenska, "Feminist Theology" www.WCCGeneva.com accessed 28/8/2014.
- John Pobee. *Biblical Studies and Feminism in the African Context*. National Association of Biblical Studies (NABIS Western Zone), Ibadan: Nigeria, 2012.
- Johnson Elizabeth, *Feminism in Faith* [www.catholic.org/authors/Elizabeth Johnson](http://www.catholic.org/authors/Elizabeth%20Johnson),
Accessed 28/9/2014.
- Kwok Pui-Lan *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2005.
- Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be*, Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974

- Marcella Althaus-Reid, "What is Feminist Theology?" www.voicesofSophia.wordpress.com p. 68
- Margaret Howe, *Women and Church Leadership* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982.
- Martin Joan, *Is Leadership Male?* Milton Keynes: Nelson Word, 1996.
- Mollenkot, Virginal Ramey. *Sensous Spirituality: Out from Fundamentalism*. New York: Crossroads, 1992
- Oyeronke Olademo. *Biblical Studies and Feminism in the African Context*. National Association of Biblical Studies (NABIS Western Zone), Ibadan: Nigeria, 2012.
- Richard and Joyce Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976.
- Ron Rhodes, *The Debate Over Feminist Theology: Which View Is Biblical?* www.CRL.org accessed 1/9/2014
- Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* Boston: Beacon Press, 2000.
- _____ *Sexism & God-Talk*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.
- _____ *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism*, New York: Crossroad, 1981.
- Sharon Ringe. "A Gentle Woman's Story", In *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Letty Russell (ed) Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.
- Sallie McFague *Metaphorical Theology*, www.academicroom.com/article/sallie-metaphorical-theology accessed 16/9/2014
- Ursula King (1994) *Feminist Theology from the Third World*. Orbis Books: New York, 1994.
- Zikmund, B. "Feminist Consciousness in Historical Perspective", in L.M. Russell (ed) *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985.