

“Gender Studies has had a significant impact on the way we read the Bible”. Do you agree with this statement? Make sure you provide biblical examples.

Over the past half-century, Gender Studies has exerted a significant influence on biblical interpretation, not by introducing a single unified method but by reshaping the assumptions and criteria through which Scripture is read. Through feminist and gender-critical engagement, interpretation has shifted away from putatively neutral or self-evident meanings towards sustained attention to power, embodiment, and reception history. In this respect, the impact of Gender Studies is understood as hermeneutical rather than exegetical.

This reorientation is especially evident in feminist engagement with Genesis 1–3. As the foundational scriptural account of humanity, sexual difference, and relational ordering, these creation narratives have long functioned as a primary reference point for normative claims concerning gender and authority. Because appeals to creation have historically justified hierarchical configurations, feminist scholars have repeatedly returned to these chapters to interrogate the traditions of interpretation through which such claims were stabilised. The resulting contestation raises a deeper question of whether sexual difference is intrinsic to the biblical vision of creation or imposed through inherited hermeneutical frameworks.

This analysis argues that Gender Studies has reshaped the way the Bible is read by bringing these underlying commitments into view, while maintaining that not all gender-critical trajectories are hermeneutically equivalent. By distinguishing between feminist exegetical retrieval and feminist theological reconstruction, and by situating debates over Genesis 1–3 within wider cosmological assumptions about creation, embodiment, and difference, it proposes classical Christian theology as necessary to orient feminist and gender-critical interpretation of Scripture. In doing so, it affirms the exposure of domination within the tradition while resisting readings that construe sexual difference itself as a problem to be overcome.

One of the central ways in which Gender Studies has shaped biblical interpretation has been its reorientation of how meaning is approached and adjudicated within the act of reading itself. Rather than treating Scripture primarily as a repository of determinate meanings awaiting recovery, gender-critical reading—often articulated within the discipline as a form of feminist hermeneutics—approaches the biblical text as a site in which social imaginaries, symbolic orders, and power relations are both reflected and

contested.¹ Interpretation is thereby redirected from the extraction of presumed self-evident meaning to the critical examination of how particular readings have been authorised, stabilised, and transmitted within theological tradition. In this way, Gender Studies reshapes the reading of Scripture by transforming the criteria through which meaning itself is discerned.

If feminist and gender-critical approaches reconfigure how biblical meaning is adjudicated, Genesis 1–3 emerges as the paradigmatic site where these interpretive concerns converge. As the primary biblical point of reference for theological anthropology, sexual difference, and relational ordering, the creation narratives have long functioned as a hermeneutical locus for subsequent theological claims about gender, authority, and embodiment. Precisely because these chapters have been repeatedly invoked to ground normative accounts of human nature, marriage, and hierarchy,² they have also become among the most intensively scrutinised texts within gender-aware interpretation. Feminist re-readings of Genesis 1–3 therefore do not arise arbitrarily but respond to the formative role these narratives play in shaping how Scripture is read as a coherent theological whole. The interpretive contestation surrounding Genesis thus exposes a deeper question of whether gendered difference is to be read as intrinsic to the biblical vision of creation, or as a structure imposed and sustained through inherited interpretive frameworks.

Applied to Genesis 1–3, this gender-critical reorientation is exemplified paradigmatically in Phyllis Trible's use of rhetorical criticism. Rather than approaching the text with the presupposition that it encodes fixed hierarchies of gender and authority, Trible attends closely to its literary structure, lexical and rhetorical patterns, and narrative dynamics in order to show how androcentric conclusions have often arisen from inherited interpretive

¹ Feminist and gender-critical approaches are best understood as critical hermeneutical frameworks rather than discrete exegetical methods. They interrogate how biblical meaning is produced, authorised, and transmitted by foregrounding the role of embodiment and power in interpretation. Such approaches emphasise that biblical interpretation is 'thoroughly contextual' and 'shaped by the social location (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc.) and faith commitments of the interpreter'. The determination of which interpretations are treated as valid or authoritative is 'ultimately a matter of power', given the cultural and theological authority vested in Scripture. See Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler (eds.), *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World: An Introduction to Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Katharine Doob Sakenfeld* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), pp. xii.

² Susan Niditch observes that 'Jewish and Christian traditions postdating the Hebrew Bible and a long history of Western scholarship have viewed woman's creation in Genesis 2 as secondary and derivative—evidence of her lower status', thereby establishing Genesis 2–3 as a foundational text for normative claims about gender hierarchy and authority. Ann Loades similarly remarks that '[t]here can be no doubt that the use of biblical texts has long sustained convictions concerning women's inferiority and consequent subordination to men' and explicitly identifies '[c]ritique and evaluation of Genesis chapters two and three' as 'of considerable importance'. See Susan Niditch, 'Genesis', in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. by C. A. Newsom and S. H. Ringe (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 10–25 (p. 13); and Ann Loades, 'Feminist Interpretation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by J. Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 81–94 (p. 83).

frameworks rather than from the internal logic of the text itself.³ The interpretive shift in question is therefore not from affirmation to rejection of Scripture, but from construing the text as deficient to interrogating the interpretive traditions that have shaped its reception. Genesis 2–3 thus becomes a test case for how feminist hermeneutics transforms biblical reading, shifting attention away from the recovery of an ostensibly self-evident meaning towards critical engagement with the history by which certain meanings have been normalised and rendered authoritative. In this respect, feminist engagement with Genesis 1–3 exemplifies how Gender Studies has reshaped biblical interpretation at the level of hermeneutical discernment rather than merely exegetical conclusion.

A crucial distinction must be drawn between feminist exegetical engagement with Scripture and feminist theological reconstruction. Feminist exegesis, as exemplified in the work of scholars such as Phyllis Trible, operates primarily at the level of critical retrieval, interrogating how biblical texts have been traditionally read, identifying the androcentric assumptions that govern inherited interpretations, and seeking to recover latent textual possibilities without abandoning the integrity of the scriptural canon. Feminist theology, by contrast, moves beyond exegetical critique towards normative theological reconfiguration. Here the Bible is no longer approached solely as a text to be re-read but as a symbolic and theological resource whose fundamental categories—God, creation, salvation, authority, and embodiment—are themselves subjected to critical reassessment. This shift signals a substantive transformation in how Scripture functions within interpretation. Rather than serving primarily as a site of textual meaning to be clarified or retrieved, the Bible becomes a locus of contestation in which core theological symbols are

³ Phyllis Trible challenges the assumption that Genesis 2–3 ‘proclaims male superiority and female inferiority as the will of God’, arguing that such conclusions arise from ‘traditional interpretations’ which have, over time, ‘acquired a status of canonicity’, even though ‘most of them are simply not present in the story itself’ (p. 73). She maintains that these patriarchal readings persist not because they are demanded by the text, but because they have been stabilised through interpretive repetition. More broadly, while acknowledging that ‘the patriarchal stamp of scripture is permanent’, Trible insists that ‘the interpretation of its content is forever changing’, as ‘new occasions teach new duties and contexts alter texts’, thereby ‘liberating them from frozen constructions’ (p. 202). See Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 72–73, 202.

evaluated according to their capacity to sustain or disrupt relations of power.⁴ The influence of Gender Studies is thus most clearly discerned not simply in new readings of particular passages but in the reordering of interpretive priorities that accompanies feminist theology's turn from textual critique to theological reconstruction.

This reorientation is given systematic expression in the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, whose feminist theology reconceives Scripture as a contested site of both oppression and empowerment. Rejecting attempts either to defend the Bible uncritically or to abandon it as irredeemably patriarchal, Schüssler Fiorenza maintains that the same texts which have authorised women's marginalisation have also preserved suppressed memories of female agency, leadership, and religious authority. Her hermeneutical orientation is therefore shaped by the task of remembrance—the recovery of silenced histories and erased voices within the biblical tradition, understood as a normative theological practice oriented towards liberation. On this account, biblical interpretation is redirected away from primary concern with textual coherence or doctrinal harmony towards analysis of how power operates within Scripture's symbolic world and its subsequent reception. Authority is no longer grounded primarily in canonical status or apostolic continuity but is assessed according to Scripture's capacity to generate emancipatory praxis within concrete historical communities.⁵ In its most radical formulation, this reorientation entails a relocation of the locus of divine revelation away from the biblical canon and ecclesial tradition towards the lived experience of oppressed communities themselves, which functions as the primary interpretive criterion

⁴ This reconfiguration of Scripture as a contested symbolic field is articulated explicitly within feminist theology. Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that 'the maleness of Jesus has no ultimate significance', possessing only 'social symbolic significance in the framework of societies of patriarchal privilege', such that Jesus' significance lies in the kenotic subversion of hierarchical power rather than in any ontological or sacramental mediation tied to his sex (p. 137). Monica Migliorino Miller critically situates this claim within a broader feminist re-evaluation of Christian symbols, observing that in such frameworks 'Christ's male body has no redemptive sacramental value' (p. 12), since salvation is no longer mediated through Christ's embodied person but through egalitarian praxis and communal transformation. Redemption is therefore understood as 'not mediated by Christ alone as *symbol* but by *Christ and the Church*' (p. 11), with sacramental and doctrinal symbols evaluated primarily in terms of their social and ecclesial effects—particularly their relation to equality, hierarchy, and domination—rather than their participation in an objective order of creation and redemption (pp. 15–16). See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983), p. 137; and Monica Migliorino Miller, *Sexuality and Authority in the Catholic Church* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1995), pp. 11–12, 15–16.

⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that 'the Bible is source for women's religious power as well as for their religious oppression throughout the history of Christianity to the present', and contends that a feminist theology of liberation 'must cease its attempts to rescue the Bible from its feminist critics', since 'the source of our power is also the source of our oppression' (p. 35). Within this framework, biblical authority is no longer treated as self-validating by virtue of canonical status alone, but is evaluated according to whether Scripture functions as a resource for liberation or as a mechanism of domination within concrete historical communities. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1983), p. 35.

for judging both Scripture and tradition.⁶ Accordingly, the Bible functions less as a repository of settled meaning than as a theological resource whose significance emerges through critical engagement with structures of domination and exclusion embedded in both text and tradition.

A more radical trajectory within feminist theology is represented by Mary Daly, whose engagement with Gender Studies moves beyond reconstructive re-reading towards a fundamental rupture with inherited biblical and Christian symbolic systems. Daly argues that the God-language and theological imagery of the Christian tradition are not contingently but structurally patriarchal, functioning to legitimate male dominance and to alienate women from their own embodied becoming.⁷ Within this framework, liberation cannot be achieved through the reinterpretation of Scripture but requires a decisive break from its symbolic grammar altogether. Authority is therefore relocated away from canonical texts and ecclesial continuity towards women's experience, imagination, and transformative praxis. Here, Gender Studies reshapes biblical reading not by re-evaluating Scripture from within its own symbolic and theological logic but by subjecting it to external criteria of liberation—thereby altering not only the conclusions drawn from biblical texts but the role Scripture itself is permitted to play within theological reasoning.

Before particular texts are interpreted or contested, biblical reading is already governed by deeper, often unarticulated assumptions about the nature of reality itself. These assumptions—cosmological rather than merely exegetical—concern the status of creation, embodiment, and differentiation, and function as a grammar that determines in advance what Scripture is permitted to say. Disagreements over Genesis 1–3 therefore cannot be reduced to competing interpretations of isolated passages but instead reflect divergent accounts of whether difference is constitutive of created goodness or a sign of disorder to be overcome.

⁶ Fiorenza articulates this relocation of authority and revelation with particular clarity, arguing that '[t]he locus or place of divine revelation and grace is therefore not the Bible or the tradition of a patriarchal church but the *ekklesia* of women and the lives of women who live the "option for our women selves"'. Revelation is thus identified not with canonical texts or ecclesial tradition as such but with 'the experience of women (and all those oppressed) struggling for liberation from patriarchal oppression', where divine disclosure is mediated through emancipatory praxis rather than through Scripture alone. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Will to Choose or to Reject: Continuing Our Critical Work', in Letty M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 125–136 (p. 128).

⁷ Mary Daly contends that the symbolic and theological language of Christianity is not merely historically conditioned but structurally patriarchal, arguing that 'if God is male, then the male is God', and that the persistence of the 'divine patriarch' within Christian discourse functions to legitimate male dominance at the level of the collective imagination (p. 19). On this basis, she rejects attempts to reform Christian symbolism through reinterpretation, insisting instead upon the necessity of transforming the imaginative frameworks through which transcendence itself is conceived. Daly extends this critique to biblical myth, describing the Genesis narrative as 'a prototypic case of false naming' in which 'the male's viewpoint is metamorphosed into God's viewpoint', thereby rendering inherited scriptural symbolism complicit in the alienation of women rather than a viable resource for their liberation (p. 47). See Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 19, 47.

Across a range of pre-Judaic and gnostic cosmological frameworks, reality is structured according to a logic in which primordial unity precedes differentiation and multiplicity is interpreted as ontological loss, fragmentation, or decline. Difference—particularly sexual differentiation—is therefore associated with distance from the divine, while embodied existence is construed as a constraining or alienating condition. Within such symbolic grammars, salvation is imagined not as the restoration or fulfilment of differentiated relationality but as a return to undifferentiated unity through ascent, knowledge, or the transcendence of material particularity. Although diverse in expression, these frameworks share the assumption that created distinction is metaphysically suspect and that narratives of creation and embodiment must therefore be read as provisional stages to be overcome rather than as affirmations of an intended order.⁸

These tensions were not absent from early Christian theology itself. Patristic debates concerning the status of embodiment and sexual difference reveal an ongoing struggle to articulate the relation between creation and salvation. Origen, drawing upon Platonic and ascetical traditions, allows for the reading that sexual differentiation belongs to a provisional economy destined to be transcended in the eschaton, thereby aligning redemption with a return to primordial unity.⁹ By contrast, Augustine decisively resists this logic, insisting that sexual difference belongs to the good order of creation and is not erased, but healed, by redemption. For Augustine, the Fall distorts relationality without nullifying the ontological goodness of embodied distinction—a position

⁸ Ancient Near Eastern cosmological traditions commonly depict primordial reality as an undifferentiated unity from which order emerges only through subsequent separation or conflict. In the Babylonian *Enūma eliš*, creation begins from a condition in which Apsū and Tiamat 'had mingled their waters together', indicating a primordial unity prior to differentiation (Lambert, p. 51). Hermann Gunkel similarly observes that, in both Babylonian and early Israelite mythic materials, 'the creation of the world follows the defeat of the monster', such that cosmic order is established only after the containment of an antecedent, resistant plurality (p. 77). Gunkel's identification of *tēhôm* with Tiamat is descriptive rather than normative: while Genesis inherits elements of this mythic grammar, it simultaneously demythologises it, reconfiguring creation as intentional, non-violent differentiation rather than as a secondary order produced through conflict. By contrast, gnostic and emanationist frameworks retain the older valuation in which differentiation marks ontological decline and salvation consists in return to undifferentiated unity. See W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), p. 51; and Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton*, trans. by K. W. Whitney (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 74–77.

⁹ Origen's speculative eschatology is structured by a metaphysical logic in which multiplicity arises from an original unity and is ultimately restored to it. In *On First Principles*, he maintains that 'the end is always like the beginning', such that 'from one beginning arise many differences and varieties, which in their turn are restored . . . to one end, which is like the beginning' (p. 53). Differentiation is thus associated with a movement away from primal blessedness, corresponding to varying degrees of 'lapse' or 'departure and defection from goodness' (p. 54), while redemption is construed as a return to unity through subjection to Christ. Humanity itself belongs to this provisional economy, having been constituted 'in the hope of restoring it . . . to that unity' promised in the eschaton (p. 55). Although Origen does not explicitly single out sexual difference, his framework—shaped by Platonic and ascetic currents—renders embodied differentiation contingent rather than ultimate, thereby permitting its interpretation as a condition destined to be transcended rather than eternally affirmed. See Origen, *On First Principles*, trans. by G. W. Butterworth (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), I.VI, pp. 53–55.

grounded in his sustained defence of sexual difference as intrinsic to the created good rather than a postlapsarian defect.¹⁰ This clarification proves hermeneutically decisive, securing a reading of Genesis in which differentiation is not a problem to be overcome but a created good whose meaning is fulfilled rather than negated within salvation history.

Against this backdrop, it becomes possible to see how certain strands of feminist theology reproduce, in inverted form, older cosmological assumptions, even as they seek to critique structures of domination. Where pre-Judaic and gnostic frameworks construed differentiation as ontological decline, these approaches reinterpret difference—particularly sexual difference—as a structure of domination to be overcome. Liberation is thus imagined not as the healing or fulfilment of embodied relationality but as the transcendence of sexed distinction itself. The difficulty here is not that such approaches embrace gnosticism but that they replicate an evaluative posture towards difference in which sexual distinction is construed as a problem requiring resolution rather than a feature of creation requiring redemption. The result is a hermeneutic where the biblical affirmation of differentiated embodiment is displaced by a suspicion of difference as such. The hermeneutical consequence is that creation narratives are no longer read as affirmations of an intended order but as symbolic problems requiring correction. Consequently, disputes over Genesis 1–3 are not merely contests over textual meaning but turn on deeper metaphysical assumptions concerning how creation, embodiment, and difference are construed. It is at this level that Gender Studies has exerted a particularly significant influence on biblical interpretation, setting the stage for a reconfiguration of how Genesis 1–3 is read.

Genesis 1–3 occupies a central position within contemporary debates on gender, functioning as the foundational scriptural account in which humanity, sexual difference, relationality, and authority are first articulated. For this reason, these chapters have become a focal point for assessing whether the Bible's creation narrative affirms hierarchy or instead supports differentiated relationality without domination. Gender-critical re-readings, particularly feminist interpretations, have accordingly identified Genesis 1–3 as pivotal for evaluating how sexual difference is construed in Scripture, given that appeals

¹⁰ Augustine explicitly affirms that sexual differentiation belongs to the created good order and is not a postlapsarian defect. Interpreting Genesis 1:27–28, he insists that humanity was created as 'two sexes manifestly distinct' (XIV.22, p. 38) for the purpose of generation, and that this differentiation was itself blessed by God prior to sin. The Fall, therefore, does not abolish sexual distinction but introduces disorder into its exercise, such that what was originally subject to the will became disordered, giving rise to disobedience and shame (XIV.16–17). Redemption, accordingly, does not negate embodied difference but heals what has been 'vitiating and depraved' (XIV.11, p. 23), restoring nature rather than annulling it. Augustine thus maintains that sin distorts relationality without negating the ontological goodness of embodied distinction. See Augustine, *The City of God*, Volume II, ed. and trans. by Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), XIV.11 (pp. 22–25); XIV.16–17 (pp. 31–34); and XIV.22–23 (pp. 38–41).

to creation have historically been invoked to justify normative gender roles.¹¹ These chapters have thus become a contested interpretive site where the central question is not only what the text says but how its symbolic logic is to be received and evaluated. Disagreement over Genesis 1–3 therefore discloses a deeper hermeneutical divergence concerning the status of creation itself—specifically, whether sexual differentiation is an intended feature of the created order or a condition to be reinterpreted as the product of postlapsarian distortion.

The narrative sequencing and lexical distinctions of Genesis 1–3 do not readily support readings that construe sexual differentiation as inherently hierarchical. In Genesis 1:26–27, humanity (*ʾādhām*) is presented as a collective singular¹² created in the image (*ṣelem*) and likeness (*demût*) of God,¹³ with male and female differentiated within this shared vocation rather than as prior conditions for it. Sexual distinction thus belongs within that vocation as a mode of relational expression rather than as a qualifier of participation in the *imago Dei*, functioning analogically rather than as an ontological criterion. Likewise, the creation of woman in Genesis 2 is framed not in terms of derivation or subordination but of correspondence. The woman is given as an *ʿēzer kěnegdô*—a helper who stands in fitting relation to the human—a formulation denoting relational adequacy rather than hierarchical rank.¹⁴ The emergence of *ʾish* and *ʾishshah* (“man/woman”; Gen. 2:23) occurs simultaneously, marking the differentiation of humanity into sexual relation without establishing asymmetry of status.¹⁵ Read within this framework,

¹¹ Niditch observes that traditional readings have routinely treated the sequence of creation as indicative of hierarchy rather than relational ordering. She further emphasises that this evaluative framework reflects later interpretive traditions rather than an inevitable conclusion demanded by the Genesis narrative itself, which foregrounds conjugal closeness and shared participation in social and generative life. See Niditch, ‘Genesis’, pp. 13–14.

¹² F. Maas, ‘*ʾādhām*’, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. I, ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 75–87 (p. 75).

¹³ See F. J. Stendebach, ‘*ṣelem*’, in *TDOT*, vol. XII, ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 386–396 (pp. 387–388); and H. D. Preuss, ‘*dāmāh*’, in *TDOT*, vol. III, ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 250–260 (p. 257).

¹⁴ Tribble emphasises that the expression *ʿēzer kěnegdô* in Genesis 2:18 denotes neither assistance nor subordination but relational correspondence. While *ʿēzer* may describe a range of helping relationships in the Hebrew Bible—including God as Israel’s helper—it ‘does not specify positions within relationships’ and ‘does not imply inferiority’ by itself; rather, positional meaning arises only from ‘additional content or from context’. Crucially, the accompanying term *kěnegdô* ‘connotes equality—a helper who is a counterpart’, such that ‘woman is the helper equal to man’, standing neither above nor below him but alongside him in fitting relation. Tribble therefore concludes that Genesis 2 presents woman not as derivative or subordinate but as a corresponding partner. See Phyllis Tribble, ‘Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Tradition’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XLI.1 (1973), pp. 30–48 (p. 36). On the lexical range of *ʿēzer* as “help” or “support” as a relational rather than rank-denoting term, see H.-J. Fabry, ‘*ʿāzar*’, in *TDOT*, vol. XI, ed. by G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 12–18 (pp. 14–16).

¹⁵ N. P. Bratsiotis, ‘*ʾish*’, in *TDOT*, vol. I, pp. 222–235 (pp. 226–227).

Genesis 3:16 does not institute domination as a creational mandate but describes a distortion of relationality resulting from disobedience. Interpretations that locate hierarchy within the created order thus reflect not the internal logic of Genesis itself but a prior hermeneutical decision to construe difference as inherently oppressive rather than as a dimension of created relationality fractured by the Fall.

A further point of divergence emerges in how gender-critical interpretations construe the theological significance of difference itself. Where many feminist re-readings approach sexual differentiation primarily through the analytic of power, difference is often interpreted as a latent mechanism of domination requiring critique or dissolution. Phyllis Trible's interpretation of Genesis 2–3, however, suggests an alternative orientation. The creation of woman is framed not in terms of subordination but of relational adequacy, articulating a relation of correspondence rather than derivation.¹⁶ Within this interpretive framework, sexual difference is understood as a necessary and complementary feature of creation rather than as an expression of inherent inequality. Trible further underscores that the subordination articulated in Genesis 3 represents a postlapsarian distortion of relationality rather than an ontological feature of the created order.¹⁷ By contrast, feminist readings that construe difference primarily within the horizon of hierarchy risk transposing contemporary metaphysical concerns onto the text. The Genesis narrative itself, however, locates relational distortion not in the creation of difference but in the rupture introduced by disobedience. What is at stake, therefore, is not merely a dispute over exegetical detail but a question of hermeneutical posture—namely whether Scripture is permitted to articulate the meaning of difference within its own narrative economy or whether difference is treated as a problem to be resolved prior to, and independently of, the biblical account of creation and fall.

The foregoing analysis confirms that Gender Studies has influenced biblical interpretation by reshaping how Scripture is approached, questioned, and evaluated. Feminist and gender-critical readings have exposed the contingency of inherited interpretations, destabilised appeals to "plain" meaning, and drawn sustained attention to the role of power, embodiment, and reception history in the production of theological meaning. In this respect, their contribution is not merely exegetical but hermeneutical, altering the criteria by which biblical readings are judged persuasive or oppressive.

Yet classical Christian theology remains necessary to orient this critical project. While it affirms the exposure of domination and distortion within the tradition, it resists interpretive strategies that resolve such distortions by construing sexual difference itself as the problem to be overcome. The grammar of creation and redemption remains normative: differentiation is affirmed as part of the created good, while domination is located within the rupture of sin rather than within the structure of creation as such.

¹⁶ Trible, 'Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Tradition', p. 36.

¹⁷ Niditch, 'Genesis', pp. 13–14.

Accordingly, Gender Studies has reshaped the reading of Scripture by transforming the hermeneutical posture brought to the text. That influence, however, is neither neutral nor unlimited. Genesis 1–3 emerges as a decisive test case, revealing that the deepest disagreements concern not isolated exegetical details but prior metaphysical commitments regarding creation, embodiment, and difference. The question, therefore, is not whether gender matters for biblical interpretation but whether Scripture's own symbolic logic is permitted to govern the meaning of difference or whether that meaning is subordinated to frameworks external to the biblical account of creation and fall.

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