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*The Bible for All: Biblical Interpretation as a Grassroots Movement<sup>1</sup>*

**Abstract:**

In Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's proposed emancipatory paradigm, the biblical scholar must both analyze how the Bible is used to subjugate and imagine how those texts could form a more just world. If tenants of this emancipatory paradigm were practiced in the local church, the Bible's power could nurture a more just society. This paper explores how an emancipatory paradigm could be applied in local churches through analyzing the structure of its grassroots inspiration, Consciousness Raising Groups of the American Women's Liberation Movement, and also a similar South African method, Contextual Bible Study. In contrast to other models like the pastor theologian, the emancipatory paradigm resists hierarchical structures and instead invites all to the table of biblical interpretation.

**Keywords:** grassroots biblical interpretation, feminism, theological education, Church, Contextual Bible Study, emancipatory paradigm

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## Introduction

Pursuing objective interpretations motivates a secularizing push in biblical studies. Scholars like Hector Avalos and Philip R. Davies have advocated that the biblical text should be treated like any other ancient text and that it should not have authority or influence in contemporary life (Avalos 2007; Davies 2004).<sup>2</sup> Despite an ideal that secularism is freedom, religious adherence continues bringing religious texts into public discourse (Volf 2013: ix–x).<sup>3</sup> Even without the contributions of biblical scholars, the Bible has been used and will continue to be used in American public life and politics.<sup>4</sup> Often, its words are wielded to legitimize oppression and violence. For example, American politicians and pastors have preached American power and war from their Bibles (Schüssler Fiorenza 2008; Kittredge 2008).<sup>5</sup>

While the Bible, as critics point out, has legitimized authoritarianism and oppression, it has also sparked visions of equality and freedom for the oppressed (Dayton and Strong: 2014). To use scripture publicly involves an understanding of both the contents of the text and its varied influence on society. Instead of the secularization of biblical studies and the disengaged biblical scholar, feminist biblical scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza envisions an approach to biblical scholarship, interpretation, and teaching that directly addresses its public use. In her work, *Democratizing Biblical Studies: Toward an Emancipatory Educational Space*, Schüssler Fiorenza advocates for an emancipatory paradigm to have an equal voice at the table of biblical studies (2008: 82–83). In this paradigm, the biblical scholar becomes involved in their broader community's issues by understanding their social location and analyzing how scripture is used within their context (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 82). As Schüssler Fiorenza seeks to change the academic discipline of biblical studies, the tenants of the emancipatory paradigm could be used in the context of local congregations of the church. If infused into the theological education of the local church, the Bible's power could spark Christian grassroots movements that envision and advocate for a more just world inspired by the biblical text.

## The Emancipatory Paradigm and Women's Consciousness Raising Groups

There are no value free interpretations. Even interpretative methods that claim objectivity developed in particular contexts with particular goals and aims. For example, historical critical approaches to the Bible developed as an Enlightenment project over against church

dogma (Bruggemann 2011: 385–388). In light of scientific positivism, the critical methods seek to establish an objective understanding of the text or its historical circumstances by critically engaging its details rather than reading it through theology or the tenants of the church (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 68). Not only did critical methodologies have particular aims, the original practitioners, who were mostly European Protestant men, still had biases that influenced their findings and work (Davis 2012).<sup>6</sup> The critical methods, which claim objective interpretation and universality, arose from a particular historical situation and cultural context and thus reflects the interest of a particular group of people rather than a universal interpretation of scripture.

While critical methods were exciting and groundbreaking at their time, scholars of the text today face different problems and issues. These differences in contexts can push potential scholars out of biblical studies as they feel a disinterest and distance from critical approaches. As long-time scholar Walter Bruggemann (2011:389) observes, “There was a time when JEDP aroused great excitement or great resistance, but no more—now only a yawn, because the enigma of a world at risk makes such a quarrel a luxury that does not deserve our energy.” Critical methodologies (perhaps precisely because of their contextual location) still speak and are important to the study of scripture, but as Schüssler Fiorenza (2009: 83) indicates, these methodologies need to be in respectful conversation with other paradigms of biblical interpretation, like the emancipatory paradigm, rather than a hegemonic power.

Schüssler Fiorenza (2009: 91) makes clear the goals of the emancipatory paradigm; the emancipatory paradigm seeks the well-being of all people and to liberate them from structures of domination. This is not a disinterested approach but rather one filled with pathos as it looks at suffering within our world, analyses how the Bible is used to justify oppression, and also imagines how those texts could form a more just world. The general disinterest of the discipline of biblical studies at best makes many bystanders to violence and at worst compliant and enablers. Centering the subjugation of women, Schüssler Fiorenza (2008: 164) calls out the disinterestedness of biblical studies to their global condition, writing, “The scriptural roots of systemic inequality, abuse, violence, discrimination, starvation, poverty, neglect, and denial of wo/men’s rights, which afflict the lives of wo/men across the globe, are still not taken seriously by biblical

scholars but seen as an unacademic special-interest issue of middle-class white wo/men.” The emancipatory paradigm corrects a disinterested biblical studies field, holding interpreters accountable and pushing the discipline into the public sphere as it “situates biblical scholarship in such a way that its public character and political responsibility become an integral part of its contemporary readings and historical reconstructions” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 91).

For Schüssler Fiorenza, the Bible is inherently rhetorical and public, meaning that even within its original context, the text was written to create, shape, and order communities (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 91). To live into this power, one must understand the social location of the interpreter and also the Bible’s use in their context, particularly who interprets scripture and who benefits from that interpretation (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 15).<sup>7</sup> Since the Bible is rhetoric and its purpose is to shape community, interpretation is power.

Interpretation then, because it shapes communities of people, is not a solitary act. Truth is discovered within community as “truth and meaning are not a given fact or hidden revelation but are achieved in critical practices of deliberation” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 152). Within an interdependent community, biblical interpretation pulls from a wide wealth of experiences and wisdom. Good interpretation shifts from being a task accomplished by intellectual giants and returns to being developed through discussion and debate within a community of equals. As Schüssler Fiorenza (2008: 168) writes, “Instead of looking to ‘great books’ and ‘great men,’ a radical-democratic model of biblical reading/learning... engages in critical questions, exploration, and debate in order to arrive at a deliberative judgment about the Bible’s contributions to the ‘good life’.” The power of interpretation does not belong to outstanding individuals but to a renewed community who regards each other as equals and who mutually engages with their experiences and scripture together. From that intersection, we can see reality in a new way and act to make that new vision a reality.

Schüssler Fiorenza’s approach is not new but is like political-historical methods used in American discourse (Cone 2018).<sup>8</sup> Her emancipatory paradigm explicitly draws from the grassroots methods of the American Women’s Liberation Movement (Schüssler Fiorenza: 15). Understanding how the Women’s Liberation movement in the 1960s and 70s used consciousness raising groups (CR groups) to develop their political

theory and action will help apply the emancipatory paradigm outside of the academy to more local contexts.

The political theory of the women's movement developed within CR groups. CR groups were a form of feminist grassroots organizing in the 1960s that led to societal reformation. As Naomi Braun Rosenthal, in her history of CR groups, describes, "In the view of radical feminists, consciousness raising was an instrumental method of developing a collective understanding, and ensuring that revolutionary action would not ignore women's situation" (Rosenthal 1984: 314). The core to CR groups was women's experience and feelings. A Redstockings (a feminist activist group) manifesto declares, "Our first task is to develop our capacity to be aware of our feelings and to pinpoint the events or interactions to which they are valid responses" (*Redstockings* 1970). Feminism and CR groups held a core assumption that women were not crazy nor to blame for their oppression. Their feelings were caused by external factors of their world, namely the subjugation, belittling, and violence they had endured (Redstockings 1969: 7; O'Connor 1969, 36). Because women's feelings arose from concrete realities, they were important tools to understand reality and develop theory. In a speech, activist Carol Hansich (1978: 204–205) explains, "One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems." In other words, the personal was political. For women to understand their subjugated place in 1960s and 70s America and around the world, women had to see how external realities produced their emotions and that they had those experiences in common with other women.

In order to ensure that political theory and social action did not ignore women's experiences, the general movement of a CR group flowed in this way: 1. share one's experience and the emotions associated with it, 2. evaluate the common elements of each other's experiences and develop political theory, 3. collectively act to change the community to reflect women's interests (O'Connor 1969: 35–38; Sarachild 1970: 78–80; Brown 1969).<sup>9</sup> Kathie Sarachild (1970: 78), a feminist writer, summarizes this process, "Our feelings will lead us to our theory, our theory to our action, our feelings about that action to new theory and then to new action." Action would be supported by political theory, and political theory, in turn, would be based on the concrete experiences of women collectively.

The sharing of feelings and experiences in community also involved a logical process of evaluation. Lynn O'Connor (1969: 35) describes CR as

a long and logical process that synthesizes an understanding of the self with an understanding of the social class that one belongs to and their treatment. In this process, women found commonality with each other and could articulate the general treatment of women within the broader society (O'Connor 1969: 36; Sarachild 1970: 79). Having the place to articulate one's own experiences and its connection to other women led to theorizing and envisioning a world that women actually wanted (A Bread and Roses Member 1970: 10–11).<sup>10</sup> The development of political theory then led to action that was grounded in women's experiences and not alienating to them (Sarachild 1978). Action, from theory, was meant to be collective and transformative. The solution for women was not personal change, but rather the transformation of society and social relationships (O'Connor 1969: 37).<sup>11</sup> This was an ongoing process, and this ongoing discussion empowered women to see their reality and envision a new world in which they were not subjugated. Then they could act together to build that new world.

Like CR groups, Schüssler Fiorenza's emancipatory paradigm: 1. includes and values experience, 2. is done within community, and 3. has an eye toward the effect on the broader community. This process seeks Wisdom. In the biblical wisdom tradition, Wisdom can be discovered within common life and governs our social relationships (Schüssler Fiorenza 2001: 23). Drawing from Proverbs 9, Schüssler Fiorenza sees biblical interpretation as the spiraling dance of Wisdom open to all and biblical authority as enabling justice and well-being. She writes:

This image of Wisdom/wisdom's open space seeks to replace the understanding of canonical and scholarly authority as limiting, controlling, and exclusive authority and 'power over' which demands subordination. Instead it understands the power of the Bible and biblical scholarship... as enhancing, nurturing, and enriching creativity. Biblical authority and biblical studies renewed in the paradigm of Divine Wisdom will be able to foster such creativity, strength, self-affirmation, and freedom of the sacred. (2009: 166)

As Schüssler Fiorenza seeks to sustain a diversity of voices in professional biblical interpretation, her invitation and vision of the spiraling dance of Wisdom could also reform theological education within the church. If her radical democratic ethos was applied to how congregations approached scripture, then there would be a place for people to become aware of their own power (together) and move toward a vision of human flourishing

and the good life inspired by their scriptures. This would bring biblical interpretation to the people and could inspire grassroots movements nurtured by the Bible.

### **Use of the Emancipatory Paradigm in the Church: Contextual Biblical Studies as a Model**

As Christians influence their political and public world, they should act from this core commandment: love God and love neighbor (Volf 2013: xv, 63, 73).<sup>12</sup> Schüssler's Fiorenza's emancipatory model develops deep reflection of both context and text that inspires public action reflecting this emancipatory heartbeat of scripture. Though she wrote to address the academy, her insights and the methods of consciousness raising within the Women's Liberation Movement should be incorporated into the theological education of the church. Involving these methods at a grassroots level would bring critical reflection on one's experience and the Bible that would birth emancipatory change within the church and its wider public context. At a grassroots level, the emancipatory paradigm reflects the practices of South Africa's Contextual Bible Study (CBS).

Practiced at the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research, CBS is a mode of interpretation that involves socially engaged biblical scholars (or other bible teachers) reading alongside and with ordinary readers, who are often poor and marginalized. As Gerald O. West, a foundational promoter of this method, describes, "[CBS is] a form of Bible reading that begins with an emancipatory interest that is grounded in the real conditions of poor and marginalized local communities" (West 1999: 31). This method allows ordinary readers of the text, those who seek to make direct links between the text and their social location, to use the resources and skills of scholarly readers, who seek to read the texts and authors on their own terms (Anum 1996: 13). This is not an impartation of knowledge or skill from the biblical scholar to ordinary readers, but rather a collaboration with one another. The biblical scholar, rather than dominating because they see themselves as more competent than ordinary readers, facilitates, lending their technical skills to the ordinary reader to empower them to reconstruct their own ideas and views (Anum 1996: 16). West pulls from insights from feminist scholar Jill Arnot to describe this reading process; the scholar should move beyond 'speaking for' and 'listening to' and move toward 'speaking/reading with' others and the marginalized (Arnot 1996: 85; West 1999: 52). This is a collaborative effort between

scholars and ordinary readers to interpret the Bible, envisioning how to bring its vision of wellness, flourishing, and freedom to their communities.

In order to bring about social change, CBS follows a loose structure that is similar to the movement in feminist CR groups. CBS is based on a See-Judge-Act method (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 25).<sup>13</sup> This method begins with understanding and analyzing the local context of the participants, informed by their own understanding (See). Then it leads to re-reading the Bible and allowing the biblical text to speak to that context (Judge). Lastly, this process then spurs the group into action, responding to what God is saying and the way that the world should be (Act). This is an ongoing process as action then leads to reflection on that action, starting the cycle over again (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 4). The See-Judge-Act model follows a similar movement as the general steps of CR groups in the American Women's Liberation Movement which involved: 1. knowing one's own feelings and experiences, 2. developing political theory from the commonality of women's experiences, and 3. collective action for social change. In both processes, social change starts with the context of marginalized groups: the poor, women, disabled, minority groups, etc. For the Bible to bring community transformation, people within that community must bring their whole selves to the text.

Both methods, by elevating experience, uncover hidden class consciousness of a group and help them articulate their embodied theory or theology. Embodied theology is a theology that is formed within a person based on their culture, tradition, and past experiences (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 12). This theology is often covered and hidden by hierarchical church theology and dogmas. As a CBS manual points out:

Under the dried crust of the often bereft public theology we carry resides a deeper, usually unarticulated and incipient, theology. This embodied theology has been generated by our lived faith and experiences, but is inchoate and unformed. A challenge that awaits the church is to tap into this rich residual substratum of theology and bring it into the public realm. (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 40)

CBS does not seek to grow the participants into a certain ideology in theology or church doctrine, but rather uncovers a group's embodied theology. As a group articulates their class experiences and embodied theology, they can plan informed action. This action is not just personal change, but collective



action that leads to change in the broader community (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 13).

A theological education within the church that is informed by the CR groups in the American Women Liberation's Movement, Schüssler Fiorenza's emancipatory paradigm, and the CBS method of interpretation calls for participation within and mutual respect among the people of God. Biblical interpretation then is a democratic process that inspires transformation of the community into a place of well-being for all. Theory, theology, and informed action rises from a dialogue between experience and scripture. Below are some suggestions on how scripture can interact with experience:

*1. Critical Engagement with Both Scripture and Cultural Context:* This engagement with Scripture is based upon Schüssler Fiorenza's approach. In her approach, the Bible is a tool for rhetoric. Both in the text's original contexts and our current one, its words formed communities and supported worldviews and systems. Thus, the Bible's rhetoric has been used both to justify oppression by the powerful or to envision freedom by marginalized people (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 17). By reflecting on how the language of scripture has been historically and currently used, the community critically engages with domination justified by scriptural language and also advocates for a more just society supported by the text (Schüssler Fiorenza 2008: 158).<sup>14</sup> This process of critically examining how the language of scripture forms communities will empower congregation members to use biblical rhetoric to transform their communities into a reflection of the emancipatory aspects of the text.

*2. Finding Lines of Connection between the Biblical Text and the Contemporary Community:* In this dialogue, the community finds connections between their own experiences and the ones described in the text or of the community behind-the-text (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 9). The community discovers these connections themselves by processing a variety of questions: 1.

questions about how scripture is used within a particular context, 2. questions that draw people into reflecting on the biblical text, and 3. space for the community to ask about the circumstances that gave rise to the text (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 11). Discovering the lines of connection between us, the text, and the historical community, empowers the contemporary faith community, including women, the poor, and any other marginalized people, to interpret scripture and articulate their embodied theology (*Doing Contextual Bible* 2015: 37).<sup>15</sup> Making space for congregations to articulate their embodied theology challenges the hegemony of church theology and inspires action that stops the perpetuation of domination, violence, and sin.

3. *The Forming of Imagination*: When we interpret scripture together, its democratic language shapes our lives and imaginations. The Bible becomes a collective memory that helps us imagine an involved God and form social relationships that reflect his involvement (Aitken 2011: 576–578). Ellen Bradshaw Aitken (2011: 576), an Anglican biblical scholar, describes this as a social imaginary from the world of the Bible. In this view, the Bible does not take an instrumental role, but rather “those texts become environments, territories, in which we grow familiar with other ways of looking at the world, other ways of moving toward God’s desire” (Aitken 2011: 577). This approach involves a gradual growing together and toward God’s vision for the world. It involves sitting within the text, its diversity, reenacting it in liturgy, and involving many voices in its interpretation. From imagining with scripture, congregations can articulate a new and creative theology that brings God’s world of goodness, freedom, and well-being into our contexts.

There are many ways to engage with scripture in grassroots interpretation. The list above is a sample from my own reflections and reading. However, I hope that it shows the multi-varied approach that readers of scripture, both “ordinary” and “scholarly,” could take while reading together. And as we interpret scripture together, we invite the Spirit, as Schüssler Fiorenza (2008: 171) describes, to move and blow where she wills to foster “such creativity, strength, self-affirmation and freedom of the sacred in the public sphere.” When seeking to love God by studying scripture and loving our neighbor by interpreting with them, local church communities will be empowered to use the rhetoric of the biblical text to transform their communities into a place of well-being for all.

### **Congregation Led Theology vs. Clergy Led Theology**

Modeling theological education within the church on the emancipatory paradigm moves the power of interpretation from exclusively belonging to the academy and invites discussion within the whole people of God. This proposal is not just about the method of teaching or interpretation, but also about *who* should have the power to interpret. Other theologians and interpreters have also felt the shortcomings of biblical interpretation and theology developed within the academy. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson (2015: 59–60), founders of the Center for Pastor Theologians, argue that since theology is typically done from an academic place, it usually does not reflect the concerns of pastor or congregations. They propose a pastor theologian model that elevates the credibility, quality, and quantity of theological research from the contextual location of the pastorate. The pastor theologian is a clergy member who works within a local church and also produces theological scholarship for the broader church (Hiestand and Wilson: 15–16). For Hiestand’s and Wilson’s pastor theologian model, the *who* of interpretation are clergy and other church workers. In an applied emancipatory model, the *who* of interpretation is the whole people of God. While the voices from the pastorate should be respected in theological discourse, moving the locus of power away from the professor to the pastor does not dispel the risk of domination and subordination. Despite Hiestand’s and Wilson’s (2015: 12) idealization of the pastorate as a place for intellectual men, clergy centered theology often was oppressive and reinforced human subjugation. This subjugation arises partly because clergy positions have historically been accessible to a limited group of people. If the pastorate is the main contextual location of theology, then

large demographics of the people of God would be excluded from creating theology.

These issues are demonstrated by Hiestand's and Wilson's implicit exclusion of women in their primary text on the model. When describing a pastor theologian, Hiestand and Wilson (2015: 11–12) consistently use male only language.<sup>16</sup> In order to justify their model, they appeal to historical examples of men who did theology from an ecclesial location (Hiestand and Wilson 2015: 21–41, 133–172). They never mention a female pastor theologian within their main text and in the 500+ theologians they list in the appendix, only five of them are women: Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Avila, Anna Comnena, Hrotsvitha Gandersheim, and Jean Marie Bouvier (Hiestand and Wilson 2015: 141, 147, 150, 168, 172). None of these women fit Hiestand's and Wilson's "clerical" designation. As Hiestand and Wilson relied on outside collections for their list of theologians, this shows a broader issue (Migne 1844–1864; 1857–1886). This exclusion of women highlights two elements that Christians must contend with: 1. the patriarchal past of Christianity, namely the barring of women from roles of pastoral leadership, and 2. the continued bias of theological collections to see the contributions of men as more substantial than those of women. The former poses an issue for the pastor theologian model. If women have been historically and currently barred from clergy, then how could they trust a clergy led theology to reflect their interests and God's vision for their lives?<sup>17</sup> The latter is still a persisting issue, but Hiestand and Wilson could have circumvented it by also analyzing collections that focus on the contributions of women within the church.<sup>18</sup> Feminist scholars have done this work for them, but they did not consult it. Failure to do so keeps them and their readers in an echo chamber that reinforces their own biases.

The reason for erasing women is made explicit in Hiestand's work outside of this book, as he argues against women in ministry (Hiestand 2021).<sup>19</sup> As Hiestand and Wilson advocate for shifting theological authority from the academy to the church, the locus of power would rest on a specific elite class of male interpreters. This has historically limited the voices of women from participating in interpretation and theology. As women are a principal and large demographic within the church, as Philip Jenkins (2011: 1–2) describes, "If we want to visualize a 'typical' contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria, or in a Brazilian *favela*," the pastor theologian model gives a minority of people theological power over others. Theology done at the pastorate level does not inherently

benefit the whole people of God. This work of meaning-making, describing reality, and discerning appropriate action is done instead by an elite class determined by traditional qualifications.

Witnesses like Hiestand and Wilson help broaden out the social location of theological reflection and biblical interpretation. Pastors, female and male, should also be welcome to the table of biblical interpretation. However, due to Hiestand's and Wilson's biases, the pastor theologian model does not address all the issues of academic biblical interpretation and theology. This model has a high potential to reinforce structures of domination and subordination by giving the power of interpretation to those who have access to the pastorate. To bring true transformation to our communities, there should be space for the voices of scholars, pastors, and congregation members to express their theology and biblical interpretation. The emancipatory paradigm of biblical teaching and interpretation is a democratic vision. As the pastor theologian model defines the *who* of interpretation as (implied male) pastors, an emancipatory model sees *all* as interpreters within a community of equals. Womanist biblical scholar Wilda Gafney reflects this vision with a metaphor of a dinner table. At the supper of biblical interpretation, all are welcome to the family table where we discuss both the contents of the meal (the Bible) and our lives (Gafney 2017: 1–2). Schüssler Fiorenza (2009: 27) echoes this inclusive sentiment in her description of Wisdom, “She transgresses boundaries, celebrates life, and nourishes those who will become her friends. Her cosmic house is without walls and her table is set for all.” The Bible belongs to all, and thus the theology of the church should be a grassroots project rather than a dominating authority from one group of people over another.

## Conclusion

Schüssler Fiorenza's democratic vision for biblical studies should be applied in the theological education of the church. Based upon the CR groups in the Women's Liberation Movement, and similar to the CBS method from South Africa, the emancipatory approach to theological education would empower marginalized members of the people of God to critically examine their lives and the Bible and contribute their own theology to public discourse. Different from authoritative models, like theology coming from the academy or from clergy, this approach is a democratic process that invites all voices to the table or peoples to the dance of biblical interpretation. As a grassroots method, the emancipatory

approach to theological education in the church will bring out the authentic and embodied theology of local communities. The theology of the church will spring forth from the ground-up and will inspire action toward communal transformation that reflects God's heart for the well-being and peace of all people.

### End notes

<sup>1</sup> In honor of my mother, Deborah Hopkinson (1956–2022). I hope that my work reflects your determination and tenaciousness in life, and opens doors for other powerful women in the Church that had been closed to you.

<sup>2</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza uses their work as examples of secularizing Biblical Studies (2009: 38–44).

<sup>3</sup> Theologian Miroslav Volf advocates that people of faith have the right, in a democratic society, to bring their visions of the good life into public life and politics, and that it would be oppressive to bar them from doing so.

<sup>4</sup> For examples of how the Bible has been used in the United States see Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (1982).

<sup>5</sup> Such as the work of the “Moral Majority” in the 1970s and the rise of the Religious Right in the 1980s and 1990s (Schüssler Fiorenza 2008: 157). As another recent example, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge (2008: 55–66) draws out the parallels between Paul's liberation speech about human salvation and George W. Bush's speeches that justified the United States' war in Iraq.

<sup>6</sup> Stacy Davis points out the anti-Jewish environment of Julius Wellhausen, a founding voice of source criticism, and how this influences his documentary hypothesis.

<sup>7</sup> The emancipatory paradigm has dual sides to its hermeneutics: the hermeneutics of suspicion and reconstruction. The hermeneutics of suspicion is a critical approach to the texts and interpretations. The hermeneutics of reconstruction is centering scriptural stories, characters, and ideas that are on the margins of the text and interpretation, and creatively imagining a new world that is centered on justice and well-being for all.

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<sup>8</sup> James H. Cone's work is a good example of American political-historical methods. He interpreted black liberation and power as part of the Gospel message (Cone 2018).

<sup>9</sup> This loose structure of 1. share experiences, 2. evaluate and develop political theory, and 3. collective action comes from an analysis of women's literature from the late 1960s and early 1970s.

<sup>10</sup> A woman expresses her CR group's reflections on the relationship they have with their male partners through a comic strip. Those women wanted to have a relationship that was equal (no one was lesser) and autonomous (having space to pursue their own interests and relationships) while still being interconnected.

<sup>11</sup> O'Connor stresses that change for women could not be just personal change. As woman's consciousness is awakened, and they begin to live in a way they truly want, they face backlash from those around them. Through that backlash, they realize that only collective action, not personal change, will win them liberation.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus summarizes the law in this way in Matt 22:37–40, Mark 12:30–31, and Luke 10:25–28. Jesus' parting in commandment in John 15:12 is that the community should love one another. Lastly, Paul tells the Galatians in Gal 5:14 that the entire law is fulfilled through love of neighbor.

<sup>13</sup> See-Judge-Act method is first associated with a Catholic chaplain, Joseph Cardign who used it with factory workers in 1930s Belgium.

<sup>14</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza refers to this community and process as developing the *ekklesia* of wo/men.

<sup>15</sup> As the manual describes the impact of this process on women who have been abused or sexually assaulted, "Because the Bible is a sacred text and because Christians located themselves in relation to it, establishing lines of connection can be enormously empowering," and through their discussion of the text in the context of people with similar experiences their "embodied theologies are given and become owned (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015)."

<sup>16</sup> This male centered language is apparent at the beginning but builds throughout Hiestand's and Wilson's work. In their first descriptions of a pastor theologian, they use male-only language.

<sup>17</sup> Laure L. Norris (2016: 163–171) sees this issue and tries to address it, in practical ways, to include women in the pastor theologian model.

<sup>18</sup> Some examples of work that highlight the work of women include Marion Ann Taylor's and Agnes Choi's *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide* (2012), Amy Oden's *In Her Words: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought* (1994), and Ruth A. Tucker's and Walter Liefeld's *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (1987).

<sup>19</sup> Hiestand's argument rests on the idea that women have been subjugated to violence, violated, and oppressed and the call into ministry is to embrace that type of suffering for the freedom of others. Women were barred from ministry in the early church because to embrace ministry was to give up privilege and power. However, this explanation does not take in account women's experiences and the reality of the pastorate. The pastorate is currently and has been historically a place of power and authority.

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