

## Chapter 2

### Methods

Three categories of different methods will be discussed in this chapter: methods of Practical Theology, methods of postmodernism, and methods of feminist theology. Pieterse (in Heyns & Pieterse 1990:46) describes “Practical Theology as a theological, operational science”. In Practical Theology, theoretical aspects are closely related to practical aspects. Theologians always try to reform contemporary situations, to offer Christians the most authentic truths, by means of theological research, interpretation of the Bible and traditions, theological analysis of politics, economics, social events and cultures. They want to achieve the honest truth for Christians. Truth, rationality, and objectivity have been regarded as key concepts of science, yet these concepts are also related to theology (see Hekman 1990:10-13).

Methods of scientific and logical research can be found in Practical Theology. The models of the scientific research are distinguished three models: the positive model, the scientific revolution (Thomas Kuhn’s theory), and the evolutionary growth (Karl Popper’s theory) (Mouton 1996a:16; 1996b:14-16). Four different models in scientific research are stated differently: the epistemic, sociological, economical, and managerial (Mouton 1996a:17; 1996b:17-19). The models of logical thinking entail the deductive and the inductive approaches. Practical Theology applies in both types of logical research: induction and deduction. Deductive thinking is applied when the findings of other theological disciplines are considered to be in the process of theory formation. Inductive thinking applies in the case of empirical studies, on the basis of which new theories are formed (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:26). Induction and deduction should not be regarded as mutually exclusive (Van der Merwe 1996:279). A practical-theological theory is a discussion or a consideration of existing and future ecclesiastic, and religious praxis. The concept “praxis” (see Bevans 1992:63-80) is the concrete action or actions by individuals or groups, in the church or society, aimed at furthering the kingdom of God. Also, in practical theology the concept “praxis” refers to communicative actions in the service of the gospel. With the methods of the scientific and the logical research, the

situation of Korean women can analyze politically, economically, socially, culturally, and religiously. This is done in chapter 3.

Postmodernism is characterized as antifoundational, antitotalizing, and demystifying (Adam 1995:5). Postmodernity allows unauthorized interpretation by individuals. Postmodernity is that which denies the “absolute”, including “absolute power” of men over women. Postmodern thought originates in the work of Heidegger (Megill 1985:138; Hoy 1985:47; Shapiro 1984:217; Ricoeur 1983:191). Heidegger (1977:128; see Hekman 1990:65) rejects what he identifies as the men-centeredness of the modern world. According to him, man is always historical, rooted, and a product of a particular manifestation of Being, so Heidegger rejects the transcendental, privileged status of the Cartesian subject. Postmodern criticism will be used in various ways:

- to critique Korean society and culture in chapter 3 and 5
- to describe the social contexts, e.g. the social roles of women in the Greco-Roman world, gender roles in Judaism, gender roles in the Jesus tradition, the letters of Paul, and in the early church (in chapter 4)
- to articulate a systematic analysis of the *kyriarchal* relations of domination, e.g. patriarchy in Korea and in Korean literature in chapter 3 and 5, a fundamentalist understanding of the Bible, phenomena of fundamentalism, fundamentalism in Korea and the criticism of fundamentalism in chapter 4
- to analyze social movements and cultural-religious values in Korea (in chapter 3, 4 and 5).

Feminist theologians indicate different ways in which the Bible can be read from a deconstructive perspective (see Schüssler Fiorenza 1994, 2000; Ruether & Bianchi 1992:7-16, 249-260). One method is to regard feminist theology as “a critique of the androcentric and misogynist views and judgments of patriarchal theology” (Isherwood & McEwan 2001:123). Deconstructive (Adam 1995:31-32) and feminist critique (Register 1975:2; Goodman 1996:71; Isherwood & McEwan 2001:75) are methods of feminist theology. The deconstructive method will be used in chapter 4 where the images of Jesus from the view of Korean women will be discussed. Through feminist criticism, the

interpreter discovers that the Bible reflects class conflicts and class interests. Ideological criticism, that is the combination of both political and economical aspects of biblical ideology, points out the oppressive or the liberating ideological contents of the Bible. Ideological criticism is also influenced by the critics' own ideologies (Adam 1995:51). The social and economical locations of biblical criticism also determine the critics' interpretations. Biblical ideological criticism aims to demystify the religious aura of the Bible, and to reinterpret the Bible taking into account the ideological conflicts (see Schüssler Fiorenza 1996; Felman 1981). Feminist theologians argue against the pervasive ideological bias in biblical studies. However, ideological criticism extends beyond the analysis and critique of patriarchal structure and class structure. With this criticism, scholars analyze the phenomena of politics, economy, and society.

Feminist criticism is concerned with the literary representation of sexual difference, with the ways in which literary genres have been shaped by masculine or feminine values. Virginia Woolf (1966:1, 204) calls it "the difference of view; the difference of standard". Feminist criticism is also concerned with the exclusion of the female voice from criticism, literature, and theory. Therefore, feminist criticism has established gender as a fundamental category of literary analysis. The basic concern of scholars is to develop theories of sexual difference in reading, writing, and literary interpretations.

Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:39) asserts that "a critical feminist theology of liberation does not simply seek to analyze and explain the socio-religious structure of domination that marginalize and exploit women and other non-persons". Instead, it aims to entirely transform the structures of alienation, exploitation, and exclusion. Its goal is to change the theoretical and theological religious knowledge, and the sociopolitical systems of domination and subordination. Such a feminist theology understands itself as a critical theology of liberation because its critical analysis and its intellectual practice for the production of religious knowledge aims to support struggles for women's liberation globally. Hence, Schüssler Fiorenza (1985:12) says, "its articulations are diverse, and is often in tension and conflict with each other". Deconstruction and postmodern biblical criticisms, including feminist critique, will be used to analyze "a story of a good wife (Pr 31:10-31)" and Korean literature in chapter 5.

## 2.1 Methods in Practical Theology

Practical Theology has two aspects: theoretic and practical. Practical Theology has within itself its own practical and theological theories and applies its own scientific methods to church society. Christians experience the actual religious events, which is the critical test of praxis. Therefore, Practical Theology emphasizes praxis (see McCann 1983:105-125; Moessner & Glaz 1991), in order that people learn to understand the worldly realities that make up human lives. A particular proposed praxis flows from a particular chosen theory. However, one of the most common pitfalls for practical theologians is that they can too easily lose sight of the force of reasoning, and instead, focus only on practical issues. When this happens, it becomes almost impossible to distinguish their models of doing praxis from that of psychology and practical application. If one remembers that a model is, epistemologically seen, the choice to bring a particular theory into practice or operation, one will also realize that there will always be a theory behind practice. In Practical Theology, this theory should be theological in nature (see Ballard 1992; Burkhart 1983:42-60; Browning 1983).

Practical Theology has a *theoretical* aspect. Here, the theory is not in opposition to the practical knowledge. Heitink (1999:102-103) states that Practical Theology is “a theological branch of learning with a theory of action”. He explains three theoretical tracks in practical theology: 1) a hermeneutical theory, 2) an empirical theory (see Van der Ven 1993), and 3) a strategic theory. It arises as a moment within Practical Theology itself, because human beings have had and will continue to have many experiences. It is necessary to recognize and analyze one’s experiences. To analyze an experience means to incorporate the various facets of the experience into human cognition. Ogletree (1983:85) explains that, “the possibility of objectifying a given experience is a phenomenon of self-consciousness, our power not only to relate to our world consciously, but also to do so with a consciousness of the manner of relating itself”. Thus, a theoretical orientation is closely related to the practical. Theoretical studies can be understood in simple terms - knowing, doing, and being. Human beings make it possible to understand the interactions of the theoretical and the practical, of the objective and the subjective, and of the fact and its value.

Heyns (in Heyns & Pieterse 1990:31) explains that the relationship between theory and practice is one of bipolar tension and that this “relationship of bipolar tension is best illustrated by an ellipse”. In the figure of an ellipse, the autonomy of each side should not be destroyed or abolished, and they should remain interdependent: unity without identity; diversity without division. Theory should test and criticize the church praxis, which continually analyzes and evaluates its own theoretical premises, goals, efficiency, and results.

Otherwise, Heyns (in Heyns & Pieterse 1990:38-40; cf Heitink 1999:106-108) categorizes that Practical Theology may be characterized as a theological operational (or active) science for the following reasons (see Lapsley 1983:167-186; Otto 1974:195-205; Tracy 1983:61-82; Vian 1999):

- Practical Theology studies human religious actions, especially those that mediate God’s coming to this world.
- Practical Theology studies people’s religious activity (religious praxis).
- Practical Theology takes the existing praxis seriously, reflects on it, considers the underlying theories, evaluates these, and develops new theories.
- Practical Theology is communicative. Christians are continually communicating to serve the cause of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit, the very thing that conjoins God’s communication to the church and the world.

To practical theologians, those who adopt a biblical hermeneutic perspective, praxis is secondary to scripture based theories, which are of primary importance. James W Fowler (1983:163) identifies and characterizes four constituent elements of a Practical Theology of Christian invention:

- a theory of the sovereign love of God as the pattern of action underlying and giving character to the cosmic process;
- a theory of development in faith;
- a theory of the virtues and affections of the Christian life;
- a theory of methodological principles and strategies for the formation in faith.

### 2.1.1 Characteristics of Practical Theology

Practical Theology has two characteristics: the constructive and the critical aspects. The constructive aspect is concerned with interpreting biblical myths and symbols in terms of “liberation”. And the critical aspect of a practical theology is based on “orthopraxis”. Gutierrez (1973:10) first coined the term “orthopraxis”. Literally, the concept means “the right sort of praxis”. It refers to the concrete struggles of “basic communities” seeking to be witnesses of Christianity. In the revolutionary situation, without necessarily involving counter-violence against the oppressors, “orthopraxis” is the “critical reflection on praxis” (cf McCann 1981:209-213). Thus, Practical Theology is redefined as the critical theory of Christians engaged in “orthopraxis”. Gutierrez (1973:11) explains “orthopraxis”, when he states:

But above all, we intend this term to express the theory of a definite practice. Theological reflection would, then, necessarily be a criticism of society and the church insofar as they are called and addressed by the Word of God; it would be critical theory, worked out in light of the Word accepted in faith and inspired by a practical purpose – and therefore indissolubly linked to historical praxis.

“Orthopraxis” is a kind of critical theory and “historical praxis” with which one can interpret the “Word of God”. The practical purposes of social action are both critical and constructive. Since the whole realm of theological discourse is subject to criticism based on praxis, the church’s traditions are criticized.

### 2.1.2 Methods as scientific research

Methods in Practical Theology are deeply rooted in modern scientific research (see Habermas 1987). Scholars are doing theology by means of rational thinking. Modern science is understood as

- the high expression and embodiment of the human spirit and of creativity,

- a symbol of alienation, destruction and pain,
- evidence of current debates on genetic engineering and animal experimentation,
- a process of knowledge production, and
- a production of knowledge (Mouton 1996a:15; 1996b:13).

In the fourth meaning, “science” means that a specific body of knowledge has certain features, such as validity, or internal consistency, or explanatory potential, or usefulness. Science also results in certain activities, such as the formulation of research problems, or data collection, experimentation, interpretation, validation, analysis, or the testing of theories. Science has two aspects - one is science as a product (scientific knowledge) and the other is science as a process (scientific research).

Mouton (1996a:16; 1996b:14-16) distinguishes three models of scientific research for the growth of scientific knowledge:

- The positive model: Science grows through the accumulation of facts that are accepted as true. Science is the range of confirmed rational theories from authentic results.
- Thomas Kuhn’s (1970) theory of scientific revolutions: His scientific revolution is a direct response to the positivist position on the growth of scientific knowledge. Kuhn formulated his views about scientific revolution in 1962. He distinguishes between normal science and scientific revolutions. Normal science is a traditional or dominant paradigm, while the scientific revolution is the rejection of the dominant paradigm, for example, Newton’s paradigm which was replaced by Einstein; the Copernican revolution; Darwin’s theory.

When Fiorenza studies the historical Jesus within a revolutionary paradigm shift, she analyzes the dominant discourses produced by Western science as an integral part of its research project. The logic of “difference” or the logic of “othering” (Fiorenza 2000:21) engenders such dominant discourses. Women are “others” because women are not–elite, not–white, not–male, not–civilized, not–educated, and not–powerful in the valued qualities of the hegemonic society.

The “others”, who include women, innocent children, nature, and noble savages, become the negative object. They are depicted in negative modes such as lazy, irrational, emotional, gossipy, or sex hungry. In a similar way, the West has authority over the Orient, so that the Orient is the “other” over against the West. The politics of “othering” does not recognize both differences and commonalities between past and present, between Mediterranean and contemporary democratic societies. The scientific discourses of domination seek to control the “other” of past societies by objectifying and alienating them (Mouton 1996a:22; 1996b:15). Thereby they lead to the fusion of common structures of domination across history.

- Karl Popper’s theory of evolutionary growth: Scientific theories evolve in the process of scientific research: the strongest theories survive, but the weakest perish. Popper’s theory (1963) is more moderate than Kuhn’s theory. The evolutionary growth of Popper’s theory used the same logic as the history of science (Popper 1964:32-44, 1987:20-23).

The advantages or disadvantages of each model are:

- The positive model has a possibility of the pitfalls of the ideal of objectivity and the dangers of determinism behind both deductive and inductive reasoning. Deductive is less objective but prone to determinism.
- Kuhn maintains that the history of science is the history of successive phases of normal science during which one research tradition or paradigm dominates, followed by “a scientific revolution to be followed again by another period of normal science” (Mouton 1996a:16; 1996b:16). The history of science can no longer be viewed as the accumulation of facts and truth. Scientific knowledge can be untenable. Thomas Kuhn’s theory of scientific revolutions has limitations. Scientific results are relational in terms of shared paradigms, but Kuhn’s theory is only valid in one paradigm and cannot be transposed to others. Scientific progress is no longer measured in terms of the so-called accumulation of knowledge, but rather by its explanatory power. Propositions explain data adequately or inadequately in terms of a specific paradigm. Inadequacy becomes clear when anomalies exist.



- Karl Popper's theory of evolutionary growth led to the concept of "falsification". It means that the validity of a scientific proposition is measured in terms of its *relevance*. When Popper's theory is combined with Kuhn's paradigm theory, a shift from one paradigm to the next is of revolutionary nature, e.g. that paradigms are often incompatible. Popper's theory is also critical of the positive notion of growth through accumulation, so the strongest theory in the contemporary situation might still be found. Popper's theory continually examines the self-correcting nature of scientific growth. It is a long process because of the extended research, the process of theory assessment, rational decision-making, and public scrutiny of research results.

The existence of a scientific tradition makes new research possible with theories, models and data on reality. Mouton (1996a:17; 1996b:13) says "science as a product and science as a process are interdependent". Science as a product also makes new research possible. Mouton (1996a:20; 1996b:17-19) defines "different models of the nature of scientific research".

- The epistemic model searches for truth. The term "epistemic" means "true and authentic" knowledge. Science is based on the assumption that "truth" is not unproblematic, but is *discovered* or *revealed*. The role of methods and procedures is emphasized and is valuable in the pursuit of truth.
- The sociological model studies communities and social conditions. Science is basically viewed as a social process.
- The economical model sees knowledge as a commodity that has a specific market value. All commodities, production or manufacture of knowledge requires certain resources and has a specific value (price).
- The managerial model focuses on manufacturing and production in its management of concepts.

These models produce a real change in the nature of scientific inquiry. Theological research is normally done within the epistemic and sociological models. Church growth theories make use of managerial and economic models. Individual research in the

epistemic model, large-scale professional and institutional research making use of sociological, economic, and managerial models and the globalization of scientific research are all of importance. Mouton (1996a:20) explains that “nowadays, the conceptions of science (epistemic, sociological, and economical) are rooted in real change in the nature of scientific inquiry”.

The gradual change in the nature of scientific research has brought two terms to our attention: “democratization” and “globalization”. Democratization refers to the shift from an exclusive approach to science to a more inclusive one. Globalization is explained as a logical consequence of modernization. Globalization of science means that science is done in an international and global context rather than in a national context only. But there are different contexts, such as the global, national, institutional, individual, and discipline-oriented contexts. The contribution of scientific research is important to each of the specific contexts and specific problems are inherent in each of these contexts.

### **2.1.3 Methods as logical research**

Practical theologians use the relationship between theory and praxis to get a grip on their field of study, just as all scientists have certain methods and tools of the trade. The relationship between theory and praxis is indissoluble. This means that they are like two sides of a coin: distinguishable, but not divisible.

The concept “theory” refers to the *discussion, consideration* and *planning* pertaining to praxis. There are two methods of thinking in theories: the deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive thinking means that the theories in a particular situation are formed on the basis of general rules and principles. Deductive thinking progresses from the general to the particular. Russell (1974:53) says, “in the past, much theology was done by deductive conclusions from first principles established out of Christian tradition and philosophy”. Another method is by inductive thinking, where one proceeds from the particular to the general. In general feminist theologians, along with other liberation theologians, stress the inductive method rather than a deductive method.

The experiential nature of this inductive approach does not have any doctrines, but rather seeks out the appropriate questions from different approaches. Russell (1974:55)

explains that “such an experiential or inductive approach is dependent on the corporate support of the community of faith and action out of which it grows”. Feminist theologians draw the material for reflection from women’s life experiences as they relate to the message of the Gospel. The nature of the gospel is diverse and this emphasizes the *situation-variable*. Women are seeking answers from the gospel for their particular needs of liberation, each in her individual situation. The inductive approach is experimental in nature. It is a process of seeking the right questions from different hypotheses that arise. Women constantly devise questions about biblical and church traditions, as well as about the concepts of creation, redemption, sin, salvation, and incarnation. It is important for women to be engaged in actions and reflections in their groups through the constant exchange of material and ideas. However, there are the disadvantages to both deductive and inductive reasoning. One should be aware of the danger that theory-models can function in a deterministic way.

As far as methods are concerned, there are the quantitative and qualitative methods (or deductive method and inductive method). The quantitative or deductive method depends on questionnaires, or comparatives and tests by means of a computer or techniques like experiments. From this method, the large volume of raw data can be collected. Quantitative research aims at testing theories, determining facts, statistical analyses, demonstrating relationships between variables, and prediction. A researcher who is involved in quantitative research will typically choose to stay in the background and not become involved in the events or “objects” of inquiry, for example the research subject (Van der Merwe 1996:282). Meanwhile, the quantitative hypothesis testing is sophisticated and depends on the existing knowledge. Quantitative research includes exploration, explanation, verification by test, and description. The quantitative method actually requires a lot of material and knowledge.

Another method is the qualitative or inductive method, on the basis of material obtained from the interviews of people. Induction is understood as that by which one infers knowledge that is not generalized from a specific number of cases. Van der Merwe (1996:283) explains, “the qualitative research aims at the development of theories and understanding. Qualitative researchers do not regard themselves as collectors of “facts” about human behavior that will lead to verification and the extension of theories and

enable researchers to determine causes of and predict human behavior. This research emphasizes an improved *understanding* of human behavior. In inductive studies, one makes a general statement and tests its validity in individual cases each time, on new subjects. This means that one cannot keep testing the same group of people. One has to check whether hypotheses are valid for all individual cases in specific situations. This research is basic to the research approach of “participant involvement”. A researcher becomes actively involved in the community that is being studied. The researcher would have to be accommodated as the concepts of researcher and research subject are partners in the research process. However, when the knowledge is limited, the inductive research method is actually the ideal form. The inductive method includes description, but also exploration and explanation in a certain degree of sophistication.

## 2.2 Methods in postmodernism

### 2.2.1 Characteristics of postmodernism

Cornel West (1985, 1989; see Lyotard 1984, 1993; Jameson 1991; Habermas 1981; Rossouw 1995) explains that postmodernism is understood in three characteristic ways, which can be described as “antifoundational, antitotalizing, and demystifying”. Postmodernism is antifoundational in that it resolutely refuses to posit any one premise as the privileged and the unassailable starting point for establishing claims to the truth. Antifoundationalism refers to the relativity of all truth-claims. Postmodernism is also antitotalizing because the postmodern discourse suspects that any theory that claims to account for everything, is suppressing counter examples, or is applying warped criteria so that it can exclude recalcitrant cases (Adam 1995:5). “Antitotalizing” protects against the danger of systems. Lastly, postmodernism is also demystifying. Modernism tends to claim that certain assumptions are “natural”, but postmodern thinking shows that these are, in fact, ideological projections (Adam 1995:5). Demystification protects against the danger of theologizing ideologies as false consciousness, which is Karl Marx’s (1988:110-117) concept, while personal and group interests of a sociological nature are the generating power behind these ideologies or ideological projections.

Postmodernity understands itself over against “modernity” (Hekman 1990:1; Kim AY 1995:226). Some of the distinctions between modernity and postmodernity are the following (Adam 1995:18-19):

	Modernity	Postmodernity
Criticism	-absolute	-relative
Knowledge	-universal, unified, total -rests on a mystified account of intellectual discourse	-local, particular -rests on various forces
Implications	-political and personal struggles	-individual, various implications
Characteristic	-the appeal of a naturalized, universalized conception of reason	-antifoundational -antitotalizing -demystifying
Readers	-The putative totalities are privileged the text or the reader as the focus of interpretive power.	-Readers encounter several different versions of the text. -unauthorized interpretation
Approach to Interpretation	-the text itself	-emphasis on the reader's experience
Dream	-unified system of all purely relational knowledge	-illusionary
Presupposition	-specific attributes to their intellectual tradition	-Nothing is pure, nothing is absolute, and nothing is total, unified or individual.
Method	-reliance on science and scientific method -transcendental authority of reason	-demystification with science and reason -various interpretations -various starting points
Texts	-valuable for interpretation as a historical record of the past -mystified past	-Readers can interpret texts various ways from their experience or from their own perspectives.

The effect of postmodernism on hermeneutics can be seen as follows:

- Rorty (1983:585) expresses, “postmodernism rejects ‘meta-narratives’ – the absolute justifying mechanisms of foundational thought”. Various components of the Bible

are interwoven. One could indeed be tolerant to such an extent that unacceptable ideologies hidden in certain “master” or grand narratives are not exposed. Even though there are differences in people’s intentions and directions in their interpretation, postmodernism accepts the various ideologies. “Contra”-narratives in the Bible oppose grand narratives. For example the Zion narrative, which is an affirmation of the centralization of the temple in Jerusalem, supports the neglect of God’s righteousness towards widows, orphans, foreigners and the poor. The Jesus story is also a contra-narrative that opposes the temple ideology.

- Another function of the postmodern approach is textual studies. Modern critics tend to have emphasized the reader’s direct engagement with the text and the autonomy of the text itself. But Adam (1995:18) stated that “postmodern critics recognize much more complexity in the interaction of the text and the reader”. Postmodern perspectives break down the putative totalities of the text and the reader, hence readers encounter several different versions of the text. It is exactly this contribution of postmodernity that enhances the possibility to “read between the lines” in order to speak from the voiceless.
- Postmodern interpretations are unauthorized. There is neither a unified, nor a totalized reader, nor a unified or an autonomous text, so there are no authorized authors. Adam (1995:20) expresses, “the author” is recognized as an unsuitable foundation for criticism as “the text” of “the reader”. Postmodern interpreters may work freely without knowing the original intentions of the author. This position represents a more “radical” postmodern reading. A more “moderate” position would be to balance authorial intention with readers’ expectation. “Radical” postmodern reading focuses only on the present day reader. The more “moderate” method though, takes author, text, and reader all into consideration. It also considers the difference between the intended reader and the present actual reader.

## 2.2.2 Criticism

Michel Foucault produced a series of historical studies, called the “New Historicism” (Foucault 1973, 1979; cf Howard 1986:13-43; Veese 1989; Via 1992:369-88). Most historians typically seek the roots of events and ideas of the past, but Foucault (1979: 43;

see Adam 1995:46) seeks to undermine the notion that “sameness” persists in a body or institution over time. Modern historicists usually take aspects of the texts as reflections of prevalent ideas of a given historical moment in order to understand a text from that moment. They interpret a text on the basis of its historical context. Historicism is positivistic: seeking the truth in fixed, objective data. However, the New Historicists treat the context as reflecting not only the prevalent ideas of the past historical moments, but also the prevalent assumptions of the historicist’s own day. The New Historicists seek to situate the texts with cultural impulses and with the life of their texts’ times. It takes the historical context of the data and the historical context of the researcher dialectically into account. Postmodernism needs not be indifferent with regard to the aspect of historical or authorial intention.

New Historicists resist the “text”/“context” binary opposition; texts are part of their context and the historical context is woven into the text. Adam (1995:47) says, “the texts may be internally contested; the text may present the prevalent ideas, but it may be resisting the prevalent ideology at the same time”. Readers need to select the main ideas and must not accept the dominant ideology. The New Historicism is arguably more true to history, than its older precedents.

Criticism, which was developed from the New Historicism and political criticism by the work of Foucault (1972:215-237), is extended in the interpreter’s definition of “ideology”. The falsity of ideology comes from Marx and Engels’ analyses of political ideology (see Engels 1993:320; Marx 1988:110-126). Marx referred to the political ideology as *false consciousness*. The generality of ideology and the work of ideology come from the response to the Marxist definition. Marx and Engels were concerned with oppressive conditions in part because the social practices that dominated their lives expressed a misleading justification of their situation. Engels (1993:125) mentions that “the workers are cast out and ignored by the class in power, morally as well as physically and mentally”. In order to think coherently, people must attribute coherence to an incoherent world (Adam 1995:48). Oppressors have taught the oppressed, and rationalized their oppression. Transformation of oppressive systems should start at the pre-conceptual and pre-cognitive level. Some interpreters treat ideology, whose emphasis helps make the term valuable, as political assumptions, with a political agenda.

Their usage is more flexible than Marx's ideology, whose emphasis is on material and social conditions. These two definitions, "false consciousness" (Hegel 1977:733-36; cf Gadamer 1975:317) and "political agenda", are limited and vague. Here, other readers define "ideology" as a description of all the social interactions that ascribe "significance" to our behaviour. The term ideology involves the ideological component of oppression in Marx's insight, in any case of false consciousness, and in any possibility of consciousness. These assumptions have liberating effects.

In ideological criticism of biblical interpretation, scholars have stressed that the biblical writings reflect and reproduce the false consciousness of oppressed groups (Adam 1995:48). All composition and interpretation involve ideology, and the biblical texts can easily be constructed in ways that reinforce structures that oppress the lower classes. Readers should analyze what the biblical text seems to be interpreting in any given source. There are different approaches to interpretation and reading, political criticism, which undertakes the work of resisting interpretive complacency; the form of a New Historicism; the form of a feminist critique of patriarchy. Where critics subject modern (scientific, specialized, systematized) ideologies to demystification and deconstruction, is where we discern a different, postmodern political criticism.

Postmodern interpreters feel free to blur and cross over (transgress) the borderlines that separate biblical interpretation from the literary criticism of fiction, from art history, and from psychoanalytic discourses, and so on (Adam 1995:62). The dimension of postmodern biblical criticism is "not undisciplined" but "interdisciplinary". This potpourri approach to interpretation enlarges the insight derived from structuralism, which is based on the principle of the designation-denotation inter-relationship, e.g. signifier and signified. There are no pure discourses, no pure disciplines, and no pure genres. And people have generally lacked the knowledge of the difference between truth and fictional narratives; it is difficult to distinguish between "truth" and "history". The New Historicists point out that neither "history" nor "fiction" is the privileged one. Because of this, "the New Historicists may feel free to employ both of them as evidence, regardless of whether it is a 'factual' account or not" (Adam 1995:63).

The following comparative chart highlights some differences between modernism and



postmodernism:

Modernism	Postmodernism
-Political critics pay attention to modern interpretive discourses' foundational or totalizing claims.	-Postmodern ideological critics pay attention to the ideological function.
-Interpreters conceal an ideological aim.	-There is no universal discourse of truth that can distinguish between a true interpretation and an ideological interpretation.
-The nature of the historical argument rules out "advocacy" in interpretations.	-Critics act in a particular local set of truth.

Postmodern critics would explore the psychoanalytical significance of any biblical text. The biblical texts are understood as the record of a theological consciousness, or as writers' expressions of God. Postmodern interpreters use midrashic amplification or allegorization freely to make sense of the texts. Fredric Jameson (1981:31; cf Adam 1995:65-67) distinguishes four dimensions of significance of the biblical text:

Four Dimensions	Examples
1) The literal sense means the plain, grammatical, historical significance of a passage.	Literal reference: Jerusalem
2) The allegorical sense indicates the correspondence between the circumstances and other biblical narratives.	Allegorical significance: the Christian church or the city of God's people
3) The topological sense communicates the passage's value for moral instruction.	the topological sense: the believer's soul or the dwelling place of the faithful
4) The anagogical sense connects the passage with the anticipated circumstances of heaven and of the times at the end of the age.	Anagogical (political reading) significance: the heavenly city promised in the apocalyptic visions

Postmodern critics engage the imagination, which is a mode of rabbinic midrash, more than the theoretical faculties. Some postmodern interpreters have been impressed with the freedom that midrash seems to hold for interpretation (Adam 1995:67). Midrash and allegory permit interpreters to say what they imagine. But interpreters cannot make the Bible mean whatever they want it to mean, unless there are audiences that find those

interpretations convincing. So postmodern interpreters may seek out different audiences in a variety of conditions who understand their readings. Biblical critics of postmodernism engage the reader and the Bible, not on the terms that any privileged institution (the academy, the synagogue, the church, or the state) sets, but on the terms that interest particular readers and their audiences (Adam 1995:75). Thus, postmodern biblical criticism also opts for various gestures and means of expression such as games, drama, music, video, dance, writing, poetry and so on. Postmodern biblical criticism is bound up with political concerns as well as theoretical arguments about the nature of “criteria” and “disciplines” (Adam 1995:70). In the hermeneutics of postmodernism, interpreters resist totalities, but use political criticism and deconstruction as sources for their interpretation.

Postmodern ideological critics point out that the dominant social groups’ approaches to the Bible produce and reproduce oppressive social relations. They show how to counter-read and to compete with the prevalent interpretations. This counter-reading is not a dominant approach, but one of the alternative approaches to interpretation (cf Schüssler Fiorenza 2000). These approaches reflect the local truth for which the ideological critics stand.

In a postmodern ideological criticism, the Old and the New Testament are observed to express an internal contradiction with regard to the basis of the human relation with God. In conclusion, how people can rectify their relationship with God is neither inconsequential nor ideologically innocent. An example is the sacrificial system that reproduces a hierarchical, social economy. Women are pushed to the margins in several ways:

- Women are not allowed to be priests in a sacrificial economy. Men interact with the priesthood, chiefly as potential sources of defilement (many women were treated as witches in the Middle Ages).
- Women cannot offer sacrifices. A woman needs a reconciler on her behalf, that is, her father or husband. But the only woman whom the Bible describes in a situation close to “offering sacrifice” is Hannah (1 Sm 1-2). Her husband, Elkanah, allots Hannah a double share. Hannah does not bring the offering (or sacrifice) alone.

- The Bible shows that women themselves are value-laden assets (women disciples of Jesus: Mk 15:40-41, 15:47, 16:1), so women are sacrificed (Adam 1995: 55).

Any alternative of the sacrificial economy must address not only the theological model that enacts an exchange between men and God, and also the oppressive gender relations that exchange enforces, and the contemporary political and theological situations that make the sacrificial economy seem more or less “natural” (Adam 1995:56).

Another example is found in the jubiliary theology. Israel’s obligation to care for an economy was based not only on exchange, but also on sharing. “Righteousness” is to “care for the needy”. But the biblical jubiliary texts themselves, are not ideologically innocent. The biblical texts do not envision women’s participation in cultic leadership, and the tendency to oppress women is much stronger than is the case in the sacrificial economy.

Derrida (1992:19-20, 23-24; see also Graham 1996:21; Hekman 1986:171-187, 187-196) claims postmodernism to be symptomatic of poststructuralist thinking. The readers’ preparation for taking a different path to biblical interpretation is to practice “thinking the opposite”, considering critical possibilities that common wisdom proscribes or conceals. “Thinking the opposite” means to resist biblical and interpretive tendencies to pose mutually exclusive interpretive options. Readers can learn to think about the Pentateuch or the synoptic gospels without accepting the initial assumptions that impel modern scholars to define interpretive options in familiar ways. Another way of “thinking the opposite” involves the media of biblical interpretation (Adam 1995:76). Postmodern readers can explore other possible media, to communicate their interpretations of the Bible. For example videotapes, the computer, video, audience’s capacities, theater, film, oratory, sculpture, painting, or drawing are all ranges of interpretive media that allow readers to venture out on their own and extend beyond even these.

### **2.3 Methods in feminist theology**

Feminist theology has come out of Christian feminist praxis (cf Ruether 1985b; Graham 1990, 1996; Graham & Halsey 1993; Ruether 1982, 1998). Graham (1988:129; cf

Walton 2000:196-201) explains that “feminist Practical Theology emerges from the encounter between faith and practice in the form of the values embodied and enacted in the diversities of pastoral response to women’s changing needs and perspectives”. It has been crucial to counter the invisibility of women. Women’s experiences of motherhood, work, growing older, caring and inequality were not mentioned and were not recognized in the Christian ministry (see Graham 1988:130-131; Graham & Halsey 1993:180-191; cf Gray 1988; Ruether 1985b; Neuger 2001; Willows & Lynch 1998:181-187; St Hilda Community 1991). Therefore, women criticized androcentric traditions, and brought a feminist perspective to Practical Theology. To criticize is necessarily followed by the task of “reconstruction”.

### **2.3.1 Characteristics of feminist theology**

The characteristics of feminist theology are feminist criticism and feminist theology as “liberation theology”. The first and probably most familiar aspect of feminist criticism is the ideological criticism of the Bible. At first the historical-critical method which dominated for nearly a century was used, but its limitations and inherent prejudices are now being widely recognized. Current biblical studies demonstrate a diversity of methods: literary criticism, structuralism, social and sociological interpretation, as well as the various forms of spiritual and psychological interpretation. The varieties of feminist studies challenge traditional patriarchy, traditional exegesis, and dominant ideologies. All hermeneutics are dependent on interpreters, premises of historians, intelligent concepts, politics and prejudice. Therefore from these premises, feminist theologians criticize tradition and traditional theology that is per definition male-centered.

The other characteristic mentioned, namely feminist theology as liberation theology is concerned with classism, racism, and pursues liberation to achieve the freedom and dignity of the human being from various discriminating actions. In other words, feminist theology is understood as an instrument to realize God’s will of liberation for the whole human race. Letty Russell (1985:11-18) understands God as a liberator. She emphasizes various aspects of liberation namely the political, social, economical, psychological and religious dimension which are not separate from one another. Schüssler Fiorenza (1981b:106; 1982) disagrees with Russell in that the different kinds of oppression cannot

be generalized in one category. The oppressive experiences of women are obviously different in different cultures, religions, and backgrounds. Moreover, it is difficult for the oppressed to have concrete direction and a strategy. In spite of different opinions amongst theologians, they do agree that feminist theology is basically a liberation theology. Women's full humanity is the goal of feminist biblical hermeneutics in Ruether's view (1985b:11-18; see Russell 1985:115).

Feminist theology is not just talking or thinking about God. It involves action that is informed by reflection on situations and conditions as seen from a theological perspective. Like liberation theology, feminist theology is intended to be put into practice. Feminist theology is called "doing theology" (cf Fabella & Lee SA 1990). Action is concurrent with reflection or analysis. New questions emerge from the action. For example, feminist theologians meet three women who survive by prostitution in the Philippines (Ruether 1973:3). The theologians instead of condemning these women for their immorality would seek to understand and expose the conditions that force women into prostitution. They would expose the dehumanizing aspects and the evil and sin of patriarchal capitalism including the hypocrisy of the church. In the case of these three prostitutes, feminist theologians revealed the oppression through international sex-tourism that encourages such evils as prostitution.

The purpose of doing theology in feminist theology is to discover a new way of action that brings change in society, and to seek ways to express women's faith and confidence in God (cf Hampton 1990:148-150). This Practical Theology brings action and reflection together. Therefore, Tapia (1989:171; see Chung HK 1990:100; cf Graham 1998:129-152; Ackermann 1998:75-102) rather calls this theology "God-praxis". Theology is not only a theoretical exercise. It is a commitment and participation in people's struggle for full humanity, and discernment of God's redemptive action in history. It is theology – *in action*.

### **2.3.2 Deconstruction**

Deconstruction is one of the feminist approaches to biblical material. In line with the postmodernism rejection of unity or totality, the feminist method celebrates difference. Women have doubts about the structure of language, the concept of the self, the authority

and the truth. A strong faith in tradition should be deconstructed to set new standards and create new conceptions according to deconstruction. So this feminist approach is as a deconstruction of new reconstruction. Postmodern reasoning can help women to realize that there are no absolute criteria for what is right or wrong, and that those who have power decide what the truth is. Here power means not only political-economical power, but also power that can be extended to any active categories of human behaviour such as social power or religious power. So people need to discuss power, authority, and knowledge that are established by western culture and controlled by males everywhere in the world. Postmodernism seems to provide an analysis of feminism as a theoretical foundation. From this viewpoint, rejecting unity or totality is an important notion in contemporary feminism and feminist theology.

Deconstruction means to make a difference in the identity, which is not absolute, but differs in relation to others. Derrida (1992:8; Hekman 1990:22) has called deconstruction “logocentrism”, combining *logos* and centrism. This *logos* is subject to the question of what the foundation is. By posing the how-do-we-know question, deconstruction displaces the *logos* from its position of authority; deconstruction decentralizes that which has been constructed to be central. Deconstructive critics can work in various ways: “writing” or “speaking” (Derrida 1976:142, 7, 83, 159; see Johnson 1981:xiii). In “speaking”, a speaker uses a word and immediately refers to a particular “referential meaning” e.g “externalization”. In “writing” one uses a written word. Here, simultaneity, or the overlapping of the signifier (*logos*) and the signified (the principle of intertextuality) does not occur. Meaning is not fixed; the authority of the *logos* is displaced. The language user, when he/she uses a word, is always displaced to another word/expression/meaning. Deconstruction calls this principle difference. The quest for meaning is a journey that never ends.

When deconstruction moves into the discourse of biblical criticism, it displays some characteristics of interpretation:

- It is antifoundational, which means that there can be no absolute reference point by which we orient our interpretations: not the text, the author, the meaning, the real, the historical event, nor any other self-identical authoritative presence.

- Deconstruction demystifies the authoritative text. Careful readers need to separate history from fiction.
- Deconstruction shatters the totalities, and identifies the shadowy presence.
- Deconstruction is used for readers' purposes, although not by any means for all purposes.
- Deconstruction suggests to interpreters that there are no unnatural acts of textual intercourse (Adam 1995:31-32).

Postmodern deconstructive biblicists make a valuable contribution to the academy and the church. One such contribution is that that academically trained interpreters do not have an exclusive right to legitimacy in the field of biblical interpretation (Kim KH 1995:31-56; Adam 1995:33). There can be various interpretive interests in the wide hermeneutical field. A second contribution is that biblicists are freed from the modern anxiety to legitimate the interpretation with reference to history.

### **2.3.3 Feminist critique/ feminist criticism on literature**

Feminist criticism is a part of postmodern criticism. Feminist criticism (see Anderson 1992:103-134; Strobel 1991; F Showalter 1983:130-149; E Showalter 1986a:5-6) has flourished in combination with every other critical approach from formalism to semiotics. The most well-known ideological criticism of the Bible is feminist criticism. Feminist theologians like Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1895, 1898) have produced a wide variety of ideological-critical readings, among others by using horrifying stories about women in the Bible (see Tribble 1984). Other feminist scholars criticize the androcentric, and patriarchal ideology (cf Gray 1982; Daly 1975, 1984; Ruether 1982). These scholars point out that men's lives are important and take priority but women have only secondary status in the Bible. Moreover, the problem is that the interpretive methods of modern historians are connected with patriarchal androcentrism.

Cheri Register (1975:2) distinguishes three subdivisions in feminist criticism, each with its own target:

- The analysis of the "image of women" as it appears in works by male authors.

- The examination of existing criticism of female authors.
- Prescriptive criticism attempts to set a standard for literature in order to guide authors who are writing literary works from a new feminist perspective.

Goodman (1996:71) gives three reasons why the gender of authors is a major concern in literary studies today:

- because there is a considerable body of writing, much of it by women, which was “silenced” or ignored in previous generations;
- because looking at this body of literature challenges the canon not only by increasing the number of texts studied, but also by adding themes, images and ideas to a list of literary concerns;
- because there is a freshness and mystery about literary texts which we have not encountered before or which have not been widely studied.

The first point concerns the historical treatment of women and women’s work economically, socially and culturally. The second concerns the conditions of women’s lives as expressed in their creative writing. The third is perhaps the most important point for readers: reading newly “discovered” texts can be particularly thought-provoking and enjoyable.

In its earliest years, “feminist criticism concentrated on exposing the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuse or textual harassment of women in classic and popular male literature, and the exclusion of women from literary history” (Showalter 1986a:5-6). Feminist criticism focused on the connections between the literary and the social mistreatment of women, for example, pornography or rape. But over the past fifteen years, these efforts to make readers question the innocence, insignificance, or humor of antifeminist characterizations have succeeded in changing the atmosphere of the literary response. Sandra M Gilbert (1988:xiii; cf 1986:33) says that “assumptions about the sexes are entangled with some of the most fundamental assumptions western culture makes about the very nature of culture that is male dominant”. Even literary genres were deeply influenced by psychosocial



notions about gender. Gilbert (1986:33) found that, “though the pressures and oppressions of gender may be as invisible as air, women are also as inescapable as air and, like the weight of air, they imperceptibly shaped the forms and motions of our lives”. The focus on women’s writing as a specific field of inquiry led to a massive recovery and rereading of literature by women’s specific perspectives.

Women of different backgrounds, have their own internal differences. Whereas Anglo-American feminist criticism (Bell Hooks 1989; Donna Haraway 1987; Cora Kaplan 1987; Joan Scott 1988) tries to recover women’s historical experiences as readers and writers, French feminist theory (Rosemarie Tong 1989; Toril Moi 1985, 1986; Helene Cixous & Catherine Clement 1986; Claire Duchen 1986) studies the ways in which the “feminine” has been defined, represented, or repressed in the symbolic systems of language, metaphysics, psychoanalysis, and art. The most radical French feminist theorists also believe that the feminine is connected to the rhythms of the female body and to sexual pleasure, and that women have an advantage in producing this radically disruptive and subversive kind of writing (Showalter 1986b:9). They urge the woman writer to ally herself with everything in the culture which is muted or silenced, in order to destroy the existing systems that repress feminine difference. Mary Jacobus (1986:64) thinks feminist criticism has this underlying political assumption at its starting point, because women confront the basic theory of the language of dominance and literary tradition or culture that is manifested in writing by and about women. Irigaray (1985a:68-85) suggests that women would have a question about all systems and all forms whether it is women’s oppression or not. She points to criticize not only reading and writing, but also gestures or manners that are beyond cultural boundaries.

On the other hand, Cheri Register (1975:1) understands feminist reading to be an aspect of feminist criticism. The reader must depend on her personal response to the book and evaluate it in terms of her own tastes and priorities. Feminist criticism has a practical aim:

- the analysis of the “image of women” as it nearly always appears in works by male authors and
- the examination of existing criticism of female authors.

Women have been drawn as a particular stereotype. Barracano Schmidt (1971:900) points out three reasons for this.

- The writer used a common model.
- The character is a product of social ideal or social value.
- The character is a symbolic fulfillment of the writers' needs, a mythical being invented to give solace in an otherwise terrifying situation.

Schmidt opts for the third reason, claiming that the terrifying situation in this case is the rise of feminist consciousness and its threat to male dominance. A Christian feminist, Schüssler Fiorenza (1985:126), expresses the opinion that "feminist consciousness radically throws into question all traditional religious names, texts, rituals, law, and interpretive metaphors because women all bear 'our Father's names'". Carol Christ (1979:273-287) insists that "the central spiritual and religious feminist quest is the quest for women's self-determination". Feminist criticism started from a resistance against patriarchal ideologies, society, and religions. A critical analysis of patriarchy allows women to conceptualize the interaction of sexism, racism, classism, and militarist colonialism. Schüssler Fiorenza explains why women criticize patriarchy.

The patriarchal dehumanization and victimization of triple oppressed women exhibits the full death-dealing powers of patriarchy, while their struggles for liberation and courage to survive is the fullest experience of God's grace in our midst. A feminist critical theology of liberation must therefore be particular and concrete. It must theologically explore women's particular experiences of marginalization, victimization, and oppression. At the same time, it has to articulate our individual and historical experience of liberation (Schüssler Fiorenza 1985:128).

Feminist biblical interpretation must challenge the scriptural authority of patriarchal texts. Schüssler Fiorenza (1985:130-135) suggests the elements of criticism or critical interpretation should be as follows:

- suspicion rather than acceptance of biblical authority,
- critical evaluation rather than correlation,
- interpretation through proclamation,
- remembrance and historical reconstruction,
- interpretation through celebration and ritual.

I will explain in detail:

- Firstly, a hermeneutics of suspicion should be applied to the history of exegesis and contemporary interpretations. And the task of a hermeneutics of suspicion is to elaborate the patriarchal, destructive aspects and oppressive functions of the Bible.
- Secondly, critical analysis and evaluation of particular biblical texts is to examine how patriarchal structures are contained in the original historical contexts and contemporary situation. A feminist hermeneutics of critical evaluation has criteria and principles to evaluate certain texts. The criteria and principles are the affirmation and promotion of the full humanity of women. Thus, women can find some liberating paradigms in the biblical texts through a process of critical evaluation.
- Thirdly, the Bible is understood as interaction with contemporary culture, politics, and society. A hermeneutics of proclamation evaluates the contemporary political situation and psychological factors of biblical interpretations and texts. The question is how much the Bible does impact on women's oppression.
- Fourthly, such a hermeneutics of proclamation must be balanced by a hermeneutics of remembrance, which recovers all biblical traditions and texts through a feminist historical reconstruction. Women need to remember their sufferings, struggles, and even visions in the patriarchal biblical past, then they will proclaim their victories through the subversive power of the "remembered" past. A hermeneutics of remembrance seeks to develop a feminist critical method and historical model for

moving beyond the androcentric text to the history of women in biblical religion. In this way women become the center of biblical life.

- Fifthly, interpretation through remembrance and historical reconstruction must be supplemented by a hermeneutics of creative ritualization. Such an interpretation allows women to have historical imagination, artistic recreation, literary creativity, music, dance, and liturgical celebration through biblical stories. Women have opportunities to rewrite biblical stories, to image biblical visions, and to create feminist rituals for celebrating.

In Schüssler Fiorenza's elaboration, through structural and creative transformation, the Bible can become the Scripture for women as a holy book, and the biblical revelation will not be reduced to merely androcentric texts which originated within patriarchal structures. Through feminist criticism (see Anderson 1992:103-134), women explore all kinds of hidden connections between literature and sexuality, genre and gender, sexual identity and cultural authority, political issues and women, psychological feeling and historical facts. Bons-Storm (1988:9-26; see Graham & Halsey 1988: 129-152) refers to this as women doing "feminist Practical Theology".