MAPPING THE CONTRIBUTION OF FEMINIST SPIRITUALITIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL OF "GENDER EQUALITY"

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AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Invisible women?

Invisibility, silenced voices, unheard stories, the "second sex". These are all associations with the lives of women, globally. It has been the case for millennia. Therefore, one can ask: What is the state of women's global wellbeing today? This is precisely the question that of the National Geographic's November 2019 issue, titled "Women: a century of change". The issue considered the progress of change in women's lives over a century and women's wellbeing around the world was scrutinised. The study underlying the report was conducted by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security (GIWPS) and measured the wellbeing of women in terms of three categories: inclusion, security, and justice. The inclusion-category covers the economic, social, and political spheres. Security is measured on the individual, community and societal levels, and justice is measured by studying formal laws and monitoring informal discrimination (GIWPS, 2021:1).

The institute's latest report, the "Women, Peace and Security Index of 2021/22", which was published in 2021, includes data of 170 countries[1]. Trends in the index indicate that the global advance of the progress of women has slowed and globally, disparities have widened (GIWPS, 2021). In the preface of the report, Jeni Klugman, managing director of the GIWPS states that the aim of the index is to highlight patterns and progress relating to women's status and empowerment around the world. "It reflects a shared vision that countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunities" (GIWPS 2021:vi). The Index Report indicates that equal rights and equal opportunities for women are still not a reality. Since the first report in 2017, index scores have risen with an average of 9%. From the 117 countries, only 31 have had an above average

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[1]The data investigates provincial and state levels to show major disparities within country borders that a national average could conceal (GIWPS 2021:vi).

increase in their index scores. In about 90 countries, the index score rose with 5%. In 2021, Norway was the country with the highest index score, and Afghanistan the lowest (GIWPS, 2021: 2). The latest report also indicates that South Asia is the worst performing region, with high levels of intimate partner violence, legal discrimination, and low levels of inclusion. Six out of the top ten score improvers are in Sub-Saharan Africa, although the numbers of forced displaced women and girls in Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan remain exceptionally high. These women and girls face a much higher risk of economic marginalisation, intimate partner violence and financial exclusion (GIWPS, 2021:1).

All of this indicates that data is paramount and necessary to indicate disparities, identify what the problems are (where the hurdles lie) and to work towards turning the situation around. Capturing data is essential for the visibility of women, unearthing their stories and making their voices heard. The extent of this data need and the data "gap" is indicated in a recent publication by Caroline Criado Perez (2019). In her work titled, *"Invisible women: data bias in a world designed for men"*, she comprehensively indicates how women experience being invisible daily simply due to the fact that women's perspectives and experiences are not included when gathering virtually any kind of data that informs policy and sometimes even something as simple as the design of a seatbelt of a car. The gender-data gap is not always done deliberately, as Criado Perez illustrates:

> "The gender data gap… is simply the product of a way of thinking that has been around for millennia and is therefore a kind of not thinking. A double not thinking, even: men go without saying, and women don't get said at all. Because when we say human, on the whole, we mean man"

> (2019: xi)

Criado Perez indicated that this data gap is everywhere:

> "The female specific concerns that men fail to factor in cover a wide variety of areas … three themes crop up again and again:

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the female body, women's unpaid care burden, and male violence against women".

Criado Perez' findings confirm and correlate with the data from Georgetown institute for Women, Peace, and Security-Index. Both these studies are indicative of the challenges of realising gender equity and gender equality, globally. The United Nations' programme of sustainable development goals and specifically the sustainable development goal number 5 of gender equality and equity represents one of the most comprehensive global and interdisciplinary attempts to date to try and address the challenges indicated in the abovementioned studies. This study aims to contribute to filling aspects of the data gap related to realising gender equality by considering and mapping the contribution of feminist spiritualities to the sustainable development agenda of gender equality. The background and rationale for this is briefly set out in the next sections, by considering three questions related to "seeing", "speaking" and "safe spaces". This is followed by an overview of related matters pointing to the relevance of the study.

1.1.1 Seeing but looking the other way?

The gender-based violence statistics of South Africa is available; however, these may not tell the full story. It is not a euphemism to state that gender-based violence in South Africa is a pandemic[2]. The media reports on this frequently. On 3 May 2022 the heading of a News24 article was, "Woman crawls to taxi rank for help after being raped, stabbed, left for dead in Johannesburg south". On 28 April 2022 a heading read, "Artist, 79, charged with rape and grooming of 11-year-old girl gets bail of R5 000" (Francke, 2022). Two days later, on 30 April 2022, another nauseating headline, "Pensioner found guilty for a second time of raping girl at crèche he and his

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[2]The declaration made by the Commission for Gender Equality in 2021 stated that "South Africa has long experienced high levels of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF)". Various initiatives have been launched by government to curb the spread of violence. These initiatives range from policy to programmes. In 2019 a declaration was launched and signed by Cyril Ramaphosa and several civil society organisations, with key commitments to address GBVF in South Africa.

wife owned" (Viljoen, 2022). Shortly thereafter, The Sunday Times published an article on 1 May 2022 titled: "Eastern Cape man, 43, guilty of raping, impregnating 11-year-old girl" (Koen, 2022). On 4 May 2022 a title read, "Justice for Hillary Gardee: 8 other young women murdered in mysterious circumstances in SA" (Masilela, 2022). This woman that crawled to a taxi rank after being raped is 49 years old, lost two front teeth during the attack as well as the use of both hands. She spent a month in the hospital. The suspect denied raping her, claiming it was consensual sex, he did confess that he tried to kill her (Chabalala, 2022). The list of news articles seem endless, and the rapid succession of the publication dates indicates the frequency and severity of the problem of gender-based violence in South Africa. It is not surprising, therefore, that South Africa has some of the highest statistics worldwide regarding gender-based violence and femicide[3]. It is up to four times the international average.

Due to an intersection of both ethnicity and gender, and intersecting experiences of oppression and marginalisation, statistically, women of colour in South Africa are particularly adversely affected by gender equality[4] (Vallabh, 2022) and related gender-based violence (Vallabh, 2022). The high prevalence of gender-based violence (also outside the borders of South Africa) was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, as the policy brief, titled "The impact of Covid-19 on women" by the United Nations in April 2020 indicated. In 2020 the president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa actually designated gender-based violence (GBV) the 'Second Pandemic' with reference to the Covid-19 pandemic. In South Africa, gender-based violence incidents increased during the pandemic[5] since women were confined in

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[3]The term femicide was coined in 1801 and politicised in the 1970's. Femicide refers to the murder of women and girls due to their gender (Mangan, 2019:316).
[4] Kimberley Crenshaw, critical race theorist and law professor coined the term intersectionality in a 1976 employment discrimination case to show that we cannot separate a women's experience of gender from her race. Intersectionality is a tool used to understand how each individual or group experiences the fight for equality, it also helps to show how multiple layers of oppression reinforce one another. "Applying an intersectional analysis to an issue helps us bring to light invisible identity and to understand the qualitatively different experience we could have from one another in the fight for equality" (Bagshaw, 2019:25,26), (Crenshaw 1989:139-167) cf (van Wyk, 2019:137).
[5]"Police Minister Bheki Cele recently announced that more than 9 500 cases of GBV and 13 000 cases of domestic violence were reported just between July and September 2021. Over the same period, 897

spaces with their perpetrators because of lockdown regulations that restricted movement.

In a recent study by Dekel and Abrahams (2021:1), titled, "'I will rather be killed by corona than by him...': Experiences of abused women seeking shelter during South Africa's COVID-19 lockdown" they indicated that there was and is an increase in intimate partner violence (IPV) especially in times of crises. The researchers conducted interviews with 16 women living in domestic violence shelters in South Africa during the lockdown period in 2020. The study was aimed at understanding the experiences of women who remained in an abusive relationship and those who ended an abusive relationship during the Covid-19 pandemic. These results seem to correlate with the UN Policy brief, which is in turn supported by different reports, published in 2020 by the United Nations' Women initiative[6]. All these reports provide comprehensive evidence relating to the horrible effects of Covid-19 for women and girls.

1.1.2 Speak up? Justice in a (un)just system

Although South Africa has some of the best humanitarian and equality focused laws in the world, this does not seem to curb GBV[7]. A Lack of law enforcement, and a lack of resources, both at the government and community level, are some of the hinderances to affecting the inclusive laws of South Africa[8]. This is also linked to the fact that the extent of gender-based violence is more often than not wholly known and hidden. Vallabh has recently indicated that, "according to the World Bank, only

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women were murdered (an increase of 7.7% compared to the same period in 2020), while sexual offence cases increased by 4.7% and incidents of rape rose by 7.1% compared to the second quarter of 2020" (Vallabh:2022).

[6]https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women

[7]To try and curb the scourge of GBV new legislation is implemented, examples are the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Bill; the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Bill, and the Domestic Violence Amendment Bill (Vallabh:2022).

[8]Jennifer Smout, author of a newspaper article published on 29 April 2022 reflects on the gender-based violence and femicide summit held in 2018 that concluded with a declaration to establish a GBVF council within six months. In 2022 progress is still slow. The resolution stated that a "national, multisectoral coordinating body must be established within six months of the signing of the summit declaration". The idea was to have better representation which in effect can help to address GBV more effectively. This has not yet been realised.

7% of women who have experienced violence have reported it to a formal source such as the police, healthcare systems or social services" (Vallabh, 2022). Victims of gender-based violence are often stigmatized or victimised further by their families or communities which can lead to discrimination. Discrimination as a result of stigma can occur in all areas of society. As a result of stigma and victims that do not feel safe to report incidents to the police, distrust in law enforcement and the judicial system, incidents are not always reported (Vallabh, 2022). During a panel discussion in 2020 held by the HF Oppenheimer Chair in Human Rights Law and the Transformation Committee of the Stellenbosch University Law faculty on the theme of "Gender-based violence as a human rights violation - virtual panel discussion"[9] some alarming statistics related to violence against women and girls, and the reporting thereof, was highlighted. In 2019/2020, 2695 women and 943 children were murdered in South Africa, this means a woman is murdered every three hours. In 2019, 53000 sexual offences were reported to the police, 146 sexual offences that are reported is committed daily (Faculty of Law, 2020). It was noted that the legal system stigmatizes victims of gender-based violence. In 2018/2019 there were 52420 reported sexual offences of which 6346 sexual offence cases were prosecuted and 4724 were found guilty. There is thus a conviction rate of 9.01% for sexual offence cases reported to the police (Faculty of Law, 2020).

It seems that women are not safe, even with persons they should be able to trust. According to a Statistics South Africa report, half of gender-based violence (GBV) assaults are committed by a friend or someone that is known to the victim (22%); or by a spouse or intimate partner (15%); or by a family member or someone living in the same household (13%). Only 29% of GBV cases is committed by a stranger (Vallabh,2022). Therefore, when women need to report an incident, they do not feel safe to do so. Be it unfair treatment by police, the law enforcement officials, their workplace or being shamed by family, friends, and other groups, women are cautious to report incidents. If victims gain the courage to report incidents, it is not likely that the case will result in a perpetrator found guilty. In the publication of their

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[9] https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=7619

study, Dekel and Abrahams (2021:12) concluded by emphasising that women's experiences need to be "un-silenced" (heard) and recognised (seen) if there is any hope of bridging gender gaps and addressing gender-based violence in its different forms.

1.1.3 Religious communities, a safe space?

Working in a religious community, based on my experience, I have often asked the question: How are religion, gender and gender equity connected? This is connected to a series of other questions:

- Are religious communities a safe and welcoming environment for human diversity?
- Are religion or religious communities participating, enforcing, or sustaining gender imbalances, gender stereotypes and gender inequalities?
- What role can spirituality play, is it already playing a role?
- What role does gender stereotypes play and what is the connection between these stereotypes and religious communities?
- Are there religious or spiritual justifications for gender stereotypes?

The reason for asking these questions is deeply connected to my experience as a woman and a minster of religion in an Afrikaans-speaking Reformed church, namely the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). Although the DRC has recently celebrated the 30-year anniversary since women were accepted into ordained ministry in this denomination, an insidious relegation of women to certain spaces still occurs. The leadership structures do not always reflect the substantial numbers of women who are members of the DRC. There are occurrences of what Joanne Bagshaw (2019:41,42) refers to as "benevolent sexism", which entails the attitude towards women that at first seem positive but actually restrict the roles of women. An example is to idealise a woman or giving women compliments when they comply with the traditional gender roles. In this way the standard of patriarchy is maintained. The examples that Bagshaw (2019:42) mentions are examples that I observe frequently. These examples include "women are hard workers", "women should be

praised for what they do" and "women are special and should be protected". These statements sound positive, but the effects are damaging. I therefore observe the effects of patriarchy almost on a daily basis. I hear the many stories of women, witness the struggle for women and the church's struggle to recognise women as fellow human beings, and not only objects to be admired for their appearance. As a member of a faith and religious community, I therefore ask what the role is and/or the responsibility of religion in general, and of my faith community in particular, when it comes to the phenomenon of gender-based violence and the realisation of gender equality and gender equity.

In a predominantly religious country and continent where both religion and spirituality function as ways of understanding daily life, a certain worldview is created and lived by. It could be argued, therefore, that both religion and spirituality should have a substantial influence on people's approach toward gender-based violence and gender equality, as these are issues that affect a large part of the country and the continent's population(s). How do religious communities respond to the violence? Might they be perpetrators of the violence women suffer, and contributors to women's invisibility? And, if spirituality has an impact on someone's whole life, as Masango (2006) has indicated, how do women who are part of religious communities make sense of their surroundings and find meaning in what is happening? Where do women find solidarity? In my experience, women only find this type of solidarity and safe space with likeminded people sharing the same vision, connecting spiritually, and living the values that are closely associated with feminist and womanist perspectives.

In this study, Christian feminist spiritualities (in the plural) will form a major part my approach to close the data gaps and address the invisibility that Criado Perez (2019) has referred to – the invisibility that is the underlying reason for gender inequalities and abuses as evidenced in the indexes and reports referred to earlier. I have specifically chosen spirituality due to its holistic and dynamic character, and the way it could serve as a countermovement (see the work of Kees Waaijman 2002: 212-301). I have chosen feminist spirituality specifically because of my own positionality, but also because of the way that spirituality, throughout history, has been a way for

women to authorise themselves to speak, as the feminist historian Gerda Lerner (1993) has indicated. Spirituality, for women throughout history, has been a way to be visible – to be seen and heard.

At the intersection of my experiences of patriarchy in a religious and faith community and the experiences of the scourge of gender-based violence in South African life, the history of feminist spirituality and the diversity of women's voices connected to their spiritualities as a way to address gender inequalities, seemed like a viable approach.

1.2. Theoretical framework and relevance of the study

For the purpose of this introductory chapter, I will provide a brief overview of some of the core terms and discourses related to this study, which link to the introductory rationale and provide a theoretical framework for the study.

1.2.1 Feminist spiritualities

The term feminist spiritualities originated in the 1980's within the feminist context and "is the shared experience of women who had become conscious of living in a male-dominated cultural system" (Waaijman, 2002:218-219). The women reacted with resistance to structures that regarded them as inferior. In her seminal work, Lerner (1993) indicated that women's spirituality as a means of authorisation (among others) was born out of feminist consciousness. These spiritualities took on different forms. It is more accurate to refer to feminist spiritualities in the plural, therefore. For the purposes of this introduction, "feminist spiritualities" can be described as having central elements of feminist consciousness (Carr, 1982:99). The literature on feminist spiritualities is a colourful tapestry. "Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion" was published in 1979 and edited by Christ and Plaskow. Just over a decade later, a follow-up work was published, "Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality". Although substantial literature was published in the interval between publications, both works identified similar and ongoing tensions and challenges. According to Plaskow and Christ (1989:1), these were, the critique of patriarchal religion, the centrality of the experience of women while working with feminism, the focus on bodies and the natural world and the conflict that arises

between traditions that have been upheld for years and the creation of new traditions. Plaskow & Christ (1989:1) noted that the most important development between the two books was the increase in the diversity of voices that were represented (Plaskow & Christ: 1989:2).

A major part of the theoretical framework for this study comes from the work of Nicola Slee (2002: loc 4196) who identified five trends that she regards as characteristics of feminist spiritualities. For the purpose of this introduction, these are just listed here briefly, as they will be discussed thoroughly in other sections of the study. These characteristics are a strong focus on the body and desire, a deep understanding of relationality, connectedness, and the functioning of community. The search for right relations both in interpersonal and communal relationships. The characteristic of the liberation of the earth is present as well as a focus on integration, inclusivity, and holism are some that Slee identifies. Kees Waaijman (2002) also notes certain characteristics that are part of feminist spiritualities, such as the focus on the lived experience of women. The way spirituality functions as a tool of authority for women to occupy space outside of a patriarchal delimitation of space, is noted by Anne Carr (1982:99): "a specifically feminist spirituality, … would be that mode of relating to God and everyone and everything in relation to God, exhibited by those who are deeply aware of the historical and cultural restriction of women to narrowly defined 'place' within the wider human (male) 'world'". These initial remarks on feminist spirituality are framed by at least three important current discourses taking place, which together also represents the contextuality and relevance of this study.

1.2.2 The global focus and urgency related to the UN Sustainable Development Goal initiative and programme

The first important current discourse for this study, is that of the United Nations' Sustainable Development initiative. In 2015, all the member states of the United Nations (UN) adopted 17 goals that were aimed at achieving the sustainable development of humanity in all its facets on planet Earth. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form part of the UN's Agenda 2030, which is a global cooperation attempt towards sustainability. There is a 15-year plan to achieve the

goals that are a "universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere"[10]. Progress has been made, however the rate of progress at this stage might mean that the goals will not be achieved in the time frame that was envisaged. Each of the 17 goals focus on specific aspects related to human living and the balance with nature. Each of the 17 SDGs has specific targets that are being measured throughout this period. Within the sustainable development agenda, it is the 5th goal (SDG 5), which specifically focusses on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls". Gender equality is of particular importance, as the findings of the GIWPS-Index confirmed. The Covid-19 pandemic has slowed progress and a renewed focus on gender equality and equity is therefore necessary. There is a myriad of UN programmes dedicated to this, which will be discussed in full later on in this study. However, for now it is relevant to note the UN's history related to activism and awareness relating to gender equality and equity. According to the UN SDG webpage[11], the United Nations encountered different challenges in its effort to globally promote gender equality. Some of these challenges include inadequate funding. In July 2010 the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality, and the Empowerment of Women, to address such challenges. This step taken by the United Nations accelerated UN Member states to work together on the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women. Resources and mandates were brought together to enlarge the impact. Different divisions were put into place, for example: The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW); International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

There is a dedicated SDG 5 webpage[12]. It is stated there that progress that has been made can be seen in the increase of girls going to school, fewer girls forced into

[10]https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda
[11]https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda
[12]https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality

early marriage, an increase of women in leadership positions and laws that enable the advancement of gender equality. However, according to statements on the webpage, the slow rate of progress is acknowledged and worrying. There are still challenges remaining such as discriminatory laws and social norms, women still being underrepresented in political leadership as 20% of women and girls, aged 15-49, reported experiencing physical and or sexual violence by an intimate partner in a 12-month period. The global focus on the SDGs and the amount of time and resources that are being dedicated to the SDGs makes apparent the urgency of the current situation.

1.2.3 The role of faith communities' contribution as actors for achieving the SDGs

The second current discourse that provides the rationale and framework for this study, is the increasing awareness of possibility of religious communities being actors for the achievement of sustainable development (see Öhlmann *et al* 2022). Although this will be discussed in detail a chapter in the study, it can be noted here as part of the theoretical framework that there is an increased relevance of religion in the development sphere, as seen for example in the work of the International Network of Religious Communities and Sustainable Development (IN/RCSD)[13]. This in turn is related to a "resurgence in religion" (see the work of Thomas (2005) and Wariboko (2014)). Former assistant secretary-general of the UN and former deputy executive director of UN Women, Lakshmi Puri delivered a speech in 2017 titled "The Agenda of Creating a Planet 50-50 Cannot Come True if Religion, Religious Leaders and Faith Actors Remain Outside The Conversation". The planet 50-50 campaign, launched by UN Women in the lead-up to the adoption of the SDGs was a call from women to governments for national commitments to address challenges that are holding women and girls back from living their full potential. This evolved into the Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it Up for Gender Equality Campaign that fostered

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[13] See for example: https://in-rcsd.org/en. The network focuses on "teaching and policy-advice in the field or religion and sustainable development. As a global think tank, it brings together scholars, policymakers, development practitioners and representatives of religious communities from various parts of the world". As proof of the growing importance of the connection between religion and sustainable development, see also: https://brill.com/view/journals/rnd/1/1/rnd.1.issue-1.xml

mobilization and public awareness. During Puri's speech, the necessity of the inclusion of religion, religious leaders, and faith actors, in the sustainable development conversation. Since then, the campaign morphed into a public mobilization campaign aimed at raising awareness on the key role that women and girls play in the achievement of the SDGs [14]Puri made several comments on the power of religion and referred to the significant role that religion plays in individual, and communities lives worldwide. Religion therefore has a potential that can be harnessed to mobilise parts of society for the transformations that is called for by the UNs human rights, peace and security, humanitarian, and sustainable development agenda. Puri urges that the power of religion should be harnessed in the creation of the new social reality where gender equality and empowerment of women is realised.

Religion has the potential to do good, it unfortunately can be part of the problem as well. In this regard, and specifically related to SGG 5, Puri addressed the role of patriarchy:

> "Unfortunately, so far in many societies we have misconstrued religious teaching which justifies the "naturalness" and "sacred nature" of the patriarchy in which men are viewed as superior to women, discriminated against, there is gendered division of labour and roles and gender stereotyping, harmful practices like child marriage, female genital mutilation and violence against women justified in the name of religion"
>
> (Puri, 2017)

Puri noted that religious teachings should be revisited, re-examined and that out of these new narratives the role religion and faith in achieving gender equality should be created. An Interfaith platform is necessary as an equal world cannot be realised if religious leaders and faith actors remain outside of the conversation. The UN

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[14] https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up/toolkit

Women's Strategy on "The Role of Religion in Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" requires faith actors to critically dismantle structures that upholds inequality. This strategy also aims to engage faith actors, different organisations, and institutions to work toward the goal of gender equality.

1.2.4 The urgency of gender equality and equity

The effects of Covid-19 cannot be taken lightly, and the repercussions are still being discovered. The UN Secretary General, António Guterres made the statement during a policy brief in 2020[15]: "Limited gains in gender equality and women's rights made over the decades are in danger of being rolled back due to the Covid-19 pandemic", urging governments to put women and girls in the centre of efforts toward recovery.

Klugman (2021:vi) of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security noted that the repercussions of Covid-19 can already be seen "and the results are sobering". The global pace of improvement in the WPS Index has slowed considerably, with widening disparities across countries. This reflects a worsening of inequalities in the status of women, as countries at the top continue to improve while those at the bottom get worse, mirroring global trends in wealth and income inequality. The COVID pandemic has triggered multiple and overlapping crises, magnifying existing inequalities. The urgency of the issue can also be seen in the action that is taken globally. In a press release on 25 November 2020 in New York "The United Nations humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock has released $25 million from the UNs emergency fund to support women-led organizations that prevent and respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings"[16].

The pandemic revealed the fuller extent of gender inequality and poses a threat to reverse some of the progress that has been made. "The high levels of gender-based violence that women and girls experience, especially in countries that are in crisis and in need of humanitarian assistance, remains one of the greatest injustices in our

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[15] United Nations (2020) *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women.*

[16]https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/11/press-release-un-releases-funds-for-women-led-projects-battling-gender-based-violence

world," said UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. Mlambo-Ngcuka further stated that "putting these resources into the hands of women-led organizations that respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings is essential to address the needs of survivors and to strengthen systems to prevent and promote accountability, so that we finally end this scourge". The funds come from the United Nations' Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), an emergency fund that offers one of the fastest and most effective ways to help people affected by crises. Since it was established in 2005, the fund has provided close to $7 billion for life-saving humanitarian action that has helped hundreds of millions of people across more than 100 countries and territories. The WPS notes that it is necessary to track the progress that is being made in order to give accurate research on persistent gender inequalities and inform policy making. This is even more important considering the effects of Covid-19. "We see this year's report as an important contribution to the growing evidence base underlining the importance of women, peace, and security and the Sustainable Development Goals, bringing partners together around a shared agenda for women's inclusion, justice, and security" (2021:vi).

1.3 Research Question

Religion and spirituality are a big component of everyday life in South Africa and the African continent (see Abigi & Swart 2015). Spirituality and religion often help women to have another position in society, it also maintains culture in many ways. When women see each other and connect out of shared experience, this shared experience can bind a group and foster a safe place without regarding history or dividing factors. Feminist spiritualities seems to bind and provide language that is otherwise lost. Feminist spiritualities is not part of the mainstream discourse. Therefore, in this study, it will be investigated whether feminist spiritualties can be an instrument toward achieving gender equity, focused specifically on a goal of our time, namely Sustainable Development Goal 5. I want to find out if there is a connection between feminist spiritualities and the UN SDG5 and map the possible contributions of feminist scholars work in the field of spirituality towards achieving gender equality, as expressed in SDG 5.

1.4 Overview of existing literature

1.4.1 United Nation's progress on gender equality

The United Nations established United Nations Women in 2010 with the specific aim to focus on women and issues that are related to women, described as: "UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.[17]" UN Women supports UN Member States as they set out global standards for achieving gender equality. They also work with governments and civil society. The contributions vary from designing policy and laws, giving programmes, and providing services that benefit women and girls globally.

According to UN Women, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are also a big focus and part of the vision for UN Women and therefore they have four strategic priorities. Firstly, to have women lead and participate in government systems whilst benefiting equally. To free all women and girls from all forms of violence. Thirdly, to enable women and girls to contribute to building sustainable peace and resilience. Fourth, UN Women coordinates and promotes work in UN to advance gender equality that is linked to the 2030 agenda[18].

The literature that is available by the United Nations and the various entities that are linked to the UN maintains that gender equality is a basic human right and that it is necessary to achieve this. Gender equality will also have positive socio-economic repercussions. They also acknowledge that gender inequalities are embedded into societies in different ways and on different levels. "Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes"[19].

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[17] https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women
[18] https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women
[19]https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women

The Covid-19 pandemic had several detrimental effects which women are most vulnerable to. It is also the case that women are at the centre of fostering recovery in communities during and after the pandemic. Women are frontline healthcare workers and are also carers at home. Women's unpaid workload has increased significantly due to school closures and needs of the elderly (cf Obja Borah Hazarika & Sarmistha Das, 2021 & Chauhan, 2021). Women are mostly working in insecure labour markets and in the informal economy. There is strong motivation to put women and girls in the centre of economies to hasten recovery and to help achieve the sustainable development goals. The UN stated that every response plan to Covid-19 needs to address the gender impact of the pandemic. Women needs to be part of the response planning and decision making. Unpaid care work needs to be addressed in an inclusive economy. Socio-economic plans need an intentional focus on the lives and futures of girls and women[20]. The goals and aims that was active before Covid-19 were amplified and more energy was put toward achieving these goals. The UN has made progress[21] as is stated on their various platforms. Gender equality is related to 11 of the SDGs. Gender equality and women's empowerment is interlinked and the UN states that it is part of all their workstreams.

1.4.2 The role of religious actors

On 15 March 2017 the global platform on "Gender Equality and Religion" was launched. There were many organisations collaborating on this initiative. In the article announcing this initiative UN Women stated, "UN Women is currently developing its own strategy on "The Role of Religion in Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", which is founded on the belief that faith actors are critical in dismantling structures and practices that promote inequality. Several partners[22] form part of this initiative. The statement ended with "closely in line with

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[20]https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5
[21]Over many decades, the United Nations has made significant progress in advancing gender equality, including through landmark agreements such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
[22]The Platform launch was led by UN Women, on behalf of the UN's Interagency Task Force for Religion and Development (UNIATF), together with UK-Aid/ DFID and the International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD).

other advocacy efforts such as UN Women's Planet 50-50, HeForShe, and the UNITE Campaign, this faith-based Platform endeavours to work with global citizens, in partnership with civil society organizations, public and private sectors, traditional and social media, to engage on gender equality and influence the discourse on women's rights"[23] (UNWomen:2017). It is always clear or evident how this initiative continued since then.

A policy paper by Haustein & Tomalin (2019) based on findings from the research project "Keeping Faith in 2030: Religions and the SDGs made observations and recommendations in 2019" faith communities and faith actors play an important role and development practice acknowledges this. Development aid is increasingly being given through faith-based organisations and religions is being recognised more than a recourse than an obstacle. Faith actors were also involved in helping to shape the development policy and are committed to the SDGs. The research made several findings and recommendations[24] that are of interest to this study as it links religious actors and the targets of the SDGs to one another (Haustein & Tomalin:2019).

1.4.3 Feminist spiritualities as a force of transformation

In their work titled "Colonizing and Decolonizing Projects of Re/Covering Spirituality" Rhee & Subedi (2014) analyses how spirituality has been appropriated and re-appropriated for (re)colonialization and recolonization by means of a postcolonial inquiry. In the article Rhee and Subedi ask a question is an important hermeneutical

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[23]https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/3/news-global-platform-on-gender-equality-and-religion-launched

[24]"1. Faith-actors should not be brought in solely as 'religious voices' but as development partners like all others. 2. Members of NGOs and governments should increase their religious literacy, not only in terms of the history, teachings, and practices of different world religions, but also with respect to how religion actually manifests in diverse settings. 3. Identifying which faith actors to engage with according to their relative background and expertise, and on what issues, should be given careful consideration. 4. Perceived tensions between certain SDG goals or targets and religious values should be approached by recognising that faith actors can be important mediators for gaining a more specific understanding of such tensions and finding ways of addressing them. 5. In building partnerships with faith actors, it is important that those actors are listened to and included on their terms rather than being instrumentalised to achieve pre-defined development goals. 6. More investment is needed to spread knowledge about the SDG agenda to local faith actors to enable them to participate in the international conversation and mobilise local resources for the sustainable development agenda (Haustein & Tomalin:2019).

marker for this study: "when your (ways of) being and knowing are constantly delegitimized, disrespected, marginalised, inferiorized, attacked, erased, and/or destroyed, how to you continue to be?" (Rhee & Subedi, 2014:339). In their work, they have argued that spirituality is a way of sustaining energy. Furthermore, Rhee & Subedi (2014:339) maintain that spirituality functions as a recovery space and a space of possibilities for marginalised communities. A space of possibilities includes the space that is opened beyond Western-modern-colonial-scientific knowledge, truth, and power. What could this mean for feminist spiritualities? How can feminist spiritualties be a force that realises transformation for gender equity?

Feminist spiritualities can be a useful analytic lens when examining transformation possibilities. Rhee & Subedi (2014:241) approach educational studies through a framework of postcolonial inquiry and then demonstrates a different reading and interpretation of spirituality. Rhee & Subedi (2014) portray spirituality is a space of possibility. "Transformative spirituality demands the rewriting of knowledge paradigms that limit experiences within the simple binary of the materiality as tangible and the spirituality as invisible or non-existent" (Rhee & Subedi; 2014:351). When transformative spirituality is engaged within an epistemological and ontological manner it does not argue for relativistic and pluralistic stances where everything is being legitimised. It carries the possibility of decolonisation because it opens a space or "source of power and information" beyond Eurocentric-modern-colonial-scientific discourse and knowledge systems (Rhee& Subedi; 2014:351).

Kees Waaijman, one of the most prominent scholars and author of one of the seminal works in spirituality, "Spirituality, forms, foundations and methods", published in 2002. This work offers a paragraph on feminist spirituality as a subgroup of liberation spirituality. The research that forms part of the mainstream discourse does not often include work on feminist spiritualities. In the consulted work, it seems there is no one definition of feminist spiritualities but rather connections between different forms. As mentioned earlier, Nicola Slee developed several characteristics that are prevalent in feminist spiritualties. These characteristics are all embedded in the lived experience of women. It is these characteristics that could shape the contours of this new landscape and further the discussion and practice on gender

equality with regards to SDG 5. Even though there is a rich corpus of material on feminist spiritualities, it is not part of the main theological discussion, it is also not part of the main discussion on spirituality and not mentioned in the discussion on sustainable development and gender equality. The characteristics that are present in Feminist Spiritualities can help to form the language that is needed for transformation discourse. The characteristics can be applied to SDG 5 and may help in the transformation of individual lives, communities as well as the thought systems of people and groups. When the resounding chorus of feminist spiritualities are heard it can bring emancipations on an epistemological, ontological, and materialistic level. Spirituality should have a prominent place in development literature as there is an integral link between spirituality (and feminist spiritualities) and issues of sustainable development (Ver Beek, 2000:36,37). When feminist spiritualities and sustainable development are seen in relation there are strong links between the characteristics of feminist spiritualities and the targets of the sustainable development goal for gender equality. This is the main identified research gap of this study.

Before I present a summarised research gap, let me turn to a final issue that needs to be addressed regarding the topic of this study, and which features prominently in literature. That is the relationship between religion and spirituality.

1.4.4 Relationship between religion and spirituality

Opinions on the relationship between spirituality and religion differs among scholars (King, 2011:19). Many scholars are of opinion that the word God should not be used in spirituality as this confine's spirituality to the religious sphere. The possibility exist that certain religions will be given an advantage; others will be excluded, and a methodological reduction will be placed on theology also forms part of the discussion. These objections seem valid but certain terms are ambiguous (Waaijman, 2002:427). "Even the most secular types of spirituality seem bound to borrow some of their resources from the religious traditions they repudiate" (Schneiders, 2003:164). Sheldrake (2012:55) notes there are serious questions about whether in practice we can separate spirituality entirely from belief systems, worldviews, or theories of some kind.

In times past, religion had a favourable status in Western culture and society. It was only in the later part of 20th century that organised religion became viewed negatively. This change happened because of several factors (Boehme, 2015:21). There are scholars who suggests that the West has moved into a post-Christian age or into a secular age, whilst the secularization process has proven not to be true (Boehme, 2015: 21). Organised religion is not as prominent but new spiritualities and religions are appearing, and many are rooted in historic religions (Boehme, 2015:21). There seems to be a shift from the East to the West. There seems to be a weakening of major religions in 1960's and 1970's in USA and a shift to an individual, consumer-oriented spirituality. This cultural shift can also be seen in mainline churches and peoples view of their faith (Boehme, 2015:22). "This Western turn to Eastern theology and a much more individualized spirituality has one of its causes in the historical-critical view of Scriptures" (Boehme, 2015:22). Once the historicity of the Bible is brought into question it opened the possibilities to reveal more and even different truths (Boehme, 2015:22). There is a definite individualisation of faith and spirituality. Trans-religiosity is also seen (Boehme, 2015:23). This shift can be seen since the 1700's even though the big changes are seen from 1830 and into the twentieth century (Boehme, 2015:24). In the last part of the twentieth century American culture moved towards the removal of religion from the public square. Religion also became something that was more and more seen as something to be practiced in private (Boehme, 2015:23). "This growing negative estimation of religion has been accompanied by a rise in the positive estimation of generic spirituality. More and more people are saying "I'm spiritual but not religious", or "I'm not religious, but I'm very spiritual" (Boehme, 2015:28). From a western perspective religion as a term is used to refer to the public institutions, specific denominations, official church doctrines and rituals that are formal and enacted as a person with a fellow religious person. Religion is public and part of a society and culture. Religion is not just private but rather a public activity that people of the same belief do together. Religion has certain beliefs and doctrines that are shared publicly and participated in with others. Religion is something you believe personally but live out with others (Boehme, 2015:28). Spirituality, from a western perspective, is generally associated with the private and personal realm of experience, belief, and

action without the need to share this with an organised group of believers. Spirituality then rather refers to attitudes, experiences, and feelings of each individual and is therefore personal. Spirituality speaks of a person's private and individual beliefs that does not necessarily need a doctrinal foundation but rather places focus on personal actions. Spirituality is something one believes and puts into practice privately and can be shaped by and for the individual (Boehme, 2015:28). There seems to be a big rise in spiritual writings that encourage this individualistic spirituality[25]. The understanding of spirituality in the West also changed in modernity. King (2011:20) is not convinced it can totally be separated from religion. Spirituality is seen as more open and inclusive than religions but the two are interrelated in a dialectic and dynamic relationship and respond to each other's transformation (King, 2011:20).

Schneiders defines religion as "at its most basic, religion is the fundamental life stance of the person who believes in a transcendent reality, however designated, and assumes some realistic posture before that ultimate reality" (Schneiders, 2003:168). Religion is the recognition of a creature's total dependence on the source of life. Religion can denote a spiritual tradition such as Christianity that is emanating from some form foundational experience of revelation. Religion can also denote an institutionalised form of a spiritual tradition (Schneiders, 2003:168,169). What seems to mark religions in the concrete is that they are cultural systems that enable one to deal with ultimate reality and are organised patterns of creed, code and cult. Religions are cultural systems. Religions are concerned with whatever a society of group considers important. Religions are culturally institutionalised in the form of creed, code or what is obligatory or forbidden to live in peace with the ultimate reality and cult in how the group symbolically expressed its dependence upon reality. "In

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[25]A faith community makes certain ethical demands on the people that are part of the community. Lonsdale (2005:240,241) notes "a separation of "inner" and "outer", "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions of life and the restriction of spirituality to an "inner", "private" sphere is both comparatively modern and by no means universal in contemporary Christianity". Spirituality is often marketed as a product, and you can either have a good or bad spirituality. A person can then pick a product that bests suit them. The difference between this type of spirituality and the Christian spirituality is the basic orientation (Lonsdale 2005:241,242).

some way, religions are about the socially mediated human relationship to the sacred, the ultimate, the transcendent, the divine" (Schneiders, 2003:170). Schneiders (2003:164) states that there seems to be three models that help explain the bond between religion and spirituality in a first world / global north context. The first model is where spirituality and religion are seen as separate enterprises. There is no connection between spirituality and religion, and they function independently. The second model is where religion and spirituality are seen as realities that are in conflict. If you are more spiritual, you are less religious and when you are more religious you are less spiritual. The third model sees spirituality and religion as two extents of the same enterprise. They are in relationship even though there can sometimes be tension. Spirituality and religion are crucial to one another and together they constitute a single reality and can function as partners (Schneiders, 2003:164,165). Schneiders makes the argument that religion is the most productive context for spirituality, the individual, and the community. The quest for God is too complex and important to be reduced to a private enterprise (Schneiders, 2003:177).

"Belief systems are the varied ways human beings adopt frameworks of meaning and values by means of which they 'read' the world and in light of which they attempt to conduct everyday life" (Sheldrake, 2014:55). Spirituality is not mainly concerned with doctrines and abstract theories. Spirituality is related to belief systems of some kind (religious, philosophical, ethical etc) it is "primarily concerned with how to live our lives meaningfully, reflectively and usefully". Sheldrake further states that "spirituality relates most explicitly to practice and action" (Sheldrake, 2014:55). In the Christian community theological definition should not be seen in isolation, it arose from the Christian community which believed in Jesus of Nazareth (Sheldrake, 2014:55). "Overall, the historic religions have understood the spiritual path as a whole way of life rather than merely a set of detached practices. One corollary of this understanding of spirituality as a way of life is that ideally everyday life itself becomes the content for spiritual practice" (Sheldrake, 2014:58,59). In the spiritual Christian tradition, the theme of life becoming the context for everyday spiritual practices can be seen by Ignatius of Loyolo in the 16th century. Ignatius was the founder of the Jesuit order. There were exercises for a thirty-day retreat with a variety of prayers and methods for fasting and meditation. The dominant spiritual

value that can be observed is the "growing ability to find God in all things" as well as a way to nurture this in daily life (Sheldrake, 2014:59). The theme was developed further in the 20th century by French Jesuit Maurice Giuliani. Michel de Certeau developed it further and in essays explored that the everyday is almost transcendent Lice Giard also wrote about this (Sheldrake, 2014:59).

Schneiders makes a case for the partnership of religion and spirituality. Schneiders suggests that religion is the optimal context for spirituality. Spirituality should not be for the individual as this is not how humans function. Community might not be perfect, but it is the indispensable context for a wise and sustained spirituality. Tradition also gives ongoing support (Schneiders, 2003:176). Secondly, personal spiritualities composed of unrelated practices draw on unrelated beliefs to sustain and guide the practice (Schneiders, 2003:176). Thirdly, it may respond well to current needs as it has no past and no future. It is deprived of the riches of an organic tradition that has developed over centuries in confrontation with the historical challenges of all kinds. "By contrast, the participant in a religious tradition can both profit from and criticize all that has gone before and thus, at least potentially, can help hand on to successive generation a wiser, more compassionate approach to the universal human dilemmas and challenges with which religion has always grappled" (Schneiders, 2003:177).

1.5 Methodology: Mapping as a method

The methodology of this study centres around two main aspects. The first is the characteristics of feminist spirituality as identified by Nicola Slee (2002) mentioned earlier. These characteristics will be utilised in a mapping exercise, which is the second main component of the methodology. The research methodology of theological cartography or mapping was developed by Serene Jones in "Feminist Theory and Christian Theology" (Jones, 2000). This methodology[26] was used by Nadia Marais (2015) in her PhD thesis (Marais, 2015). Serene Jones uses mapping by sketching the maps of different worlds and then laying out certain concepts as

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[26]Marais notes that Jones is not the only scholar to employ this hermeneutical method and refers to James Smiths reading of Charles Taylor (2014).

beacons or guideposts. Through mapping the researcher does not develop a new landscape but rather identifies travelling markers or beacons in an existing landscape, area of study or doctrinal framework (Jones, 2000:19). This methodology broadens the travelling landscape and enriches the field as it provides connections in different ways and bring diversity or even multiplicity to the forefront. Mapping will be applied in this study. When applying this methodology, the researcher takes on the role of cartographer (Jones, 2000:19). The researcher identifies dimensions that are visible and invisible in the contemporary theological landscape, identifies possible new contours and in this way guides readers to travel through established terrain whilst at the same time providing possible reorientations (2000:19,20).

Jones (2000:20) found mapping a useful metaphor when relating feminist theory[27] and feminist theology to one another[28]. One of the advantages of using the methodology of mapping is to create signposts that provide information currently missing from the main narrative[29]. Working from a feminist perspective it is then important to consider how to go to work if many the content is absent. Narratives and storytelling are important because "if women don't tell our stories and utter our truths in order to chart ways into sacred feminine experience, who will?" (Slee, 2004:15). Mapping provides the opportunity to play a part in filling in the gaps and bringing certain stories and narratives to the forefront.

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[27]Jones positions herself from a feminist perspective or using feminist theory. The term "feminist theory" emerged in the field of Women's Studies during the 1970's in the University landscape of North America. The terms aim to describe "a collection of feminist texts with shared goals, practices, and assumptions" This literature has a common goal of the liberation of women and strive for political oppositional action. The history of feminist theory helps one to understand these goals. The women's movement needed scholars to do research and writing a model called theory. The liberation of women had two goals from the start. Firstly, to identify certain forms of oppression and secondly to create an alternative future. It is necessary to name the oppression and in doing this makes itself invisible, distorts vision, and twists thought. Similarly, it is hard to envision new ways of living when everything one experiences is rooted in old, oppressive forms of knowing and acting. Feminist theory then aims to provide alternative realities, transformative opportunities. A new way to look at the situation (Jones, 2000:4).

[28]Slee states that in doing her research it was a priority to not only use feminist sources for her model of faith but to also "ground the methodology within feminist principles of research so that the process of the research itself was consonant with its avowed feminist orientation" (Slee, 2004:43).

[29]Nicola Slee in her book "Women's Faith Development: Patterns and Processes" (2004) did an empirical study on women's faith development. In this book she also developed a feminist research methodology. An important focus for Slee was grounding research in women's experience. Slee notes how the sources are male dominated and when trying to understand faith development of women and girls there were not many texts available. Slee notes how most studies are gender blind. This results that this cannot be applied to women without critically looking at the data (Slee, 2004:15).

Jones (2000) notes that feminist Christian theology is especially concerned with women's lives and stories and hopes and flourishing and failures as well as their multilayered experiences of oppression. She explains further that the Christian faith grounds and shapes women's experiences of hope, justice, and grace and it also enforces women's experiences of oppression, sin and evil. Feminist in this sense has a specific interest in theology. Feminist theology portrays the Christian message in language and action grounded in the liberation of women and all people with the goal that Christian feminists believe is inseparable from the central Christian faith. Slee notes that to apply feminist methodology considerations[30] need to be made regarding ethics and power dynamics of empirical research and philosophical principles shaping methodology (Slee, 2004:43). These considerations will aid in hearing the unheard and seeing the unseen.

There is not a singular feminist methodology, therefore mapping can be used in this study. Slee notes that methods take on meaning within a specific social location which then has complex social, political, and epistemological constraints[31]. Slee also notes that feminism cannot be reduced to an agreed set of beliefs, values, and practices (Slee, 2004:45-52). Diversity and transparency are important to be aware of as a researcher and therefore my own positionality is noted as well as the presuppositions that accompanies it.

A broader enquiry that maps the area of feminist spiritualties will be made in a historical descriptive manner. Another broad enquiry will be made regarding the UN SDG 5. Certain contours will be identified, and the characteristics of feminist spiritualties will be used as guideposts to navigate the terrain. A detailed inquiry will be done on specific theologians with a focus on their understanding of feminist spiritualities whilst looking at the specific characteristics of feminist spiritualties. This inquiry will follow a historical-descriptive and systematic-thematic method. Nicola Slee' s characteristics of feminist spirituality will be utilized to map contributions of

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[30] Slee notes that the researcher needs to stay sensitive to the hiddenness of women's faith lives as it was absent until quite recently. The researcher needs to constantly be aware and keep integrity (Slee, 2004:43).
[31] Scheman (2012: 487) notes that a research method does not have an independent essence but rather takes form as it relates to what is around it whilst being in relation to its dependencies and vulnerabilities.

Kwok Pui Lan, born in Hong Kong; Mercy Amba Oduyoye, from Ghana; Ada Maria Asasi-Diaz from the Asian context and Susan Rakoczy from South Africa and US context. The scholars are chosen because they identify as feminist scholars with a focus on religion and spirituality. The scholars are from different geographical areas, predominantly in the global South. These scholars have written and/or are engaged in issues of social justice. Possible links will be identified between scholars and measured against the characteristics of feminist spirituality which again will be brought into conversation with SDG 5 targets.

This study aims to show how feminist spiritualities, with specific characteristics, enable gender equity and can be used more effectively in the UNs goal of gender equity. Using a broader and more detailed mode of enquiry in mapping aims to bring interconnections to light. To interpret and reinterpret opens the opportunity of walking on newly discovered terrain.

This study is situated in the department of systematic theology. The reason for this that systematic theology originated from people's experiences of God. This means that this discipline is based on active, participating engagement of people with the Divine. These experiences were recorded and provides a rich history for scholars and church communities today. A systematic theological approach will provide the opportunity to also see what women's history is, if these experiences were recorded, why or why not and what can be gained from this knowledge. More voices provide the possibility to enrich the discipline. Interdisciplinary research provides for a more comprehensive understanding of the situation as well as more and different knowledge that can contribute to a meaningful discussion. It is also necessary to know from the start that there will not be one outcome or one 'answer' as women's experiences, contexts and cultures differ.

1.6 Structure of study

Chapter 2 explores the history of gender equality/equity with specific focus on feminist consciousness and the unique ways of women authorizing themselves through time. Chapter three investigates feminist spiritualities with a specific focus on certain characteristics that are present and the possible transformation potential that

lies therein. Chapter 4 present different scholars to map the characteristics in their life and work. Chapter 5 investigates the targets of SDG 5 and possible connections between the characteristics of feminist spiritualties thereby exploring the transformation possibility of feminist spiritualities at grassroot level. Chapter 6 holds findings and recommendations for possible further studies.

CHAPTER 2
FEMINIST CONCIOUSNESS AND WOMEN'S AUTHORIZATION THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Women have been able to challenge power structures in different ways through time. This chapter explores the history of gender equality (equity) with a specific focus on feminist consciousness and the unique ways of women authorizing themselves through time.

> "Women's history is indispensable and essential to the emancipation of women"
>
> (Lerner, 1993: VII)

The history of women is described as hidden, lost, or unknown. Gerda Lerner (1993: VII) writes that "it is the relationship of women to history which explains the nature of female subordination, the causes for women's cooperation in the process of their subordination, the conditions for their opposition to it, the rise of feminist consciousness". Uncovering the hidden history of women enriches feminist consciousness.

Feminist consciousness is a process. "Feminist consciousness is not merely freedom *from* marginalization, oppression, discrimination, and violence but freedom *for* self-definition, self-affirmation; the recognition of their full humanity and the freedom to exercise that personhood in every sphere" (Ress, 1996:56). The process of feminist consciousness starts with the recognition of structural oppression that is based on gender. Hereafter women realize they are not alone and find solidarity, this solidarity moves to action. Personal problems are realized as political problems; therefore, the challenge of sociopolitical systems becomes a priority (Ress, 1996:56). Gerda Lerner, known historian and writer of "Creation of Patriarchy" in 1986 and "Creation of Feminist Consciousness" in 1993 changed the landscape of feminist history and the understanding of patriarchy. These are classic works that are

used in depth in this study. The books were compiled over several years and provides a unique and rich historical interpretation of feminist consciousness.

2.1 Women's hidden stories

History, as is recollected and the process of history making is a historical creation which dates back to when writing was invented in ancient Mesopotamia. The process of events being selected, recorded, and given meaning and importance is seen from the kings of ancient Sumer, by historians such as priests, servants of royalty, clerks, clerics, and university-trained intellectuals. It should be noted that until recently these historians were male. "What women have done and experienced have been left unrecorded, neglected, and ignored in interpretation" (Lerner, 1986:4). This was also the observation of Swan (2001:2), whilst searching for material on women in history she noticed it was rarely found in scholarly material but mostly in footnotes and sidenotes. Women played and still play a central role in the making of society, what Lerner calls the "building of civilization" (Lerner, 1986:4). People of all genders preserve collective memory which enables the past to be preserved in collective memory. What is remembered collectively shapes the cultural tradition and enables generations to be connected to one another. Collective memory functions as the link between past and future. Oral tradition, such as poems, myths, folklore, art, and ritual are central elements through which women contributed to history (Lerner, 1986:4). Swan (2001:3) notes how "Women's history has often been relegated to the shadow world: felt but not seen". The history of women is hidden, and this is very visible when observing recorded history as the central role of women in history is unknown. There should be distinguished between the past that is not recorded as events that are recollected by humans, and the recorded events of the past that is known as history (Lerner, 1986:4). It seems that this phenomenon is not yet something of the past as the title of Criado-Perez's book "Invisible Women" (2019) suggests.

2.1.1 Who is creating history?

Men and women have suffered exclusion and discrimination because of their class. Men, however, have not been excluded because of their sex. Women were kept from contributing to the process of making history, where the past of humans were

ordered and interpreted (Lerner, 1986:5). The process of giving meaning when creating history is critical to creating and upholding society. Women's marginality in this process cannot be missed which places women in a uniquely isolated position. Women are the majority, but in structures and institutions still the minority (Lerner, 1986:5).

It would be misleading to see women just as victims (Lerner, 1993:5). Women played and still play an essential, critical, and central role in creating society. Women are active agents in and through history. Deprivation of education automatically excluded women from theory formation. Women have systematically been excluded from symbol making systems as well as philosophies, science, and law as a result of this. "The tension between women's actual historical experience and their exclusion from interpreting that experience I have called 'the dialectic of women's history" (Lerner, 1986:5). This dialectic of women's history permits women to move forward in the historical process. Lerner notes a contradiction in the active role that women play in creating society and the marginality of women in the meaning giving process and of interpretation and explanation. This is a dynamic force and Lerner describes it as a struggle against their condition (Lerner, 1986:5).

2.1.2 Different experiences

Lerner presupposes the assumption that men and women are biologically different and that their values and the implications thereof is based on differences because of culture. The history of women and the space that women take have been buried and overlooked because of patriarchal thought. This had a significant impact on the psychology of all genders. "I began with the conviction, shared by most feminist thinkers, that patriarchy as a system is historical: it has a beginning in history. If that is so, it can be ended by historical process" (Lerner, 1986:6). Lerner has a specific interest in the historical process of the establishment and the institutionalisation of patriarchy. While doing research on the society of early Mesopotamia, Lerner came to the realisation that the recordings on women were descriptive and very little substantive history is recorded (Lerner, 1986:7). Swan in (2001), saw that through the ages and even in 2001 women's ways of knowing was not seen as mainstream. Swan notes (2001:2) how she was, while doing research being confronted with her

own experience and frustration of this situation. There was little to no information on women who dwelt in the desert. The stories with very few exceptions were all about men (Swan, 2001:2). Patriarchy was not established as one event or occurrence. It is the development of 2500 years from 3100-600 BC. Patriarchy occurred at different times and in different places in many societies (Lerner, 1986:7). This realisation moved the focus of Lerner to look more specifically at the control over women's sexuality and procreation than at the economic questions and look for a cause and effect of sexual control. Certain propositions were developed:

- Firstly, men appropriating women's sexual reproductive capacity occurred before the formation of private property and class society.
- Secondly, that archaic states were organised in patriarchal form, thus, the state had interest in maintaining patriarchy.
- The third proposition is that men learned to institute dominance and hierarchy over others as seen in slavery because of the successful dominance of women beforehand.
- Furthermore, the sexual subordination of women's sexuality was institutionalised in earliest law codes which the state fully enforced. The cooperation of women in this system was secured by factors such as economic dependency, the function of the head of the family, class privileges and more.
- The following proposition is that men had to reproduce and therefore women had sexual ties to men.
- The next proposition states that after women are subordinate to men both sexually and economically, they play active and respected roles in mediating between humans and gods as priestesses, seers and therefore a metaphysical female power is observed.
- The next proposition is where the dethroning of powerful goddesses are observed and was being replaced by a male god.
- Lastly, in the western world a symbolic devaluing of women is observed "that subordination of women comes to be seen as "natural" hence it becomes invisible" (Lerner, 1986:9-10).

2.1.3 The visibility of invisibility

Historical evidence is used to trace the development of ideas, symbols and metaphors that lead the discourse through which patriarchal gender relations were fused into Western civilization (Lerner, 1986:10). The approach that is used in interpretation and the conceptual framework determines the outcome of the result. As Lerner (1986:15) correctly states: "We ask the questions of the past we want answered in the present". For long periods the conceptual framework that informed questions was assumed as a given, not open for discussion and indisputable. Therefore, mapping can be useful as it changes the conceptual framework. There are critics on the universality of female subordination as is seen in this question: "If female subordination was not universal, then was there ever an alternative model of society?" (Lerner, 1986:16). Many feminists argue that there are a limited number of proven biological differences between sexes. These differences have been exaggerated by cultural interpretations. This has been done in such a way and to such extent that the value that is put on sex differences is now a cultural product. "Sexual attributes are a biological given, but gender is a product of historical process" and therefore gender is responsible for establishing women's place in society (Lerner, 1986:21). This has been proven many times more since the publication of Lerner's books with focus on a women's body and the functions that it has as being closer to nature (Lerner, 1986:25). In the 19th century American feminists developed maternalist theory, not as a redefinition of the patriarchal doctrine of women's separate sphere. There are parallels such as positive 'feminine' characteristics. The early feminists accepted the existence of separate spheres as a given. They used this construct and transformed the meaning of this concept by arguing that women had a right and duty to enter the public sphere. Maternalist-feminists' similar arguments can be seen in the later suffrage movement and the reformers, with Jane Addams, which argued that women's work extended to municipal housekeeping. Dorothy Dinnerstein, MaryO'Brien, Adrenne Rich are latter in an extensive line of maternalist. Central to the argument for matriarchy is evidence of Mother-Goddess figures in many ancient religions (Lerner, 1986:27-28). The difference between maternalist and traditionalist is built upon the acceptance of biological sex differences as a given. The reasoning of the groups differs as

maternalists see women's equality and even superiority (Lerner, 1986:26). The different anthropological evidence shows different arrangements. There are signs of egalitarian societies that are found among hunting/gathering tribes which are characterised by economic interdependency. Economic cooperation can be seen in the status of separate but equal. In these societies women were still subordinate to men. There is no society where women as a group had the decision-making power over men (Lerner, 1986:29-30). "The possibility of sharing economic and political power with men of their class or in their stead has been precisely a privilege of some upper-class women, which has confined them more close to patriarchy" (Lerner, 1986:31). Lerner (1986:36) motivates that theories about the past should be based on the understanding that men and women built civilization together. The search in the past for matriarchy as a means of empowering women will not be of use as myths of the past will not liberate women today and in the future.

"The patriarchal mode of thought is so built into our mental processes that we cannot exclude it unless we first make ourselves consciously aware of it..." (Lerner, 1986:36). Most models that reflect or speculate on history and society does so from an androcentric understanding and assumes that patriarchy is a natural occurrence. By analysing the situation correctly and looking at the creation of patriarchy women will be enabled to create an empowering theory. Gender should be seen in a historical context that is not the same in every society (Lerner, 1986:36). Because of changes in social and educational opportunities available to women in the 19th and 20th century women became able to critically evaluate the processes which have helped to create a system and maintain it. It is only now that women's role in history can be seen and are able to consciously emancipate women. This consciousness can also emancipate men (Lerner, 1986:37).

2.1.4 Reconstructing of what could have been with what we have

Gerda Lerner gives an account of the rise of feminist consciousness and describes a hypothetical construct with specific focus on the Ancient Near East. In this she noted there was a transitional period where humanoids evolved from primates with a basis dyad of mother and child. Humans are in this sense different from other animals that can already function much better at infant age. Humans needs a lot of caring.

Bipedalism and upright posture, the finer development of hands, a grasping thumb, and sensory-hand coordination differ from other animals. Learning and cultural moulding is definitively different from animal development. The crucial point that Lerner notes is that infants will survive or die depending on the care of the mother, therefore the role of females was crucial. This can also be seen in the cave painting in the neolithic age of the Mother Goddess (Lerner, 1986:39).

Mothers were life-giving and had power over life and death. It was necessary to divide labour between men and women as mothers needed to look after the infants (Lerner, 1986:40). This was essential for group survival and women therefore devoted their adulthood to pregnancy, childbearing and nursing whilst combining activities that fitted with this role and function. The first division of labour according to sex derived from biological sex differences was seen in the fact that men were responsible for big game-hunting whilst women and children did small-game hunting and gathered food. This acceptance of a "biological explanation" is only true for these early stages and does not mean a later division is "natural" (Lerner, 1986:41,42). "I will show that male dominance is a historic phenomenon in that it arose out of a biologically determined situation and became a culturally created and enforced structure over time" (Lerner, 1986:42). The earliest sexual division of labour was functional as group survival was central. All the members had many skills including ecological, medicinal, food, practical skills such as working with clay and transforming products into what is needed by the group (Lerner, 1986:43).

2.1.5 Controlled sexuality – a commodity to be exchanged

As is observed in different areas of the world in several tribal societies, women were exchanged. Claude Levi Strauss (anthropologist) has identified this as the leading cause of women's subordination (Lerner, 1986:46). The relationship with marriage as a form of trade between two groups of men (not men and women) dehumanised women and reified them. Women were therefore thought of as things and not as humans. Population control resulted in male control over sexuality which became mandatory (Lerner, 1986:47). Women were forced, most likely raped, to be part of this activity. This development also demonstrates how slavery was a historical development. The way a woman's body functioned made her adaptable for this

specific role in the community. She was an object with a specific function. All children were exchanged but a tribe that had more girls could expand at a quicker rate. This is a worldwide phenomenon that can be observed in different locations in different times (Lerner, 1986:48). "Approximately at the time when hunting/gathering or horticulture gives way to agriculture, kinship arrangements tend to shift from matriliney to patriliney, and private property develops" (Lerner, 1986:49). Children became an economic asset to a community. It was at this stage when tribes made an effort to obtain more reproductive potential of women rather than women themselves (Lerner, 1986:50). "The first appropriation of private property consists of the appropriation of the labour of women as reproducers" (Lerner, 1986:52). A distinction can be made between biological necessity and cultural customs and the institutions that asked women and men to adapt accordingly. It was the latter part that forced women into subordinate roles. The history of women was influenced by the urban revolution as this changed social organisation from kin-based to class-based social structures. Three stages in urban revolution in Mesopotamia can be seen in the emergence of temple towns, growth of city-states and the development of national states. In the time between 3100-2900 BCE aristocratic women were active in temples, palaces, and economic management. This is seen in one of the earliest known portraits of women in Sumer in a carefully sculpted head from Uruk of a woman of dignity and beauty. This woman could have been a priestess, queen, or goddess (Lerner, 1986:52-59).

2.1.6 Participant yet subordinate

There is evidence of the existence of Mesopotamian women in different cultures over a 1400-year period. There is abundant evidence of societies in which there were active participation of women in economic, religious, and political life that was taken for granted. It is also evident how they were dependant on and obliged to male kin or husbands. The wife-as-deputy emerged, and this is seen from this time forward. Women did have control "but in matters of sexuality, they are utterly subordinate to men" (Lerner, 1986:74). In this social contract, females were denied autonomy and protection. They had to negotiate the best possible situation for themselves and their children in this social system (Lerner, 1986:75).

The choice to transition to a new social organisation was the institutionalization of slavery which is the first institutionalised system of hierarchical dominance in the history of humans. The connection between family structure, the development of slavery as a system that is class based and state power as an institution gives insight into the lives of non-elite women. The historical sources on the origin of slavery are few and many based on speculation. In order for a concept to be successfully implemented, one must know that this would work. For the enslaved to be made into slaves where slaves imply being made to something other than being human, men must have known that this would work. This concept that is put into action is derived from previous mental constructs. Mental constructs that shape reality is usually derived from a model in reality that then reorders past experiences. This experience, that rendered men capable of creating slavery, was the subordination of women of their own group. Rape of women of a conquered group remains a feature of warfare and conquest from second millennium BCE until today (Lerner, 1986:76-80). "Feminist conscientization has revealed the role of patriarchy not only as the root of women's oppression but also as the source of all other forms of hierarchical domination" (Ress, 1996:56).

From the beginning, in different cultures, enslavement did not mean the same thing for women and men. All genders were enslaved and subordinate to the power of another, autonomy and honour was lost. All slaves performed unrewarded labour and personal service for their masters. For women, slavery also required performing sexual services for their masters or those whom their masters might assign in their place (Lerner, 1986:88). The distinction of race and class first manifested in the institutionalisation of slavery. The link between sexual dominance and economic exploitation manifesting in the patriarchal family and archaic state was a basis for this distinction (Lerner, 1986:100).

2.2 Women authorizing themselves through history

Whether it be language, the reimagining of the female God or positions of privilege, women found ways of authorizing themselves. Different ways were also found to assert a claim to religious equality.

"We have seen how women through mystical experience found the assertiveness and authority necessary to speak, teach and influence people"

(Lerner, 1993:88)

2.2.1 Authorization through motherhood

Women found authority in basic and ordinary experiences, such as motherhood. Mothers had the role and duty to instruct younger persons. Mothers had authority to express their own ideas with this authority and could also give advice, instructions and morals and even theological interpretations. In the modern period women would claim equality on the grounds of motherhood and later developed a group consciousness. The physical aspect of the ability to become a mother and to practice nurturing motherhood as an institutional and social construction refers to some of the rules and rights of mothers. This changed over time and place across different races and classes as the ideology of motherhood had a symbolic meaning (Lerner, 1993:116). Lerner (1993:117) places the focus on motherhood on the symbolic and ideological meaning. Some women found their identity primarily in motherhood. Women thought of their group identity firstly as mothers long before they began to conceive the possibility of sisterhood. The earliest female writers grounded their pursuit for self-expression in their status as mothers. Frau Ava, being one of the first known female writers was also the first female known German poet who died in 1127 and lived a secular life before committing to a religious order (Lerner, 1993:118). In the fifteenth century a secular group of female authors, women who had education and poets who were creating work that was appreciated, began to argue for their sex. The argument was mostly limited to access to education as this would benefit society. Biblical criticism was furthered by women reinterpreting core Bible stories, here they mostly argued for the women's role as wife and mother (Lerner, 1986:119).

The role of experience cannot be overemphasized enough. "It is my assumption that all human beings develop ideas based, at least in part, on their own experience" (Lerner, 1986:119). Because of the lack of education available to women, women rely more strongly on experience and the role thereof in developing ideas. To be a mother and wife was a common experience between women and had the potential to

bond people as a group. Wifehood as seen under patriarchy rather enabled competition between women, to find a man that could support them and to keep the man. Women were dependent on men, first on their fathers and then on their husbands. When women were able to own properties, it was dependent on their dowries or inheritances which were under their father's control. It was also dependent on securing marriages or taking up a religious life. If a woman was married it was important to produce a male heir to keep her status and wealth. This competition between women was a dividing factor between noble women and other women as concubinage and male adultery posed a threat to the economic security of wives (Lerner, 1993:119). Peasant families worked more as a team where each household member provided certain labour activities. Demographics show that in every population an estimate of one third of all single women have not yet been married, will never marry, or are widowed. Until the 19th century remaining single was a choice dependent on a male, for example a woman choosing celibacy and religious life is dependent on superiors and male clergy supporting this decision. Celibacy could be chosen but then a woman was dependent on male members of her family of origin. Women might struggle to make a living as a governess in a stranger's home. Prostitution as an option did not give independence as this was an unsafe and unstable option. A very small percentage of these women could lead economically self-dependent lives on the margins of society as peddlers, vagrants, beggars, and thieves. Some women worked as spinsters, brewers, innkeepers, and farm workers. Propertied widows could live independently but their property was gained by previous dependency on a man (Lerner, 1993:120,121).

> "For the vast majority of women, marriage and motherhood were their lot and their main means of securing access to recourse and economic protection. This was the reason women could not readily conceptualize bonds of sisterhood or develop a consciousness of common interest through their status as wives"
>
> (Lerner, 1993:121)

Motherhood was different than wifehood as it unified women. Life experiences were shared such as "frequent pregnancies, miscarriages, births, deaths of children and

birth-induced disabilities". Women that could not conceive children were part of this circle as they were still part of attempted pregnancies and the threat of rape (Lerner, 1993:121). The meaning of motherhood differed between classes up until the middle of the 18th century as about 90 percent of women lived in the countryside which subjected women to the double burden of work and reproduction. This changed in the 19th century due to changes in agriculture. Demographers state that women would have five to seven successful pregnancies in their twenty years of childbearing age. Before the 20th century there was a high rate of stillbirths and miscarriages which meant a woman would be pregnant or nursing children for most of her adult life while still working in the home and in the field (Lerner, 1993:121). For women of all classes to raise a son into adulthood meant that women were securing their support in their old age. Motherhood as the fate of women and as a common experience could be shared with other women. The rituals of motherhood were also dominated by female support networks of female kin or neighbors. Births, the death of an infant child, sickness and marital abuse were experiences women shared among themselves. It is from the basis of motherhood that sisterhood could be conceptualized (Lerner, 1993:122).

The most powerful unifying aspect of motherhood was the ability of women to create new life out of their bodies, to sustain this life with their bodies by nursing and maternal care as well as being connected with other women and being sustained by female prayer and ritual. This experience had an empowering and connecting effect on women as well as with the metaphysics of the ancient Mother-Goddess religions, where the capacity to give life, to create and procreate was connected through experience and metaphor (Lerner, 1993:122). Motherhood as an experience is present in several works of 17th century authors. Women authorized themselves by writing and teaching because they were mothers and used these experiences as a subject for their work. Lerner (1993:132) describes this as a "new level in the development of women's consciousness." Motherhood as a concept was redefined to use in a political and feminist way in the later 18th century (Lerner, 1993:135). Early English feminists and European feminists were attacked and called names such as "bluestockings; old maids and strong-minded women," they were considered "de-sexed" and unfeminine, compared with the idealized wife and mother of

prescriptive literature." This early stage in feminist thought through group interest of motherhood was an ideal and hope that did not yet have political and practical results or consequences. It was the ideas of the early feminists that enabled other feminists to further develop feminist consciousness. In the 19th century middle class women in the United States and Great Britain that were educated and organised into religious and welfare groups. They started to organise themselves to improve their own economic conditions and the idea of sisterhood became a central focus of feminist thought. Common experiences such as motherhood would still be some of the key grounds of the feminist agenda in the first decade of the twentieth century (Lerner, 1993:137).

2.2.2 Desert and mystic[32] spirituality as means of authorization

Christianity gained acceptance in the fourth century when it became the official religion of the Roman Empire. This resulted in leaders becoming more public. Where women were preaching, teaching, and living ascetic lives it became difficult. Some bishops supported women, but others tried to control the women or minimise their influence in society (Lerner, 1986:7). "It was much easier for bishops to monitor and influence teachers than they could those who claimed to be prophets speaking in the name of God" (Swan:2001). Swan (2001:5,6) describes how Christianity was a home-centred faith. The home is where women presided and where they had authority which men would recognise as part of how society worked and honoured this. Both women and men were involved in evangelization and works of mercy to the poor, orphans, and prisoners. Women held leadership positions: ancient tombstones reveal a history of women bearing titles such as ruler of the synagogue, deacon, presbyter, and honourable women bishop. Christian monasticism began in the homes of people with their relatives. The people who were dependant on them and those who worked for the household. It is out of these groups that the ascetic and monastic culture grew, and inclusive communities were formed. The inclusiveness was a big formation factor in how monastic and desert spirituality

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[32]Mysticism is an elastic term. In essence Cristian mysticism is the experience of community with God (Holt, 1997:64).

evolved. This is also seen in the prophetic character of desert spiritualities (Swan, 2001:8,9) In this time when Christianity moved into mainstream culture and life, there is also a strong movement toward desert and monastic life. Freedom was found, for many women, in Christianity which enabled them to break with their own culture and live out leadership roles that was not possible in Roman society of the time. Because these communities usually started in homes and being a marginal movement, women could stay in their homes and from here serve as evangelists, apostles, and teachers. The movement towards the desert and monastic lifestyle happened on different levels. These persons and groups disengaged from culture. The ascetics sought not to stand out but rather to blend in and become part of the people who were seen as "seekers". Women also often chose to wear monastic garb and veiled their heads; they chose to dress as males as part of ascetic practice that minimised sexuality. It was also a practical consideration to appear as a eunuch as you are less likely to be harassed on the road (Swan, 2001:8-10).

The way to dedicate yourself to a life of ascetism[33] was a process. Firstly, the quest of searching for a spiritual elder would be undertaken. This spiritual elder can be an Amma or Abba. This person has lived an ascetic life for a longer time and has reached a certain level of maturity and will teach by example from their own experience. Amma's valued silence and communication was open. The relationship was honest but there was not much talking. It was also commonplace for ascetics to support themselves with work from their own hands (Swan, 2001:12). These spiritual elders and students strived towards a simplistic lifestyle, this simplicity was also cultivated in their emotions and attitudes. They tended to be mindful and intentional about how they acted. The focus was always placed on 'how' with mindfulness at the centre (Swan, 2001:13). The universal church was not separated from ascetics and

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[33] Ascetism traces back to Greek ideas of exercise. This exercise includes physical, mental, spiritual, and ethical training. These are developed and by different disciplines until one was excellent in them. Spiritual ascetism is mostly a voluntary program of self-discipline and self-denial. These are many practices which can be followed and there are numerous motivations for these actions. "While some feminist theologians reject ascetism outright because of its dualistic foundations, others have attempted to transform its meaning" (Dreyer, 1996:17). Ascetism can provide a way of deconstructing negative, socialised stereotypes of what is means to be a woman or man. Ascetism has a relational and socio-political element as one becomes more sensitive to one's surroundings (Dreyer, 1996:18).

monastics. There were still strong connections and people came for spiritual guidance, to ask for direction and to receive counselling. Ascetics and monastics were also functioning separately as Ammas. They were most often living in remote locations. "Desert ascetics believed that the greatest enemy of the inner journey were hurry, crowds, and noise" (Swan, 2001:15). We see the echoes of Ammas stories in the histories of monasteries. Out of these stories can be seen that Ammas began their ascetic journeys in monastic communities and later moved into the desert or the other way around. It is prominent that women were frequently established as leaders of monastic communities (Swan, 2001:17).

The stories of these women's lives and teachings were taken in by the people that followed them as well as by friends and families. The core concept of the teaching was more important than historical accuracy as opposed to how we would document a saying today. These sayings were recorded by eyewitnesses or were written down many years later (Swan, 2001:18). There is not much information on desert Ammas as their goal was also to disappear and therefore only a small percentage of women, who lived ascetic lives in the desert, are known of. The stories that are preserved are usually stories of wealthier and better educated women that came from prominent families. They wanted their famous relatives to be remembered by generations to come (Swan, 2001:11-19).

2.2.3 Authorization through creativity

Women had many constraints, especially people denying their creative talents. Nevertheless, many women used their right to expression and creativity. Female writers adapted to the gender constraints imposed upon them, they sidestepped them or openly challenged them. There were women whose confidence in their creativity was the foundation of their self-authorization and became empowered writers and thinkers. These talents were seen as a gift of mysterious nature, enabling women to move beyond the constraints of patriarchy, to move beyond gender defining roles and intellectual discouragements. These women wrote and affected others with these writings (Lerner, 1993:167). Women standing by their talent were often isolated and ridiculed. These women also advanced in their creative work towards feminist consciousness and the public expression thereof. Women wrote of

their own experiences that had a wide range, from grief, deaths, joys and relationships to awe and love of God. "This is the oldest and most persistent form in which women's voices expressed themselves" (Lerner, 1993:168). Autonomy of women first had to be won before creativity could prosper. The cultural context for the creativity of women differed from that of men, as can be seen in the type and style of women's writings (Lerner, 1993:179). The harassment and dissatisfaction of female writers transcended national and ethnic boundaries. Stigma, shame, and embarrassment connected with female authorship could not be evaded. There was a struggle for the authorization of European women as access to institutions of higher learning was not permitted. This was a prerequisite for the empowerment of women as writers and thinkers. Women authorized themselves in many ways, by means of divine inspiration, mystical revelation, or a sense of a unique religious calling. Certain women were empowered through motherhood and as educators of the youth, where other women authorized themselves through the demand of their talents (Lerner, 1993:176-180).

Women authorizing themselves to think and write were bombarded by religion, customs, and conventional wisdom informing them that these actions are not appropriate. Women had to overcome their sense of inferiority and empower themselves to do what does not come easy in a system that pushes back. Lerner writes it is a "small wonder, then, that woman after thinking woman argued her way out of patriarchal confinement and constraints by asserting the intellectual equality of women" (Lerner, 1993:192). Systemic educational disadvantage was the main source of women's inferiority. This argument proved time and again that equal opportunities to education are the key to women emancipation. It was through this argument of women's education that women worked towards this theory of female emancipation (Lerner, 1993:192). The protestant reformation affected women in that it increased patriarchal orthodoxy within Reformation churches. The civil rights of women were restricted, and public roles reduced (Lerner, 1993:93). Evidence suggests that women, typically daughters of wives of rabbis, were recognized scholars in their own right and had male student followers (Lerner, 1993:113). Women's search for the divine and women's search for full humanity transcended differences of class, race and religion and repeatedly found expression in the most

unlikely and humble places (Lerner, 1993:114). With religious wars of the reformation, the topic of education became more urgent and practical. Education, previously necessary for economic and class advancement was not for protestants a direct means to gain salvation, with a religious responsibility for the individual as well as the community. There was the fear that women would abandon their maternal and domestic duties once they received education. These fears were addressed by placing restrictions on the behaviour of women (Lerner, 1993:198). Once there were organised movements for the rights of women, the male power over definitions and mental constructs were continuously being challenged (Lerner, 1993:219).

2.2.4 Feminist consciousness and feminist theology
The development of patriarchy happened over centuries, the same is true for feminist consciousness. One result that came forth is feminism and feminist theology. There is a rich history of gender equality and inequality that can especially be seen in the rising of feminist consciousness. The meaning of feminist theology differs in different communities. This diversity has a relatively short history although the history of feminist theological reflection is long (Jones, 2000:20). Feminist theory and feminist theology are rooted in the women's movement in North America that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. This took place in different setting that ranged from church-basement Bible studies to women's consciousness-raising groups. Feminist theology emerged as a grassroots challenge to traditional views of women's roles in religion and society. In its earliest stages, few distinctions were drawn among Jewish feminist, Christian feminist, and post-Christian contributions to the movement's critiques of women's oppression. Similarly, the distinction between feminist theory and feminist theology was less important. In fact, the most treasured texts of early feminist "theory" were texts written by women theologians and philosophers of religion such as Mary Daly's "Beyond God the Father" and the essays collected by Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow in "Woman Spirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion". In these early years it was often in religious studies departments that Jewish, Christian, and post-Christian feminist theologians and philosophers of religion introduced the topic of feminism to the curriculum (Jones, 2000).

2.2.5 Language as means of authorization

2.2.5.1 Feminist theology and the language about God

Social construction, language, and the recognition of the effects that this have is important. Patriarchal language that is used to describe God influences social reality. In the Introduction of Johnsons book "She who is" (1992), Johnson explores how to speak rightly of God and notes how important language is in speaking rightly about God. Johnson notes that inclusive language is important, because "the symbol of God functions"[34] (Johnson, 1992:5; cf Ruether 1993) Johnson quotes Anne Carr (1992:8) "the women's movement comes as a transforming grace for the whole church although, terrifyingly, grace may always be refused". Feminist theology is a result of women whose faith seeks understanding in the matrix of the historical struggle of women for life under oppressive forces that wish to divide. When theology is done from this understanding and perspective it is necessary to investigate the language that is used to talk about God. Feminist theology raises critique to the traditional language that is male centred and is used to talk about God (Johnson, 1992:18,19; cf Dube, 1997). Feminist theology places high value on the experience of women. It is used and seen in the methodology, criteria, and goals. Feminist theology aims to resist the effects of patriarchy and to generate a new understanding. Feminist theology draws energy from social experience (Johnson, 1992:28,29).

Johnson (1992:29) states that feminist theology engages in three interrelated tasks- "it critically analyses inherited oppressions, searches for alternative wisdom and supressed history, and risks new interpretations of the tradition in conversation with women's lives". Firstly, deconstruction enables us to see the hidden dynamic of Christian tradition as it gives insight to language, ethics, symbolism, ritual, memory, customs, sacred texts, and symbolism. It also shows that Christian theory and practice are distorted and that the sexist bias has not been accidental. Secondly, one cannot focus on negatives alone and that is why feminist theologians and scholars

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[34] "Inclusive language pictures humanity and the divine in such a way as to include, honour, and do justice to diverse human experiences" (Duck, 1996:152).

are always in search of those who are ignored, outside of the mainstream and supressed as sources of wisdom. When these stories are told and heard it opens the possibility of constructing a different reality. Women's voices have been supressed in history, even fragments of these stories and history makes it possible to transform the way we think as well as how we act. Thirdly, feminist theology is a theology that always reconstructs. Christian symbols are envisioned anew, language change and the norms and methods of theology are articulated in a different way (Johnson, 1992:29-30). There is a criterion that Johnson (1992:30) identifies as a criterion that is always present in feminist theology. This is the criterion that asks the question if something 'consistently results in the denigration of human beings, in what sense can it be religiously true?'. This principle or criterion of the promotion of true humanity is not new or only present in feminist theology, it stems from the *Imago Dei.*

The androcentric perspectives have affected the language and the images we use to name the sacred as well as the underlying conceptions we hold of God's transcendence. Traditional notions of the transcendence of God is expressed through images of God as residing in heaven, creating earth out of nothing, ruling as a king as well as judging and destroying. Philosophically God's transcendence is understood as God being different from humanity and nature because God is pure spirit and not body (Christ & Plaskow,1989:95). Traditional androcentric perspectives uphold dualisms. We should challenge dualisms and listen deeply. The new feminist naming of the sacred, calls us to develop new theological and philosophical categories and languages that are less dualistic and loaded. We act out of images rather than concepts (Christ & Plaskow: 1989:96). Female God language and symbolism have a complex and ambiguous history (Lerner, 1993:88). The reconceptualization of the divine as both female and male appears in the work of Hildegard von Bingen in the 11th Century as well as in the works of Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Sienna. It seems that there was a time where this was not pursued further until the 18th century (Lerner, 1993:91). It is necessary to look at the speech about God and how it predominantly functions. Johnson (1992:33,34) brings three themes to light. Firstly, exclusive use of language that only uses male terms for God. Secondly, to talk literally about God. When God is seen as literally male other

languages are pushed aside. Thirdly, the theme of patriarchally speaking about God. Using literal patriarchal speech about God is oppressive and idolatrous. This speech will be used to enforce social structures that dominate and subordinate women. This speech will also enforce an androcentric worldview, undermine the human dignity and equality of women, and reject the mystery of God (Johnson, 1992:40).

Using the word God can be problematic. The word is generally associated with more masculine forms. Many feminist thinkers are creative in using different words, but it is difficult when it comes to oral speech (Johnson, 1992:42). A step to revise the patriarchal traits of God is to introduce feminine traits. Men gain their feminine side, but women do not necessarily gain their masculine side. This rigid binary system is problematic because it forces human beings as well as reality into it. Two absolutes, masculine and feminine are then imposed on God (Johnson, 1992:47-49). Another approach is to have a feminine dimension. This can mostly be seen in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and feminine qualities attributed to the Holy Spirit (Johnson, 1992:50). It is evident that the traits and dimensions approach is not adequate. A third strategy (Johnson, 1992:54,55) speaks about 'the divine in images taken equivalently from the experience of women, men and the worlds of nature'. In this approach language functions as personal language. The language of personhood points in a unique way to the mystery of God.

Julian of Norwich writes about Christ as mother and God as love: "the love of the Trinity is a template for the fundamentally ethical love which calls us beyond any narcissism *a deux* to a love create and open to others" (Soskice:2002). Many feminist theologians explore new names for God and experience plays an important role. Elizabeth Fiorenza (1979:137) writes that it is not her theology but rather her experience as a woman that grew up in the Catholic tradition that enables and prompts her to ask questions about the maleness of God and the essence of maleness as an essence in Christian faith and theological reflection. Wholeness is promoted by feminist spirituality as well as "healing love, and spiritual power not as hierarchical, as power over, but as power for as enabling power." Language about God is rooted in a living faith and a living faith community which enables language about God to have the ability to change and adapt (Fiorenza, 1979:139). The

argument that Fiorenza uses is that language about God should affirm mutuality, support fulfilment, the maturity and human potential that encompasses all aspects of humanity. This spirituality will empower everybody to take on responsibilities from eliminating discrimination, oppression and pluriformity. Humans will then mirror God's redeeming presence and experience life and love (Fiorenza, 1979:139,140).

Human experience is present in all contemporary theology. Feminist reflection is not alone in using human experience as a resource for theology. What is distinctive about feminist's use of human experience is that its focuses on the experience of women that is usually neglected in the androcentric tradition (Johnson, 1992:61). Feminist ethics and moral development gain much insight into the way women navigate and operate in the world. "At the heart of feminist reconstruction of ethics, as I read it, is the affirmation that women are human persons with the capacity to exercise moral agency, with all the freedom and responsibility that this entails". There is a pattern of mutuality that is present in feminist ethical discourse. This is important because it signifies a relation of mutuality, a construction of valuing one another. In feminist ethics relation stands at the centre, relation standing at the centre promotes the flourishing of all people (Johnson, 1992:67-69). Respect for plurality and metaphors for the sacred are another teaching of the turn towards the immanent in feminist naming's of the sacred. Feminist theologians have used names such as "she", "Goddess", images such as God that is inside you and everybody else and in everything. God is rooted in love and connection, there is a deep connection between woman and nature, God as mother and several other names (Christ & Plaskow: 1989: 96,97). "Whereas Morton had prayed to the patriarchal God to protect her *from* the storm, the Goddess enabled Morton to "become part of the rhythm" of the storm" (Christ & Plaskow: 1989:97). Language about God can be restrictive or freeing as is seen in the way humans describe God based on their experience.

2.2.5.2 Feminism and the Trinity
Mutuality, reciprocity, and God as an active being are seen in the writings of feminist theologians. Feminist theologians' opinions about feminism and the Trinity differ.

The notion of the Trinity will not be helpful for feminism theologians according to Hampson. The understanding of God as relational is helpful but the relations are focused on men and it is not one of equality (Hampson, 1990:154). While this statement holds truth, other scholars have done ground-breaking work regarding feminism and the Trinity. God is three and is referred to as the Trinity or the Trinitarian God. This understanding of God was part of Jewish teachings. God is one but is present to people in different ways when the circumstances differed over time. Christian faith is Trinitarian faith. This doctrine provides a framework for believers to give language to God (Soskice, 2002). Whilst trying to understand the Trinity better can be a difficult task, it is one that has been part of Christian history. Trinitarian formulas form part of the tradition, creeds, and language of the church. There is tension at the heart of the Trinity, God is one and the doctrine of the Trinity has always had critics. One of the main points of criticism is that Trinitarian language enforces a hierarchal structure of God the father that dominates whilst at the same time stressing the maleness of God (Soskice, 2002). In some cases, the doctrine of the Trinity preserves the otherness of God. The doctrine of the Trinity states that God is a God of love that is present in creation. The doctrine of the Trinity allows us to see that God is present in our world. This doctrine also endorses the fundamental goodness and beauty of being human. God being human should be celebrated as we speak of physicality. Jesus is our saviour not because he is male but because he is human (Soskice,2002).

The doctrine of the Trinity moves us beyond binaries. In three there is difference, there is difference in the Trinity without hierarchy. The "persons" are who they are in relation (Soskice, 2002). "At its most basic the symbol of the Trinity evokes a livingness in God, a dynamic coming and going with the world that points to an inner divine circling around in unimaginable relation" (Johnson, 1992:192). Jürgen Moltmann published a book "The Trinity and the Kingdom of God" (1981) first published in German *Trinität und Reich Gottes* (1980). The book brought new insight to the doctrine of the Trinity. Moltmann, standing critical towards a monarchic understanding of the Trinity where the persons are seen in hierarchy in a monarchic system (Moltmann [1980] 1981: 10-16, 129-48, 191-22, 131). The criticism was based on understandings of ecclesiology that is founded upon this understanding of

the Trinity. Further publications provided additional theological reflections such as "History and the Triune God. Contributions to Trinitarian Theology" (1992), originally published in German In *der Geschichte des dreieinigen Gottes* (1991). Standing critical against a hierarchical understanding of God is further explored as the problem of patriarchal language that is used for God.

Perichoreses is a term used since the 4th century describing the activeness of God in the relational relationality in Godself (Fiddes, 2000:71). *Perichoreses* is often described as a dance that takes place between the 'persons'[35] in the Trinity[36]. *Perichoreses* embodies unity and individuality, community stands central (Greshake, 2012:336); (Durand, 2012:178). Perichoreses, coming from the verb *perichorein* has been used to describe the nature of God that is mutuality, reciprocity, and movement (Durand, 2012:179). The Trinity is in continuous communication (Greshake, 2012:337). LaCunga understands *perichoreses* as life-giving that protects the unity of God. In the same way *perichoreses* protects the individuality of God (Grenz, 2005:96,97). Trinitarian *perichoreses* is the holy act of love that is seen in the relations in the Trinity (Durand, 2012:181).

Relationality is central to the being of the Trinity that embraces unity in diversity. Community and *communio* is not the same. *Communio* is based on service (*mun* coming from *munus* in Latin). To give and receive when everyone is participating in the same reality. Community is the coming together where *communio* can be lived. Relationality can only be realised when two or more stand in a reciprocal relationship. God embodies relationality and humans are introduced to God in

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[35]Person (originating from *prosopon*) means to mask and was used in the theatre to cover the faces and only allowing voices to be heard. The term was used to describe God as being one that wears three masks (Moltmann, 1993:171).

[36]The doctrine of the Trinity went through different stages. *Una substantia, tres personae* as used by Tertullian referred to the uniting holy substance that is present in the Trinity as the Trinity. The 'persons' in the Trinity is unique with the same substance. Later Augustine stated that the Trinity is one God constituted of three persons. Aquinas place focus on the holy substance that is God, moving the focus away from the three persons or only focussing on one. In the time after Hegel the Trinity was seen as a subject with three different modes of existence. With one only being complete when one is in relation to the other. It is more conducive not to refer to the Trinity as 'persons' as this automatically includes deeds and communication. Modes of existence is a better understanding where God is revealed by Godself (Moltmann, 1993:16-18).

relationality. Humans, created in the Imago Trinitatis therefore are relational beings (Grenshake, 2012: 333-335). Communities as seen in social systems holds elements of reciprocity, community, working together, unity and peace within diversity (Carr, 1988:156-157). Perichoreses describes unity that still holds plurality. The modes of existence in the Trinity can be influenced by others. One "person" is not absorbed by the other even as their identities overlap (Volf, 1998:409). In *perichoreses* that which distinguish one from the other is that which bind one to the other. Three cannot be reduced to one and the understanding of "one" is not to remove the three (Moltmann, 1993:175).

In the Trinity there is much relational activity such as creating, renewing, redeeming and this activity shows that God is never static but relational and dynamic. In traditional theology the Trinity is usually at least two male figures. These figures are God and Jesus, and this can be problematic in feminist theology. Trinitarian theology places the focus on relationality and the pattern of relationship. The Trinity can also give the impression of hierarchy and therefore subordinate. As the theology of the Trinity evolved, we see in the Nicene debate that the theology of the hypostasis stated that all persons in the Trinity are equal (Johnson, 1992:192-194). The love that is mutually given and received shows the relational pattern (Johnson, 1992:198). The symbol of the Trinity needs to be freed from literalness. This symbol is speaking by way of analogy (Johnson, 1992:197). An encounter with God or holy mystery is rooted in experience. The Trinity is a secondary formula that is based on human experience. The first Cristian communities did not have the doctrine of the Trinity but stories and words of praise. In later years the doctrine of the Trinity came forward and was developed further (Johnson, 1992:198). The experience was given certain language that formed the doctrine that is always formed again as it is based on experience. "The whole ensuing apparatus of theological terminology about the Trinity, its language of one *ousia* and three *hypstases*, or of one divine nature and three divine persons, is the result of this attempt to interpret the experience of God at the very centre of Christian faith" (Johnson, 1992:199). *Hypostasis* means the individual existence of a specific nature. Trinitarian 'persons' are unique even as they have a specific nature in common. This nature is established through their relationships between each other. It is only in relation that one of the "persons" can

exist (Moltmann, 1993:171). The three relations are seen as the Father, Son, and Spirit (*paternitas, filatio en spiratio),* (Moltmann, 1993:172). Karl Rahner made the statement that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa. Economic refers to a certain arrangement of the social grouping. The economic Trinity signifies God's redemption and liberation out of love. The immanent Trinity refers to God's own being that is given up to us because of the economic Trinity. By saying that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity it is confirmed again that this is one God (Johnson, 1992:199). There is movement between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity (Volf, 2006:4). By speaking about the immanent Triune God, we are remembering and helping ourselves to remember that God is holy mystery, and that God is compassionate and liberating through Jesus and the Spirit. This language affirms the Christian experience of God, and this language gives us hope (Johnson, 1992:199). Johnson (1992:200) makes the statement that no person has ever seen God, but that people have experienced God through the Spirit.[37] Therefore we hope, because we are living by faith and not by sight. God that is alive is with us and constantly renew us with liberating love. When thinking about the Trinity we must know that we do not know the inner workings of God because this is not a literal description of God (Johnson, 1992:204). As Johnson describes:

> "The Triune God is not simply unknown, but positively known to
> be unknown and unknowable – which is a dear and profound
> kind of knowledge"

(Johnson, 1992:205)

The movement toward feminist theological speech about the Trinity of God will result in new ways of conceptualizing the Triune God. The classical Eastern form originates from the first person, while the Western option places the focus on divine nature. Other options are emerging as three persons are seen in divine unity that is modelled on social communion. The inner divine life of God is inclusive of the pain

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[37]God is revealed to humans in the economic Trinity, from here there is movement towards the immanent Trinity (Volf, 2006:4).

and joy of the world. It is the social Trinity that helps us to see the story of salvation anew. The cross is Trinitarian as the suffering of the world affects the Trinitarian God (Johnson, 1992:205-207). Moltmann and Boff spoke about the Trinity in a new way of modern persons forming a new community. This is not without its own problems (cf. Boff, 1988, 2015 & Moltmann, 1992, 2000). Moltmann understands the social Trinity moving in the area of community, freedom, and respect. Volf (2006:6) reflecting on the social Trinity emphasises the history of reciprocal interaction of the Trinitarian persons in economic salvation. The reality of the social Trinity is found in the theology of Latin America. Each person in the Trinity is unique and related to the other. The diversity does not break the unity but rather shows how rich the Trinity is. There is total equality and respect. This is also understood as the highest ideal for humanity. The force of liberation dwells in the community and this is an inspiration for change. Participation and social interaction are valued higher than submission (Johnson, 1992:208,209). Moltmann refers to patriarchy where a single male ruler named father cannot help but form a dominating relationship with the world. This patriarch and power are linked with one another. The Trinitarian God, existing in mutual relationships gives the model of community, shared responsibility, and equality (Johnson, 1992:209). The modalistic view of the Trinity as supported by Rahner and Barth and the communitarian view of the Trinity as seen by Moltmann and Boff are not the only options that are available (Johnson, 1992:209). Criticism on the social Trinity notes that even if there is sameness, difference is always present. If human relationships are based upon the Trinitarian God, this could be problematic (Tanner, 2012:378). A way to address this, according to Tanner (2012:381) is to see movement from the Trinity to humans and the other way around as well, movement from humans to the Trinity. The symbol of the Trinity points to God as being alive and people experiencing God. In the community people come to trust the Mystery that is God. The symbol of the Trinity and the experience of people are in agreement, and this affirms the hope in God. There is a sense of ultimate reality that is constant with feminist values of relation, equality, mutuality, and community in diversity (Johnson, 1992:211).

"Women are equally created in the image and likeness of God,
equally redeemed by Christ, equally sanctified by the Holy Spirit;

women are equally involved in the ongoing tragedy of sin and the mystery of grace, equally called to mission in this world, equally destined for life with God in glory"

<div align="right">(Johnson,1992:8)</div>

Feminist thought and Trinitarian theology are highly compatible when observing the core values such as mutuality, relatedness, respect, and equality. "The Trinitarian God, moreover, cannot be spoken about without reference to divine outpouring of compassionate, liberating love in the historical world of beauty, sin, and suffering, thus leading us to envision a God who empowers human praxis in these same directions". The ontological priority of relatedness is very important in feminist thought as it directly challenges the idea of a single patriarch. In the Trinity relation is the core of being which implicated that there is no divine person but only the divine three. This holy mystery has community as its core and not one ruler. Classical theology is hesitant to use friendship as a model so as not to make the distinction between the divine persons indistinct. The relation of friendship may describe one aspect vividly. In friendships we can create strong bonds with people different from us, we do not lose who we are and are not interchangeable (Johnson, 1992:216,217).

Rian Venter (2015:1) asks if a Trinitarian understanding of spirituality would differ from a monotheistic understanding of spirituality? This question is of importance as the Christian God is ultimately understood as being Trinitarian and therefore Christian spirituality should reflect this. The different definitions of spirituality also reflect on how one understands a person's relationship with God, Gods work in this world as well as the interrelationship between God and humans. There is a relationship between doctrine and the spiritual. The state or extent of this relationship is observed differently by different scholars. The two main approaches are identified by Venter (2015:2). The one advocates autonomy, where your experiences in this life generates theological thought and therefore experience stands above theology. The other is a form of dialectic or organic relationship between spirituality and doctrine (Venter 2015:2). As God is Trinitarian, all spirituality is Trinitarian spirituality. Trinitarian statements are present in our liturgical movements from the greeting to

the benediction (Venter, 2015:3). Lonsdale (2005:240) states the challenge very accurately: "The challenge, therefore, is how to speak of Christianity and spirituality in ways which, on the one hand, recognise and respect difference and, on the other, succeed in identifying what is distinctive about the church as setting for spirituality in a context marked by complex diversity". The church has a characteristic of both learning and teaching. Teaching does not mean that instructions are given, it is a process of community and of different persons in a community. The heart of the church's learning and teaching does not lie in the lectures, catechesis, or sermons, but lies elsewhere (Lonsdale, 2005:240). Contemporary discussions of spirituality show that personal and communal identities are being shaped through relationships over a long period of time. We become persons through relationships with others. We are related to a physical environment with family and people that add meaning to our lives, groups, churches, and we are part of communities and societies. No person stands in isolation, this is how the individual identity is created. A person's spirituality is formed by the religious community as well as the nonreligious communities with whom the person engage. This spirituality that is rooted in the faith community "often has clear ethical, social and political dimensions" (Lonsdale, 2005:240).

The theology of the Trinity shows that relationality is the core and that the persons do not lose their distinctiveness. The bonds between the persons establish their uniqueness. The Trinity has no subordination, it is a community of equals that differ from each other but does not dominate one another. The community flourishes because of the flourishing of its members. This will be the same for people (Johnson, 1992:219).

2.3 Feminist hermeneutics and epistemologies

Hermeneutics is a foundation piece of theology. Feminist Theology raises many questions about hermeneutics. As Gilligan-Upton (2002) argues, a multi-layered approach is necessary. It would be of more use not to use a meta-narrative. As feminist biblical studies developed, so did feminist hermeneutics. Feminist hermeneutics takes place in a patriarchal system. There are different ways to go about in this context. All feminist exegesis also starts from patriarchal systems that

have been used. The power structures in the texts are also layered with patriarchy and one cannot escape this. As a result of this, two main approaches have been observed in feminism. Firstly, there is a more radical approach where the pendulum is changed. Secondly, an approach where there is a search for human equality is observed. One then reads the text as it is inside oppressive structures and as part of a patriarchal society. Schüssler Fiorenza works with hermeneutics of suspicion which can be of value (see Schüssler Fiorenza & Segovia, 2003 cf Christ, 2004). The same rising in feminist consciousness was seen in spirituality. Feminist spirituality is the consciousness that operates in our lives in our lived faith experience. Here the language used to refer to and describe God is changed to be inclusive (Martin, 1994:163-164). Anne E Patrick has defined feminism as endorsing "(1) a solid conviction of the equality of women and men, and (2) a commitment to reform society, including religious society, so that the full equality of women is respected, which requires also reforming the thought systems that legitimate the present unjust social order" (Cahill:1996:213).

When using feminism as a hermeneutic lens it is necessary to give a basic definition of feminism. Rosemary Radford Ruether (2002:3) gives the following definition: "feminism is a critical stance that challenges the patriarchal gender paradigm that associates males with human characteristics defined as superior and dominant (rationality, power) and females with those defined as inferior and auxiliary (intuition, passivity)". Most feminist reconstruct the gender paradigm in order to include women in full and equal humanity. A few feminists reverse it, making females morally superior and males prone to evil, overturning traditional male and female traits. "Feminist theology takes feminist critique and reconstruction of gender paradigms into the theological realm". In doing this, dominant patterns are being challenged, patterns or paradigms of male centred language and theology that teaches male dominance. Using feminist theology as a lens gives the writer a chance to reconstruct the theological themes and symbols. This reconstruction understands that symbols are socially constructed and therefore can be reconstructed (Ruether, 2002:3,4).

The feminist movement continues, women's experiences differ. Women's cultures and discourses differ. The future of feminist theology and the possibility of international solidarity and co-operation are made easier and more accessible in the age we live in. Women cannot afford to be divided because of identity politics (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc 916). Feminists need to be aware that while we may differ there are new forms of violence emerging, more forms of injustice are taking place (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc 921). Feminist theology is always contextual and therefore creative responses are required and can be given (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc 936). Pui-Lan (2002: loc 950) makes the statement that it is a critical task in this time for feminist theologians to develop an intercultural hermeneutics that "heightens cross-cultural sensitivity and underscores the relation between cultural-religious production and social and economic formation". Feminist theology started as a discipline in the academic milieu with white middle class women, it changed over time and is more inclusive. This broadened base has one connecting point, patriarchy (Martin, 1994:163).

Theology has an important task at hand in the field of reconceiving God (Hampson,1990:148). This task is important because the conceptualization of God has been done in a primarily patriarchal setting through people that benefit from the patriarchal system, this God will therefore reflect patriarchal values. Part of this reconceiving is the renaming of God and the reshaping of the notion of God. The God of the west is primarily described in masculine terms. Feminists operate using a different paradigm. Allowing and embracing difference is crucial for feminists, as they celebrate multiplicity (Hampson, 1990:148-153).

Feminist theologians recognise that symbols are socially constructed. It is a task of feminist theology to reconstruct these symbols as symbols are usually constructed by people in positions of power. It is out of these positions of power that social constructions of social relations such as race, class, gender, and more are constructed (Ruether, 2002). When this social construction shifts, it reflects on the nature of truth and knowledge and shows that it is dependent on certain social conditions. It is therefore necessary for women to get the necessary education and for the gender paradigm to be critiqued (Ruether, 2002).

2.3.1 Reality is constructed and can be reconstructed

As we see that social reality is constructed and may be reconstructed, it is necessary to see the practical implications of these constructions. One of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is Gender Equality. In a Policy Brief released on 9 April 2020 "Policy-Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women" (2020:1-21) research into the Covid-19 pandemic has illustrated that progress with regards to gender equality made in recent years may be reversed. It also showed that inequalities will be highlighted in this time. The economic impact of women and girls earning less and holding more insecure jobs, the health of women being impacted more severely, unpaid care work that rests more upon women, the increase in gender-based violence and contexts that are more fragile and prone to violence will worsen the progress made in gender equality. It is necessary for women to be represented in planning and decision making, this is possible when women have access to education. Unpaid care work needs to be addressed as women do the bulk of care work. Women need to be able to have access to relief funds as this gives autonomy and freedom to make decisions. The importance of education may not be undermined as this leads to financial independency and higher positions in leadership, this is not possible if all genders are not treated equally and given the same opportunities.

When looking at the relationship between religions and spirituality, it cannot be separated from epistemology and power relations. A gripping metaphor, used by Sheman (2012:471) illustrated this point "we have got onto slippery ice where there is no friction, and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal; but also, just because of that we are unable to walk. We want to walk so, we need *friction.* Back to the rough ground!". Epistemology's normative function should take us back to observe power relations. Questions need to be answered such as who is producing knowledge, why are they able to, who should be authorized to produce knowledge, how should knowledge be distributed? Sally Haslanger (Scheman, 2012:472) argues that a feminist perspective towards epistemology will be helpful as this perspective will define knowledge in another way and suggests an analytical approach to epistemological questions. The first point to consider is what the point of a concept

such as knowledge are. The second point to consider is which concepts could best accomplish this work. A person should not just assume who the "we" are who this knowledge works for. These points need to be analysed (Scheman, 2012:472). We therefore need to start from the standpoint of the marginalised. This will then enable us to be more likely ending at a point where there is space for all (Scheman, 2012:472). There is no such thing as a standpoint of the marginalised as it is intersecting, multiple and unstable. This is present in feminist spiritualities which will further be explored in Chapter 3 (Scheman, 2012:472).

> "An important lesson from epistemologies of ignorance is that one of the marks of privileged is being shielded from the consequences of getting it wrong, and this relative invulnerability comes with an epistemic loss: one is less likely to know what things cost – whether it is the price of a gallon of milk of the true cost of driving a car."
>
> (Scheman, 2012:473)

Sustainable development discourses have rested on unstable epistemologies. The failure is therefore seen on an ethical, justice and epistemic level (Scheman, 2012:477).

2.4 Conclusion

Women authorized themselves in many ways by means of divine inspiration, mystical revelation, or a sense of a unique religious calling. Some women were empowered through motherhood and as educators of the youth, where other women authorized themselves through the demand of their talents. Women needed to spend most of their adult lives bearing children and raising children. Marriage was the main means of support for women and motherhood therefore became the core concept which women used to conceptualise their group identity. This shared experience of motherhood enabled women to assert equality before sisterhood as a concept could develop. Feminist consciousness grew through time. The understanding of God as Trinity is crucial for Christian Feminist Spiritualities. Feminist theology seeks transformation. This chapter forms the foundation for the understanding of feminist

spiritualities as a moving force to facilitate change with values of equality, inclusivity, community, plurality, experience, relationality, diversity, and difference.

CHAPTER 3

FEMINIST SPIRITUALITIES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

In this chapter feminist spiritualties will be investigated with specific focus on certain characteristics that are present in feminist spiritualities.

> "Feminism represents a revolution. It is not in essence a demand that women should be allowed to join the male world on equal terms. It is a different view of the world. This must be of fundamental importance for theology. For theology, as we have known it, has been the creation of men; indeed, of men living within a patriarchal society. As women come into their own, theology will take a different shape."
>
> (Hampson, 1990:1)

3.1 Feminism and feminist theology: A short history

As the feminist movement continues to grow, insight into the history of feminism is crucial as this enables one to see where feminist theology is heading. Looking back enables one to see what life-giving opportunities are being opened for the future. In the introduction of "With Passion and Compassion: Third world women doing theology" Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1989: xii) introduces this unique volume of essays and the use of spirituality in these works with the words "women's theology comes as words that are lived". Lived experience of women is a critical part of feminism, feminist theology and feminist spiritualities.

Feminism is a broad field and some scholars trace feminism back to the 15th century; this is known as protofeminism. There is evidence that the female spiritual writers of the Middle Ages were able to partake in some theological education. Women such as Hildegard von Bingen and Julian of Norwich were accepted by other women and men as producers of theological writings, they were also teachers and preachers (Ruether, 2002).

Feminist theology has gained momentum with women of different backgrounds and cultural settings as they challenge patriarchal teachings of the church and show a different understanding of God (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc687). Feminist theology is strengthened by the "multicultural, multivocal, and multireligious character of the women that form part of the movement's experience of God and their expression of faith in the inclusive God" (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc705). In early writings and today still feminist theology is embracing plurality and diversity and is always rooted in the religious experiences of women. Feminist theology encapsulates the struggles of women, it takes their actions and reflections into account. Feminist theology builds on women's hopes and dreams (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc 718). Women's experience forms the foundation of feminist theology as well as feminist spirituality. Elizabeth Johnson (1992:18-19) defines feminist theology in a profound manner as: "Feminist theology is a result of women whose faith seeks understanding in the matrix of the historical struggle of women for life under oppressive forces that wish to divide." Johnson (1992: 29) states that feminist theology engages in three interrelated tasks, "it critically analyses inherited oppressions, searches for alternative wisdom and supressed history, and risks new interpretations of the tradition in conversation with women's lives". There is a criterion that Johnson (1992: 30) identifies as a criterion that is always present in feminist theology. This is the criterion that asks the question if something 'consistently results in the denigration of human beings, in what sense can it be religiously true?'. This principle or criterion of the promotion of true humanity is not new or only present in feminist theology, it stems from the *Imago Dei*. Equality in feminist theology is based on the *Imago Dei*.

> "Women are equally created in the image and likeness of God,
> equally redeemed by Christ, equally sanctified by the Holy Spirit;
> women are equally involved in the ongoing tragedy of sin and
> the mystery of grace, equally called to mission in this world,
> equally destined for life with God in glory"
>
> (Johnson, 1992: 8)

A movement in feminist discourse can be seen in seventeenth century England resulting from two sources, the radical apocalyptic Christianity as seen by Margaret

Fell in the Quaker movement and humanism as seen by Mary Astell who argues that equal education is necessary for the development in this life and the life to come. This can be seen as the first movement in feminist theology although the group was still marginalised as women were excluded from the dominant church, and educational and cultural institutions (Ruether, 2002). In the last two centuries the feminist movement has gained momentum (Martin, 1994:145-146). With different social and intellectual factors acting as catalysators, the feminist movements took place in certain waves which have different accents and a certain historic memory (Martin, 1994: 148).

3.1.1 The first wave of feminism: Moral issues

The first wave of feminism started in the nineteenth century and early 20th century. The first wave was primarily concerned with women's legal rights and citizenship, the need to vote and the suffrage movement (Bagshaw, 2019:18). Women were seen as property of their fathers or husbands. Moral issues stand at the centre of the first wave. The abolitionist movement started the first wave of feminism. Women spoke about the limitations that they undergo because of their sex, this resulted in the establishment of many organisations. When the civil war ended, the women's movement experienced the first of many fractures resulting from different visions of equality. The National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), created by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony focused on securing voting rights for women. A critical point in the movement came in 1840 when a group of women, including Mott and Stanton went to the International Anti-Slavery Convention and they were not allowed to participate. In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott called for equal treatment for women under the law, in education and in the right to vote at the Seneca falls convention. This resulted in the 1848 Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls. At this convention ten resolutions were adopted. Two years later another convention was held (Bagshaw, 2019:18 and Martin, 1994:148-154).

The ratification of the fifteenth amendment in 1970 caused women's suffrage to gain new momentum. Racism was deeply imbedded in the movement at this time. The National Association of Coloured Women (NACW) was started, focusing on segregation and access to higher education and black suffrage (Bagshaw, 2019:19).

The 19th amendment of the US constitution was passed in 1920, white women were able to vote whilst voting was inaccessible for women of colour. Ida B. Wells was a black feminist who still worked towards equality. Wells focused on the anti-lynching movement. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was introduced in 1923, some form of the ERA was still under proposal until 1970 (Bagshaw, 2019:19). In the early 1900's, the labour movement was formed. The racism that was steeped within first wave politics was captured by Sojourner Truth's poem "Aint I a Woman?" (Bagshaw, 2019:20). During this time women were prohibited from voting, signing legal documents, owning property, divorcing their husbands, attending college, and gaining full employment in the United States (Bagshaw, 2019:18). In the mid-nineteenth century a more organised movement can be seen seeking rights for women regarding property, politics, and higher education. A systematic approach can be seen in the feminist movement against slavery. The theological critique was based on the equality of the sexes in the image of God and the argument was based on Gods intent for social equality (Ruether, 2002).

The first wave strengthened women in the political and social arena and women were more vocal in critiquing the patriarchal elements in the Bible. It is also in this time that Elizabeth Cady Stanton published "The Woman's Bible" (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc 740). After women gained the right to vote, their energy in the movement as well as commitment to the organisations lost momentum and there was an intermission period. There are a number of factors that contributed to this situation, such as the cause for suffrage that united women were no longer prevalent, there were no long-term goals set etc. The organisations stayed active, but not to the extent as a few years earlier. In the years between 1920 and 1960 the tradition of feminism had little to do with the enlightenment (Martin, 1994:154-155).

3.1.2 The second wave of feminism: Women's liberation

The second wave of feminism brought feminist consciousness into other branches of thinking as well as academia and theology. The initial movements in feminist theology were a call to consider women's perspectives on theological issues. It was liberation thinking and praxis that gave most of the energy in this theological effort (Martin, 1994:161). Elizabeth Johnson later incorporated many previous scholar's

hermeneutics in feminism. Different feminist scholars approach feminists' hermeneutics differently in its treatment of the canon. Some scholars accept the canon that the church established between the end of the second century and the middle of the fourth century. Examples of these scholars are Heine and Jewett. Other scholars see the scriptures as being able to create a principle and the patriarchal parts may be subordinated or removed. This approach is also referred to as canon in the canon, Ruether is an example of a scholar that follows this approach. Other scholars stand firm that only in virtue of a principle outside the canon such as women's experience can scriptures be interpreted and have value. Fiorenza is a scholar that follows this approach of canon outside of the canon. There are other scholars that argue that a patriarchal text can still be liberating when a hermeneutical lens is applied, Schneiders is a scholar that follows this approach (Martin, 1994:162-163).

The second wave emerged in the late 1960's and lasted about 15 years. It was in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, and it was also the beginning of the black consciousness era. There were many political and liberation struggles from oppression. The wave began in reaction to the ideas of white married suburban life and strict gender roles in the traditional family structure in the 1950s. Women were frustrated by sexism in the civil rights movement (Bagshaw, 2019:21); (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc740). While the first wave of feminism functioned in the political realm, the second wave is also known as women's liberation (Martin, 1994:155-158). Second wave feminism focused on liberating women from discrimination and oppression and to create equal opportunities for men and women. "They argued that the personal issues that women face, like violence at home, sexual harassment at work, and unwanted pregnancies, were systemic and therefore political" (Bagshaw, 2019:22).

 The second wave focused on men and women as a society to take these issues at heart and change the society accordingly. This wave articulated certain goals. During this time there was also a feminist consciousness that was rising. The consciousness in society resulted in changing views of women as well as what the role of a woman should and can be (Martin, 1994:155-158). There are certain issues that united all the different strands of feminist movements. These issues include the

autonomy of women, that women should be able to define and create themselves and the identification of equality and identity, especially as seen in equal rights feminism. The other uniting issue was patriarchy, that they were being oppressed by virtue of their sex (Martin,1994:159). Feminist theologians in third world countries had and have to fight against feminism imposed from the outside, this happens when men and women act in ways to protect their national culture (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc 798). The struggle against violence towards women is happening in relation to different cultures being present as well as androcentric myths and practices in cultures and in Christianity (Pui-Lan, 2002: loc798).

The feminist movement happened worldwide. In the 1960s until the 1980s in India the feminist space was fed by issues on national as well as local level (Jain, 2012:200). Some of the goals of second wave feminists were secure protection from harassment at place of employment, to criminalize marital rape, to make contraception available to all women, to secure equal opportunity to compete in sports, to secure safe and legal abortions, end gender-based violence, close the pay gap and pass the equal rights amendment. Most of the goals had a successful outcome. The ERA bill did not pass. (Bagshaw, 2019:22,23). The second wave, as the first wave, placed the focus on white, middle class, heterosexual women's values. These fractures started other movements focusing on issues central to their own life experience. In the 1980s the Aids activism were being driven by lesbians (Bagshaw, 2019:24).

3.1.3 The third wave of feminism: Changing the culture

In the 1990's the third wave started by Anita Hill's testimony in 1991 who accused Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment. The Senate Judiciary Committee was comprised of all white men. This testimony and the way the process developed, showed that the personal is still political. This resulted in sexual harassment becoming part of the national conversation. The focus in the third wave was more on changing culture. Feminist questioned and redefined gender, sex, sexuality, beauty, and language (Bagshaw, 2019:29). The third wave and the influence of the internet provided opportunities for ideas to be published more broadly. This wave of feminism

brought the issue of race, class and sexual orientation to the centre and diversity was celebrated and intersectionality featured as a core concept (Bagshaw, 2019:29). The third wave accomplished that congress passed the Violence Against Women act (VAWA) in 1994. Congress passed the Family Leave Act in 1993 (FMLA) (Bagshaw, 2019:29).

3.1.4 The fourth wave of feminism: Activism

There is not a clear end of the third wave and a clear start for the fourth wave. The waves help us to understand how the movement and goals shifted (Bagshaw, 2019:30). Fourth wave feminism is new and seems to be taking place currently and mostly online as an evolution of call-out culture to include public cultural critiques and movements like #Metoo and #TimesUp. The fourth wave is also known for protests (Bagshaw, 2019:31). In 2017 over one million people marched in Washington, DC to protest the policies and sexist behaviour of President Donald Trump. Protesting alone cannot have the effect that politicians change. Protesting motivates the group to get politically active. This can create a political movement which can result in change (Bagshaw, 2019:32). Feminism means that the personal is political, it approaches all humans as fully human and becomes a way of life. A feminist can also be spiritual. There is a particular spirituality for feminists as it incorporates these values that are true in the feminist movement.

3.2 Spirituality

Spirituality as a field of study has increased dramatically in the past few decades. It is evident that people have had, and are having, certain spiritual experiences. This is apparent in the rise in publications of books as well as the rise in the academic field of the study of spirituality (Waaijman, 2002:1,2 and Kourie, 2006:19). Spirituality is a rich and diverse field as it is linked to several topics (King, 2011:17). The interest in spirituality is universal and there is cross-disciplinary interest resulting in valuable contributions in the field (Kourie 2006:19 and King, 2011:18). Peter Holmes (2007) examined contemporary spirituality as emerging in academic disciplines and saw a rise of spirituality in psychology, medicine and healthcare, religion, anthropology, education, sociology, business, and the commercial world. Contemporary discussions of spirituality seem to be undertaken by members of the caring

professions, those working in education and healthcare as well as academics in religious studies. There is theoretical sophistication and debates that are now more complex, nuanced and pluralized (King, 2011:19).

3.2.1 Defining spirituality

A general definition of spirituality will enable one to place certain spiritualities in the broader phenomenon. Spiritualities' meaning has become fluid. The meaning ranges from escapism to human maturation. Different definitions exclude different people (Kourie, 2006:22). King (2011:21) argues that it is more accurate to speak of spiritualities and propose an open-ended general definition. Spiritualities are linked with the ideas and practices as well as commitments of persons who help to nurture, sustain, and shape the existence of our human lives. This can be for individual persons or for communities. According to Philip Sheldrake (2014:56), spirituality, in a broad sense may be associated with values. Values are part of a person's belief system. Values are also part of a person's worldview. A person's worldview is shaped by several factors such as personal experiences, childhood years of development as well as the specific culture in which one grew up and functions at the present time. Anne Carr (1982:96) defined spirituality as: "…the whole of our deepest religious beliefs, convictions, and patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour in respect to what is ultimate, to God. Spirituality is holistic, encompassing our relationships to all of creation – to others, to society and nature, to word and recreation – in a fundamentally religious orientation". For Carr (1982:96) spirituality is larger than theology or a certain set of values. Spirituality is all encompassing and reaches our unconsciousness. Spirituality is also part of what shapes our behaviours and how we act and react. Spirituality is not a moral code, rather it is "in relation to God, it is who we really are, the deepest self, not entirely accessible to our comprehensive self-reflection" (Carr,1982:96). Peter van Ness defines spirituality as a quest that one embarks on to attain an optimal relationship between what one truly is and everything else that is. Spirituality is an attempt to relate as a person to the broad reality (Schneiders, 2003:166). Spiritualities is the consolidation of a vast number of spiritual attitudes, practices, and activities. Spiritualities take place over a large spectrum of connections. These occur organically and show movements of growth. Spirituality in essence cause transformation and activation. Spiritualities as a

field of knowledge is dynamic and holistic. Perceiving spiritualities progressively would be more suitable than a linear perception. This will result in perceiving a complex awakening, deeper awareness, and a way of relating to all the different layers of reality (King, 2011:21). Spirituality encapsulates your whole being as authentic life before God (Dreyer, 1999:370). King (2011:21) notes further that spiritualities is very wide, it can be linked to all human creativity and the resourcefulness of humans. Spiritualities are part of our interpersonal and personal relationships as well as our relationship with a transcendent reality. This transcendent reality can be defined as the Divine, or God or Spirit. Schneiders (2003:165) means that spirituality in its most basic or anthropological sense is a characteristic of the human being and that is in the capacity of persons to transcend themselves. This self-transcendence takes place through knowledge and love in relationship with others. Dreyer (1999:360) states that spirituality is a human phenomenon which comes in various forms that may not even be the same in specific religions. Kourie (2006:22) argues that to have a working definition of spirituality the field must be wider: *"*To sharpen the notion of spirituality and in an attempt to delineate its relevance for humanity today, it should be seen in a wider context to refer to the deepest dimension of the human person. It refers therefore to the 'ultimate values' that give meaning to our lives, whether they are religious or non-religious". Kourie summarizes the meaning of spirituality as the "values to which we subscribe which gives meaning and orientation to our lives. Spirituality entails the ongoing harmonious integration of the whole human person" (Kourie 2006:26). Kourie goes on to say that religion is connected to "institution, ritual, articulation of doctrine etc., spirituality refers to something that is deeply personal, inward, experiential and authentic in the lives of its practitioners" (Kourie 2006:26).

In a broad sense Kees Waaijman (2002:1) defines spirituality as something "that touches the core of our human existence: our relation to the Absolute". In the introduction of Waaijman's (2002:1) work "Spirituality: Forms, Foundations and Methods" he states that spirituality is present in our daily lives as "a quiet force in the background, an inspiration and orientation. Sometimes, however, it forces its way into our consciousness as an inescapable Presence, a Presence which demands shaping and thorough reflection".

It is evident that the meaning of spirituality is not the same for everyone. (Kourie 2006:20,21). Spiritualities are broad and can vary from persons and groups. It is not a generic discipline. Sandra Schneiders (2003:165) distinguished among spiritualities using criteria such as healthy or rigid, religious tradition or family of religion, salient features, such as feminist activities to help find a way to navigate between spiritualties. Schneiders notes that although all humans are spiritual each individual develops their own spirituality in a unique way, in the same way as a human develops a unique personality. Schneiders defines spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives" (Schneiders, 2003:166).

King (2011:21,22) supports the understanding of the relation between spiritualities and transformation. Spiritualties in an individual and societal context are automatically related to relationships and renewal. When one is engaging in spiritualty it is linked with internal as well as external transformation. In this transformation process a person experiences critical self-reflection, enabling one to surrender the self and care for others. Compassion is intensified and this spiritual energy can feed one's own life and the lives around you. The field of spirituality has certain shared understandings that can enable a person to locate themselves in the discourse of spirituality. Firstly, spirituality as an academic discipline is the study of spirituality as lived experience. In the second place lived experience can be personal and/or communal. Lived experience is the process of life-integration by way of self-transcendence. This process is directed towards what is perceived as being of ultimate value. Thirdly, spirituality has at least three goals: academic research of spirituality. Gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of spiritual growth and the process in which this unfolds with the different role-players and a professional preparation and study to practically assist others with their spiritual growth. In the fourth place spirituality as a research discipline is methodologically rigorous as well as being self-implicated. Another shared understanding is that spirituality can be approached from various positions. In the sixth place spirituality as an academic field follows an interdisciplinary approach. Another shared understanding is that spirituality is multicultural and not specific to one religion. The characteristics will vary from different contexts. Lastly research projects usually involve a

phenomenological moment which stems from a project, process, or procedure. It is this moment that asks a person to analyse critically by using criteria from various sources, resulting in constructive engagement and an interpretation of lived experience which is called spirituality (Schneiders, 2010:245).

These definitions and approaches to the field of spirituality help one to understand the richness of this discipline. Key terms that are part of spirituality and should form part of a definition is that spirituality is a personal (not individualistic) and communal orientation towards God in a relational, holistic, and lifelong journey of self-transcendence that transforms the self and the reality of the self and community.

3.2.2 Forms of lived spirituality

Kees Waaijman (2002) describes in his extensive work on Spirituality "Spirituality, forms, foundations, methods" the forms that can be distinguished in lived spirituality. The first form is lay spirituality, this form of spirituality is primarily practiced in the family. The second form is institutional spirituality and is studied in specific schools. Counter-spirituality is the third form and is practiced from the margins of society (Waaijman, 2002:11-17).

3.2.2.1 Lay spirituality

Lay spirituality has not been documented as well as the schools of spirituality and the counter movements. This is partly because lay spirituality is mainly an oral tradition and is practiced at home. Lay spirituality does not have specific buildings and libraries and do not function according to a certain set of rules (Waaijman, 2002:19).

From a diachronic perspective in the development of lay spirituality the following can be observed. Lay spirituality is dominant in the early biblical period. As the church developed and the Roman Empire grew and became established it was pushed into the background. While functioning in the background, a personal piety is seen in the patriarchal period. God was seen and understood as being present in daily life. This personal piety was not individualistic piety. Personal piety understood God as the one who shapes every person from before birth and has a personal relationship with

persons as well as communities and it was experienced personally as well as in community. In the period of the kings, lay spirituality was pushed back again as the official religion became more prominent in society. Lay spirituality was still strongly present in Yahwistic religions and institutions. During the exile period lay spirituality became the way for the people to survive. After the exile, the role of lay spirituality stayed prominent. In the time of exile, the house of study was developed, and this would change lay spirituality. The ability to read became important and Jewish spirituality would later remain a lay spirituality. In the early centuries of Christianity lay spirituality featured prominently as seen by Jesus and his disciples. A dichotomy arises in the Middle Ages between clergy as religious persons and the rest or other people as lay people. In the time of the reformation and humanism lay spirituality was taken back to its core that all Christians are priests. From the 19th and 20th century the position of the church changed and therefore also the position of the laity. The shift came that the church became marginalized in the secular world. Vatican II changed the church's attitude towards the world, the church shifted from ecclesiastical political terms to social-cultural terms. Lay spirituality is defined by certain elements, some of these elements are family, neighbors, specific understanding of time that influences life, death, generational consciousness, and connections to the more remote environment. "The personal life journey of the concrete individual is central" (Waaijman, 2002:19-23).

When looking at lay spirituality from a synchronic perspective. Waaijman (2002:24-25) focuses on Native American Spirituality and African Spirituality and notices three lines of continuity. The first line of continuity shows that there is a bond with the environment that is also seen as an experience with the Divine. This experience with nature is a communal experience. The second line of continuity is the community of relations. This community's genealogy is of importance and gives each person a place in this community through the different generations. The third line of continuity is the understanding of a personal life in the time of life and death that is joined to the community by love and care (Waaijman, 2002:25).

3.2.2.2 Schools of spirituality

Schools of spirituality originates from an experience with a Divine Source or a Source-experience, according to Waaijman (2002:116). This experience can then be made accessible in several ways such as through mediation, liturgies, life, and spiritual exercises. Schools of spirituality have a unique identity that is linked with the cultural and socio-cultural context of the specific school. These schools of spirituality are able to reform should the need arise. Each school of spirituality has a unique historical synthesis and a variety of forms such as the monastic system, the Benedictine centuries, regular canons, mendicant orders, modern devotions, the Jesuits, the Oratorians, followers of Vincent de Paul, receptionists, congregations of Charles de Foucault and more. There is also the reformational spirituality, orthodox spirituality, and movements like the French school. There are numerous terms that are used to explain this phenomenon such as schools of spirituality, the way of Christian life as well as holiness (Waaijman, 2002:117).

Kees Waaijman (2002:117,118) defines a school of spirituality as a specific spiritual way that originates from an experience of Divine nature. An inner circle of pupils take shape as a result of this experience. These schools of spirituality are situated in a specific socio-cultural context and therefore opens a specific perspective to the future. A second generation will structure this into an organic whole. Many people are then able to share in this experience. Schools of spirituality usually characterizes themselves with metaphors like "the way", such as the way of enlightenment, the threefold way and the way of Tao (Waaijman, 2002:123-137). Schools of spirituality uses rituals to mediate the source experience and are performed externally and internally. Examples like the temple liturgy, the eucharist and specific rituals in religion demonstrate this (Waaijman, 2002:138-150). Religious communities offer a model of spiritual life. This model encapsulates all dimensions of life that are shaped by the source experience from which the school of spirituality takes its inspirations. Examples are the Sufis, the Carmelites, and the Vincentians (Waaijman, 2002:151-165). Schools of spirituality take shape within a specific culture and this culture maintains a spiritual identity as long as the source experience remains alive in it. We see this in the wisdom schools, the Benedictine centuries as well as spirituality and art (Waaijman, 2002:166-178). Reformation is a spiritual process. In this process the

source experience and the changing circumstances of time are related to each other. Creative mediations between the two poles are essential in this process. We see this in the Deuteronomic reformation, the modern devotion and renewal geared to the times (Waaijman, 2002:179-194). The source experience opens the future. This can take place in utopias, prophecies, projects, and alternative forms of life. Examples are prophetic spirituality, utopia, and ecological spirituality (Waaijman, 195-210).

3.2.2.3 Counter-movements

Lived spirituality is observed in the form of counter-movements. Devotion is an important part of counter movements. Counter-movements are characterized by persons on the margins of cultural and religious establishments and regularly disturb the members of the establishment. There are times when marginal individuals or groups such as desert monks, refugees and exiles are taken out of their zone of security and comfort. When this happens, the situation has been seen to bring these individuals and groups back to the Core of life and experience as a source of renewal (Waaijman, 2002:212). A Countermovement is when two voices move against each other, there is resistance against the dominant power, as Waaijman states:

> "Counter-movements in spirituality are grounded outside the sphere of power structures and established relations: outside of their concepts, their spatial orders, their time period, their hierarchies, their great narratives"
>
> (Waaijman, 2002:213,214)

This outside state enables these spiritualities to swim against the current. Waaijman uses the term as used by Victor Turner "structure-antistructure" (2002:214) which describes this field of tension. Structure refers to the current social roles and positions that are the norm and antistructure refers to this area that moves outside the structure where constructive chaos lives. This is where new ideas and lifestyles are formed. Resistance is present and creativity is at word. Turner distinguished three forms of antistructure: liminality, inferiority, and marginality (Waaijman, 2002:214). Counter movements are characterized by antistructure as they do not

form part of the main structure. These forms can help us analyze counter movements. Liminal spirituality is characterized by being separated from a social structure and entering a phase of separation followed by a phase of reintegration. The liminal phase is the main phase. There is also a current of life in this phase with creativity, community, equality, vital energy, insight, imagination, wholeness, and naturalness (Waaijman, 2002:214). Inferior spirituality is used to describe people outside of the current dominant social structure. These people are usually the unemployed, people who live in poverty, the outcasts and the children, and women in a patriarchal society. These persons do not have status in society, they hold no power in the current structures and their identity is destitute. This position enables these people to see society in a different light and often with criticism (Waaijman, 2002:215). Marginal spirituality is marked by double loyalty. Marginals belong to a prestige group in society and on the other hand they are connected to their origin with a group from the outside. An example of this phenomenon is women in emancipated positions (Waaijman, 2002:215). Liberation spirituality is defined by Kees Waaijman (2002:231) as 'n countermovement of inferior spirituality. The dominant paradigm of liberation spiritualities is the Exodus narrative with the promise that God will be with them. This group that made the exodus was joined by a mixed crowd (Ex 12:28). The exodus from Egypt is the archetype of many different forms of liberation spiritualities (Waaijman, 2002:217). In the 1960s in Latin America and in Africa and Asia we see liberation spirituality movements take hold at the intersection of the experience of oppression and God who makes God known as the one who takes the side of the poor. These two dimensions are related within the specific cultural context. It is important to note that "spiritual praxis is intrinsically determined by social praxis" (Waaijman, 2002:217,218). Examples of liberation spirituality can be seen in the song of Miriam, Joan of Arc and Dorothee Sölle (Waaijman, 2002:219-231). In South Africa Black Liberation Theology is an example. Kees Waaijman places feminist spiritualities as a category under liberation spiritualities.

3.3 Feminist Spiritualities

Feminist spiritualities differ from each other in such a profound way that it is more truthful to refer to feminist spiritualities to encapsulate the richness of this discipline. Feminist spiritualities originated in the 1980s within the context of feminism. Feminist

spiritualities "is the shared experience of women who had become conscious of living in a male-dominated cultural system" and they opposed the structure that deemed women inferior (Waaijman, 2002:218-219). Feminist spiritualities can be distinguished from other spiritual orientations as it has central elements of feminist consciousness. It is the spirituality of those who have experienced feminist consciousness rising. Feminist spiritualities is different from women's spirituality (Carr,1982:99).

The literature on feminist spiritualities is a colourful tapestry. "Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion" was published in 1979. The same editors edited "Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality" in 1989. During this time between publications there was an expansion of literature and discussion. Christ & Plaskow (1989:1) notes that the most important development between the two books were the increase in minority voices. The tensions that was present in "Womanspirit Rising" is also present in "Weaving the Visions". The editors describe it as: "The criticisms of patriarchal religion, the centrality of women's experience to feminist work, the emphasis on nature and the body, the conflict between reforming established traditions and creating new ones" (Christ & Plaskow: 1989:1). Feminist spiritualities recognises the importance of supportive network among women of all ages, races, and classes in a non-competitive, non-hierarchical, non-dominating mode of relation. Feminist spirituality is open to all people and will still call out people for their failings to the wider vision of human mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependence before God as we are unity and community (Carr,1982:100). Feminist spiritualities encourages the autonomy of a person. It encourages self-actualisation and self-transcendence of women and men. Feminist spiritualities embraces that everyone is unique and tells her own story. A universal experience of women cannot be assumed as this is not the case, each woman's uniqueness should be affirmed as she makes her own life choices (Carr,1982:100).

> "Feminist spirituality, in contrast to women's spirituality more
> generally, arises from the consciousness of women's oppression
> and is a quest to overcome women's marginalization in religion
> as in every other sphere of life"

Patriarchy results in women being estranged from the church. Women often experience this estrangement while functioning in a male structured, male identified and male ruled structure. Women are in effect being estranged from themselves when this is happening. Women often accept the patriarchal view of God and these structures without criticism (Dreyer,1999:365). Injustice in religion towards women lies at the heart of the feminist critique of religion. Women were often excluded from vocations and faith communities. The language heard was also exclusive language. The women's movement began to turn this private pain into systematic feminist critique of religion. Feminist criticism of religion began with explicit statements of female inferiority and subordination, exclusion and teachings on marriage and family. The image of God as male and the influence this has was addressed. An example is the book by Mary Daly in 1971 "After the Death of God the Father" (Plaskow & Christ, 1979:3,4). Western thinking is shaped by dualisms such as male and female, mind and body, spirit and nature, human-nonhuman creation, transcendence, and immanence, rational and instinctive, intellect and emotion. Feminist's aim to eliminate divisions such as these (Christ & Plaskow: 1989:2 & Waaijman, 2002:218-219). Patriarchy is connected with other types of oppression. A worldview grounded in dualisms and hierarchy is interconnected with this oppression. Women are half of every oppressed group; it is impossible to empower women without addressing and eradicating all forms of oppression (Christ & Plaskow: 1989:2). "A specifically feminist spirituality, … would be that mode of relating to God and everyone and everything in relation to God, exhibited by those who are deeply aware of the historical and cultural restriction of women to narrowly defined 'place' within the wider human (male) 'world'" (Carr,1982:99). This critical stance includes a vision of the world in which genuine mutuality, reciprocity, and equality may prevail. A developed feminist spirituality would then bear traces of feminist consciousness, integrated within a larger religious framework (Carr,1982:100). A Christian feminist spiritualty is universal in its vision as it relates to the individual struggle of women, of all colours and socio-economic status and education to the passive problems of the day. This spirituality will strive to be inclusive and at the same time stay critical as it will not dim the radical vision of human mutuality and cooperation (Carr,1982: 101).

Women, when making meaning of their own experiences, recognised that reflection is needed. Relationships especially should be understood differently for all people to flourish. This reflection is part of what shapes feminist spirituality. The feminist movement began as political, economic, and social struggles now includes a spiritual dimension (Zaponne, 2010:337).

In "Womanspirit rising" women's experience is a crucial part for feminist theology. Feminist spiritualities begins informally in a person's life. This can come forth in many ways, for some, it happens in an intuitive way. For others, awareness of a spirituality for feminists realises itself through the conceptual study of feminist critique of traditional religious symbols (Zaponne, 2010:337-338). Women assert and name their own experience and women's experience should be explored to see how it might transform traditional religion or lead to forming new traditions (Christ & Plaskow: 1989:3). In "Weaving the Visions" women's experience has broadened. Who are women, can women be confined to a group? What is experience and whose experiences count? The diversity should be explored. "The experience of being a woman is inseparable from being the kind of woman one is" (Christ & Plaskow: 1989:3). Judith Plaskow and Carol Christ (1989:4) write that women learned to claim the diversity of their lives and see this as an important resource. When women learned that the various strategies for survival and resistance comes out of particular histories the concept of women's experience gained new significance and fullness. This is continually happening. The experience of women cannot be heard from one voice. It is this rising chorus, speaking from different places, histories and standpoints that pushes towards a society where all can be heard. The inclusion of personal experience in feminist work is a way of addressing the critique of false universalism. A personal resource for our work also helps not talking in third person and saves us from false generalisations (Christ & Plaskow, 1989:5). By writing in a way that refers to the holistic self rather than just the head is to run the often-high risks that scholars will not appreciate the contribution or the risk

of academic dismissal [38](Christ & Plaskow, 1989:6). "Weaving the Visions" questions not only the content of religious thought, it also asks who is doing the thinking, what counts as theology and asks how theology is being done. This transformation of writing and teaching, learning, and thinking in a new way cannot be separated from the substance of patriarchal thought (Christ & Plaskow, 1989:6). "The idea of a society that honours difference at the same time it recognises the fundamental character of relation brings us to the vision with which we want to end" (Christ & Plaskow, 1989:12). It is the work of marginal women and women of colour that undoubtedly keeps revealing that there is a continued existence of racial discrimination, hetero-sexism, class oppression, colonialism, and anti-Semitism inside feminist theory. This is also present in feminist practices and raises questions of whether feminists share a common vision (Christ & Plaskow, 1989:12). There is growing diversity in feminist religious discourse which engages more voices and calls one to responsibility and richer listening. This demands a strong dedication to being inclusive that will allow individual and communal differences to be appreciated (Christ & Plaskow, 1989:12).

3.4 Characteristics of feminist spiritualities

Certain themes are recurring in the spirituality of feminists. There are certain characteristics that were identified by Nicola Slee (2002) in her contribution "The Holy Spirit and Spirituality in the Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology". There is not just one feminist spirituality, rather different traditions, movements, and forms. Slee notes it is better to speak of a spectrum. "At one end of the spectrum, one can identify a broad range of groups and movements within mainstream

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[38]Mary Daly's experience in the reception of her book "Christ and the Second Sex" (1968) functions as an example. Daly grew up Catholic and completed her education from Catholic faculties. This book documented the history of women that were marginalised in the catholic church and its theological teachings. Daly wrote the book from her perspective to facilitate transformation in the form of inclusion of women in teaching and ministry. "Although it was a tame, reformist work by her later standards, the Boston University leaders responded to the publication of this book by giving her a terminal one-year teaching contract. the students erupted in protest. After considerable struggle the Jesuits reversed this decision and granted Daly a promotion with tenure" (Ruether, 1998:215-216).

Christianity which are committed to celebrating past women's spiritual traditions, employing female imagery and symbolism in contemporary worship and prayer, and reshaping the understanding of what it means to follow Christ in the world in the light of women's experiences" (Slee, 2002: loc4128). Moving along the spectrum there are several groups at the margins of institutional church life. Beyond these movements that maintains dialogue between Christian faith and other religious and spiritual traditions there are feminist spiritual movements that "is dedicated to the celebration of female spiritual power in opposition to, or in protest against it, the repossession of the female in institutional, patriarchal religion" (Slee, 2002: loc 4167). Nicola Slee (2002: loc 4196) draws attention to five trends which are present in feminist spiritualities. First, "the strong emphasis on *desire*, *eros*, and *passion* in much contemporary feminist spirituality which may be seen as a reconceptualization of the Spirits work of inspiring, energising, and enlivening faith in ways which take seriously the human body, emotions and drives". The second characteristic mentioned by Slee is "an emphasis on *relationality*, *connectedness*, and *community* in feminist spiritualities which invites new ways of grasping the work of the Holy Spirit in forging bonds and creating *koinonia*". Thirdly there is a "search for right relation in communities as well as interpersonal relations". Slee notes how this is closely connected to the judgement and justice of feminist spiritualties and can take on different forms in different contexts. The fourth characteristic is seen in women's commitment to the liberation of the earth. There is a strong sense of connectedness. The fifth characteristic is "closely connected to the justice and life orientation of feminist spiritualties, there is also a stress on *holism*, *integration* and *inclusivity*". Kees Waaijman (2002:218-219) also notes certain characteristics that form feminist spiritualities and describes feminist spirituality as being marked by certain aspects. The first aspect is that feminist spirituality is always rooted in the experience of women. Waaijman emphasises specifically the experience of being disempowered and then re-empowered. The sharing of experiences is crucial as this raises feminist consciousness and is a foundation of mutual support. The second aspect is to honour bodylines with a special emphasis on reproduction and childbirth. These experiences have often been seen as subordinate and is now rather being celebrated. The third aspect is the relation between women being possessed by men and violent behaviour that is wreaked on the earth. Fourthly, rituals that invites

participation is vital. The last aspect Waaijman identifies is the commitment of the spirituality of feminists to the view that there is an intrinsic relationship between personal spiritual growth and the pursuit of social justice. Different scholars place more focus on certain characteristics, themes, or elements. The foundational characteristic that seems to be present and necessary for the spirituality of feminists is the experience of women.

Comprehensive works that illustrate how these characteristics weave through the works of feminist spiritualties can be seen in "Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion", edited by Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (1979). This volume includes different essays from a broad range of feminist scholars. Part one places the focus on the essential challenge and asks the question: does theology speak to women's experience. Contributing essays in these sections from scholars Valerie Saibing, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Daly prove to be insightful. The second part looks to the past and asks the question, does the past hold a future for women? Contributors on this section is Sheila Collins, Phyllis Trible, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Eleanor McLaughlin, Elaine Pagels and Merlin Stone with essays studying texts, asking questions of what became of God the mother and looking at women in early Christianity. The third part places the focus on reconstructing tradition. Contributors not yet mentioned that participate in this section is Neller Morton, Rita Groos, Naomi Janowits and Maggie Wenig, Judith Plaskow and Aviva Cantor. The characteristics previously mentioned feature in these essays in various ways and intensities. The fourth part centres on creating new traditions. Contributions from Naomi R Goldenberg, Carol P Christ, Penelope Washbourn, Starhawk, Zsuzsanna E. Budapest envision the future. In 1989 Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ co-edits "Weaving the visions: new patterns in Feminist Spirituality". This volume constitutes of four parts and in this volume, even more diversity can be seen. The characteristics feature even more clearly in this volume. The first theme is: our heritage is our power. Contributions from Pauls Gunn Allen, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Judith Plaskow, E. Ann Matter, Marija Gimbutas, Charlene Spretnak, Gloria Anzaldúla and Luisah Teish provide comprehensive essays on this theme. The second part 'naming the sacred' offers insightful contributions from Alice Walker, Susan Griffin, Nelle Morton, Christine Downing, Marcia Falk, Sallie McFague,

Rosemary Radford Ruether and selections from the Inclusive Language Lectionary. This part invites the reader to re-imagine the role of language and connectedness. The third part delves into the self-in-relation. Dolores S. Williams, Ellen M. Umansky, Mary Daly, Audre Lorde, Beverly Wildung Harrison, Karen McCarthy Brown, Rita Nakashima Brock, Naomi R. Goldenberg, and Catherine Keller shed new light with these essays. The last part of the volume 'transforming the world' invites contributors such as Dhyani Ywahoo, Karie Geneva Cannon, Carter Heyward, Susan Brooks, Carol P. Christ, Starhawk, Sharon Welch and Carol Lee Sanches to explore the unending possibilities of transformation.

The characteristics of feminist spiritualities can be a helpful tool in guiding one through different literature on feminist spiritualities and have been grouped together to provide 6 characteristics. Slee (2002) is used as the basis for this section and the work of Waaijman (2002), Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (1979); (1989) provide material for a fuller description of these characteristics. There are elements of the characteristics that are connected to one another and cannot strictly be separated. This holistic approach is essential to the understanding of feminist spiritualties as interconnectedness, holism and experience stands central.

3.4.1 Feminist spiritualities values bodies, emotions, and aspirations

Feminist spiritualities values bodies, desires, a person's passion, and aspirations and these are taken seriously. This is seen as the work of the Spirit that inspires a person or group, the work of the Spirit is seen as giving life and energy. Feminist spiritualties takes faith and bodies, emotions, experiences, and aspirations seriously. The emphasis on this world shows how the Spirit reconceptualises and inspires faith. This characteristic emphasises the strong connection between the personal and political which is paramount to the feminist movement (Slee, 2002: loc4202). Many contemporary understandings capture the dynamic, transformative quality of spirituality as lived experience linked to bodies, nature and our relationships with others and society (King, 2011:21).

Spirituality evolved vertically in the West, movement upward towards the divine and away from humanity was perceived as good which had the result that the focus on

bodies was not good. Transcending was embraced and this included the physical body. Dualistic thinking was also rooted in the theology of original sin rather than original blessing. There is a strong contradiction between spirit and matter (Martin, 1993:107). These attitudes had a negative impact on women as women were constantly identified with their capacity to give birth, with nature, earth, and matter and this was used to limit female participation and representation in religious institutions[39] (Martin, 1993:108). While researching the female stories in biblical narratives Exum (2016) noticed that women occupy the position at the border of the patriarchal social order. Women are often referred to as being seductive and the dangerous other[40]. Women are most often being blamed for the violence that they are a victim of. This is one of many ways patriarchy seeks to avoid in dealing with its violent legacy (Exum, 2016:154-155). Several church father's links being female with being sexual. Sexuality is linked with the physical body and that body is then linked with nature. This implied that women were not created in the image of God as this element of nature made her tainted and lacking. A woman is flesh only where God and men are pure spirit. Through female sexuality original sin was born. This required the son of God to die. "Women could be saved through motherhood or virginity, and preferably, as with Mary, both!" (Sjørup,1998:61). Women do not fit the mold of male, clerical and celibate that was once a feature of institutional spirituality. This ensued in the marginality of the spirituality of women. Gnostic areas offered gender equality to some degree and women's spirituality grew here. The Orthodox Christian movement that included a mystic, and monastic life, often also martyrdom, was an alternative for women to the dominant culture of the times. This provided an alternative to motherhood, marriage, and domesticity. In the late medieval period women's spirituality was moved to the edges of religious orders. There were unique patterns of prayer and mysticism that can be seen, a good example is the Beguine movement. Men placed their authority in the institutional, women placed authority in

[39]The dictionary of feminist theologies described 'body' as the "physical, material dimension of human existence" (Ross, 1996:32). Dualistic thinking resulted that the body was seen as inferior and bad. Women are mostly associated with the body because of biological processes. This distinction between body and soul, good and bad, pure, and sinful had negative results.
[40]Moyo writes from an African liberation theological perspective (2004:74) and notes how patriarchal metaphors for God resulted in women's bodies that are still seen as a source of evil. Men are seen as intellectual and made in God's image and women as secondary beings.

the supernatural (Lerner, 1993:211-213). Through history the relationship with this world, perceived as horizontal, and the otherworldly, perceived as moving vertically, has evolved, and changed. There was a limited and limiting view imposed on women. This placed women in a double bind. The double bind insists that women have a role that is given by God as is seen in biology. This role is linked with a women's biological nature. On the other hand, traditional theology is not able to value these biological and natural processes (Martin,1993:108). Menstruation demonstrates this point. Martin (1993:113) interviewed several women and had discussions with women from different religious traditions. These discussions made clear that patriarchal traditions disempower women in numerous ways. It is directly linked to the delegitimization of a women's experience and in the process, women can take on this identity. The double bind functions in many ways. Women are praised when they are "good" when they have not yet affirmed their authentic selves. They are deemed a bad wife and mother when they develop their authentic selves (Dreyer, 1999:373). The specific focus on bodies should not be confused with the minimization of the mind of women. As Isherwood & Stuart (1998:10) mention in their book "Introducing Body Theology", the experience of women is central in creating theology. This experience of women is seated in the body as well as the mind. Feminist spiritualities gives a voice and celebrates bodies. Experiences which have been seen as inferior such as childbirth are celebrated (Waaijman, 2002:218-219). Feminist spiritualties embrace the human body. Through the development of feminist consciousness, it was also the female body and abilities of the female body to create and sustain life that gave women leverage to argue for equality. The body is celebrated, the body is fought for. This can be seen in issues that are central to feminists and issues that are central in feminist spiritualities. Passion, desire, and beauty in all forms are celebrated. Dualisms are challenged and the body as part of the human in all facets is celebrated.

Lene Sjørup, a Danish priest, theologian and researcher writes in the preface of "Oneness, a theology of women's religious experiences" (1998:12) about her experience as a person being able to join in on theological discussion:

"I grew able to participate in many discussions about God, some of which I still find helpful and enjoy. But religious feelings and emotions were absent, tabooed, ridiculed, and so silence descended in that area"

Sjørup, interviewed women about their religious experiences, mainly showing the experiences of women in the Western World. The interviews were conducted in the 1980s and several interviewees spoke of religious experiences relating to the experience of giving birth (Sjørup,1998:65). Bodies are taken seriously and are celebrated. The abilities that bodies have are honored in feminist spiritualities. "Feminist theologies have emphasised that human experience and knowledge are rooted in the body" (Ross, 1996:32). Feminist theologies work with 'embodied thinking' where the context is taken seriously and movement towards practical results are essential. An "embodied morality" means to take emotions seriously. Bodily integrity is crucial as this enables women to have control over their own bodies (Ross, 1996:32). Women are still associated with nature in terms of their wombs and men with culture, power, and triumph. Socialization plays a crucial role in the effect that men are more distant from their bodies and nature as well as being more afraid of decay and death. These fears are projected onto the female body (Halkes: 1996:240). As these are the repercussions of patriarchy, Halkes (1996:240) ends her essay with these words: "Ultimately patriarchy is not something predestined but a historical phenomenon. It arose at some time; it can also disappear again. And it is now the time for that...."

3.4.2 Feminist spiritualities live relationally, connected and in community

There is a strong emphasis on relationality, connectedness, and community[41]. These elements enable us to see the deeper workings of the Spirit and forging deeper

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[41]When seeing the Christian community as integrated and using this as a starting point, can answer or response to the mystery of God (Lonsdale 2005:241,242). Lonsdale (2005:246) means what is necessary is discernment. The formation of discernment arises from the two poles, the Christian discipleship and commitment to the word and the realisation of the needs of the world. The church can practice discernment through contemplation by having an "active engagement, a paying attention,

bonds. Spirituality is the relational component of lived experience. Spirituality is also the connectedness between the self and the other, the creation and that which is sacred. This characteristic explores the interdependence and mutuality in feminist spirituality. The importance of community cannot be stressed enough. This community that is found in relationality leads to wholeness, fullness, and the flourishing of all life. Relationality also stresses inclusivity and not dualism (Slee, 2002: loc4212). Dualisms embrace difference. What is understood by others as problems is celebrated in and feminist theologies. Humans of all kinds are valued. Feminist theologians places an emphasis on what all humans have in common, mutuality and solidarity among all human beings is what they value (Baker-Fletcher, 1996:69). The Dictionary of Feminist Theologies describes community in a profound way. "For many Euro-American feminists, Christian and non-Christian, feminism is first experienced in small communities of women marked by mutual respect, solidarity, and caring. The personal value and political and spiritual power of such communities for the women who participate in them makes them potentially revolutionary sites of social transformation" (Purvis, 1996:50). Communities' functionality can be seen in the New Testament. "From the beginning, embodied communities have been central to the practice of Christianity, while the concept was, and is, complex, contested, and multivalent" (Purvis, 1996:51). There are a wide range of relationships between feminist Christians, their traditions, and the Christian institutions that they are part of. There is a commitment to inclusivity by all. Diversity is valued and is seen as a marker present in Christian feminist communities: "Christian feminist community is found in the embrace of spirituality and the

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which has both an active aspect, in the sense of being curious, speaking, asking questions, and also, and especially, a passive, receptive dimension, in the sense of being willing not to speak, allowing oneself to learn, to be schooled or shaped in a certain way". There are two ethical dimensions to the church's formation of Christian spirituality. Firstly, how the church orders its own internal life. The church needs to constantly retell the story, renew her being and pondering the story of her foundation. The church needs to be serious of discernment. The second ethical dimension has to do with the church participation in God's mission or then the church's relation to the stranger. It is important to always be aware of how the church is using power, both within the church community as well as with those outside the church community (Lonsdale 2005:248-251). Lonsdale (2005:252) means that everything about Christian spirituality is Trinitarian. Christian spirituality guides a person to reflect on their relationship with their creator who is busy transforming the world by sending the Word and the Spirit.

commitment to and struggle for justice for all creatures and for creation itself" (Purvis, 1996:51). The inclusive nature of feminist community is described by Purvis (1996:51) as: "The nature of Christian feminist communities pushes beyond any communal walls that might exist and toward all those who are excluded and oppressed by social and political structures, of whatever kinds". The nature of feminist spiritualities are explored by other scholars with a focus on the reciprocity that is present. "Reciprocity means giving back in kind and quality, mutually exchanging and being changed by another's data and resources and paying back what has been received from cooperative work, mutual dependence, action, and influence" (Eugene, 1996:16). Reciprocity enhances relationships as it deepens conversion and vulnerability to see from another's perspective (Eugene, 1996:16). Relationality and reciprocity are central components of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity that emphasises plurality, relation and unity in diversity enables one to move beyond binaries. In three there is difference, there is difference in the Trinity but there is no hierarchy. The persons are who they are in relation (Soskice, 2002). Trinitarian theology may clarify and provide insight into this trend of feminist spiritualties. In the Trinity there is a lot of relational activity such as creating, renewing, redeeming and this activity shows that God is never static but relational and dynamic. In traditional theology the Trinity is usually at least two male figures, God, and Jesus. This can be problematic in feminist theology. Trinitarian theology places the focus on relationality and the pattern of relationship (Johnson, 1992:192-194). "The most crucial symbol for God in the Christian Tradition is God as Trinity" (Grey 2001:114). The Trinity is at the heart of feminist theological thinking and understanding. It is the centre from where thoughts are formed.

> "…The perfection of Trinitarian love, and the dance of *perichoresis*, is reflected in the theological privilege of relation, communion, mutuality, reciprocity, and connection"
>
> (Grey, 2001:115)

Feminist Trinitarian thinking stresses a dynamic view where God is seen as movement and where God sees suffering, this is also at the heart of the Trinity. Grey (2001:115) argues that the strength of feminist Trinitarian thought lies in the lived

ethical expression as seen in the Trinity. Feminist ethical thinking is always connected to the realities of the lives of women. McIntosh (2005:177) explores Trinitarian perspectives on Christian spirituality. When studying experiences where the Trinitarian God is involved there seems to be a reversal of order and abundance. This abundance or generosity is rooted in Jesus Christ, in relation with the Trinity. When studying the Trinity, one is constantly reminded of the mystery. This mystery includes the sharing of life in the Trinity *perichoresis*. This sharing of life between the Trinity and in an intimate way is what can also be called "spirituality" (McIntosh 2005:178). McIntosh makes an important point "I do not mean by this that all Christian spirituality is inevitably self-consciously trinitarian, nor do I mean that all Christian spirituality must be fully analysable into Trinitarian terms. The Trinitarian rhythm of self-sharing abundance is far more deeply and graciously operative within Christian spirituality than can always be discerned (McIntosh, 2005:179). McIntosh (2005:180) discerns three features that are present together in spirituality and gives life to one another. These features are self-transcendence, love for others and freedom of agency. Trinitarian belief is a belief in God that invites us to join in the mystery, to journey with the Trinity (McIntosh 2005:180). Believing in and praying to the Trinity provides a person with hope. Hope that a society can be different. Hope that connections and relations can be treated with awe. Hope that there can be a world where indifference and apartness will confront the limitations that are present because of structures and traditions (Grey, 2001:116). Relationality as originating in the Trinity forms the basis for the relationship between God and humans. Spirituality can be seen as a relational process between humans and the Divine. Kees Waaijman (2002:426) describes it as a bipolar whole in which the divine and human realities take shape reciprocally. Spirituality, when understood this way, can then be studied as a process of transformation. There is a process of taking shape or form between the divine and human. God is relational, life affirming and present (Grey, 2001:55). "What this shows is the linking of deep personal faith and community commitment – in a way that can almost be described as mystical". God acts through our passion for just relation (Grey, 2001:56).

There are two contexts in which women explore the meaning and create theory from experiences of relationality. The first context is sacred symbol systems and

traditional sacred stories. Feminist theology and feminist philosophy is critical about the suppression of the female in the deity and religious history. There is a case that the suppression of women in society is supported and enhanced by religions that do not contain women's experiences from the creation of sacred stories, symbols, and traditions. Symbols including God as father should be studied critically and deconstructed as to provide freedom. A female presence within sacred stories should be sought, retrieved, and remembered. Feminist spirituality that develops in this context chooses to remember different sacred stories. Feminist spiritualities agree that the formulation of a new awareness of the ultimate will come forth out of the discovery and the recovery of women experiences (Zaponne, 2010:337). God, as seen through relationality shows a vision for abundant life for all. When symbols are being replaced by looking through the lens of feminist spiritualities the images of the patriarchal God that is lord and judge are being replaced by the image of God who has a unique ability of relating and showing compassion and mercy (Grey, 2001:52-53). The God of fullness of life becomes the God of the transformation of society as God is committed to transforming situations (Grey, 2001:53).

The second context is where feminist spiritualities place a direct focus on the dimensions of relationality. This is then used to explore the meaning and create theory. Strong criticism is conveyed regarding the suppression of female power. This suppression can be in the psyche and in the construction of the social order. Women examine the psychological and sociological effects that patriarchy has on the inner life of a person and observes and analyses the outer struggles of women to fully become themselves and take responsibility for creating new order. Reality is then reconstructed in a way that appreciates the sacredness of the female and natural world (Zaponne, 2010:337). Luz Beatriz Arellano speaks about her community: "speaking about the living experience of God in the new spirituality of Nicaraguan women means speaking of a faith incarnate in the radical process that the people of God are experiencing in Nicaragua". The women who are working in the community have an intensified sense of community and a commitment to the community. While women are in the struggle for liberation and experience this sense of community, the struggle for liberation should be for all people otherwise the struggle would not be complete (Arellano, 1989:135-140). In this community an ecumenical spirituality can

be observed. There is a struggle for the rights and dignity of women. Christian women discover this in their Bible study discussions. The discussions enabled women to affirm the values of the struggle for liberation (Arellano, 1989:140). Waaijman (2002:86) studies examples in the sphere of caring as is understood in biblical mercy as giving love (*chesed)* and compassion (*rachamim*). There is love that gives with the focus on the other. It is spontaneous and not constricted to certain relationships. This charitable action of abundance finds completeness in how it is received. (Waaijman, 2002:86-87). There is compassion. This is where a tenderheartedness is to be moved by another. "Tenderheartedness seeks to concretize itself in tender expressions: reconciliation, care, caresses. (2002:87). Tenderness is practical as it is a person that is being moved by another. A person's senses are used as what you see triggers what is inside of you. "The rise of tenderness is sustained by the basic feeling that the other belongs to the human community" (Waaijman, 2002:88). There is a definite connection to vulnerability which needs to be taken seriously. The world reacts to everyone, and it depends a lot on who you are and where you are positioned. We are not all equally vulnerable (Scheman, 2012:473).

3.4.3 Feminist spiritualities focus on the right relation in all relationships

In feminist spiritualities there is a search for the right relation in communities as well as interpersonal relations[42]. This is connected to judgement and justice[43]. This takes on different forms in different settings and cultures. The commitment to judgement and justice is seen in politics as well as the revaluation of structures, it also includes social structures (Slee, 2002: loc 4240). Feminist spiritualities "is committed to the

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[42] According to the dictionary of feminist theologies compassion means to "feel with another". This concept is critical for Christian feminists. Christian theology and ethics support "right relations in all human interactions" (Purvis, 1996:51). Mutual feelings are forces of transformation and sees that justice will prevail. Compassion for feminists is a source of energy that always constitutes movement. Feminists consider God as compassionate (Purvis, 1996:52).

[43] "Feminist theologians define justice broadly: right relationship, with self, others, creation, God. Discussions of power, oppression, liberation, abuse, agency, interdependency, and other dimensions of life are often understood to be implicit discussions of justice" (Lebacqz, 1996:158). Power and oppression are crucial elements of justice for feminists. Justice is "power-in-relation". Feminist theologians sees liberation and justice as connected elements. Justice and to care are also in connection. Narratives are often used to become aware of injustices. This is an element often present in feminist theologies (Lebacqz, 1996:159).

view that there is an intrinsic relationship between personal spiritual growth and the pursuit of social justice" (Waaijman, 2002:218-219). Katie G. Cannon (1989: viii) writes in the foreword of "With passion and compassion: third world women doing theology": "…authentic Christianity can never be divorced from practical life. A God-pleasing faith must take into account the political economy and social realities in order for believers to recognise evil and bring about change. Christians have the responsibility to make the church community live according to the Gospel truth". People are "agents-in-relation" (O'Gorman 2001:352). People are related to their internal as well as their external context. Spirituality is the means by which people can engage in their relationships. Spirituality is the way through which self-transcendence takes place and the internal and external sphere of existence meets (O'Gorman 2001:353). The ultimate spiritual issues become issues of active human existence such as issues of injustice (O'Gorman 2001:357). The commitment to justice and just relations and the redemption of political and structural relationships is taken seriously. Spirituality is therefore not confined to interpersonal relations, but it is broad and extends to a larger web of social structures. These larger structures and relations lie under personal relations and therefore needs to be addressed (Nicola Slee, 2002, Loc 4243). Feminist consciousness and the recovery of traditions that were hidden and even lost evokes mixed reactions from both women and men. The recovery or discovery can bring joy and empowerment. The other reaction is the reality of suppression and the realisations of deep marginalisation which creates pain and a sense of alienation (Nicola Slee, no date, loc 4110) "Women form the largest of the "groups that did not fit", in Philip Sheldrake's term, into the dominant forms of institutional spirituality which were dictated by a male, clerical and celibate elite, and controlled by the priorities of orthodoxy, conformity to the center, and the repression of pluralism" (Nicola Slee, 2002, loc 4050). One of the many ingredients that make up an integral spirituality is the struggle for justice and peace in the world (King, 2011:29). The theology of Carter Heyward is founded in feminist liberation perspective. Heyward's theology always explores the different facets of abusive power. This is understood as sin with redemption seen as mutual relations. Heyward's approach is to denounce the sin, often seen in the wrong relation. This wrong relation can be seen in the use of power over others when mutuality and reciprocity are denied and when people live in disconnect from each other and

connections are ignored. Patriarchy, understood as the main systemic and ideological manifestation of sin usually brings together these wrong relations. It uses power in an abusive manner, is not focused on the physical wellbeing of all people. Psychological and spiritual wellbeing is not a primary focus as the world is perceived as "a series of disconnecting splits". Dualism functions and creates barriers that make connection difficult (Ruether, 1998:224-225). A theology of mutual relation reshapes the model of God and God in relation to us. God is not seen as separate or outside of this world, not in relation with us. "Rather, God is the ground or matrix of mutual relation. there can be no split between loving God and loving ourselves or between loving God and loving our neighbour…." (Ruether, 1998:227).

Rosemary Edet from Nigeria and Bette Ekeya from Kenya reflect on contemporary Africa, now almost all independent countries, which were once traditional, colonial, and neocolonial. "Women share the bitter fruits of the exploitation of Africa by outsiders, but women's disabilities also have authentic roots in Africa's indigenous structures" (Edet & Ekeya, 1989:5). Colonial rule added to this burden of women. The social structures have not changed much, and cultural provisions ensure that change is difficult. There is a common experience across main religions in Africa that are influencing and validating each other's concepts, and this is mostly in ways that do not favour the female (Edet & Ekeya, 1989:5). Spiritual practices are part of a person or groups' everyday lives, and it asks the question of how spirituality relates to ethical behaviours or a life of transformation. The former archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, suggests that spirituality relates to every area of human experience and action, including "the public and social world, and that it will necessarily reflect on moral issues" (Sheldrake, 2014:60). Spirituality is directly concerned with how a person or group lives their lives in different manners and in different contexts. Ethics is concerned with people's disposition of character. Spirituality as well as ethics places a deep focus on the quality of our basic humanity (Sheldrake, 2014:60).

Carter Heyward (1989:293) opens the chapter on "Sexuality, Love and Justice" with this statement: "If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don't

see. I read and understand this to be our common vocation". The experience of living undergirds all the characteristics and cannot be separated from the characteristics. One common factor present in all human lives is the experience of being human. This can encapsulate the experience of other creatures, love, and the experience of God in the world. Nothing in the world is ultimately fixed, fluidity is rather the reality. The fundamental thing that defines humans is that humans are lovers (Heyward, 1989:293). The meaning of love and what it means to love may differ in different contexts. Heyward (1989:294) remarks that it will be unhelpful to have a set of commandments stating what love is. A more truthful and embodied approach is suggested in the invitation to tell our stories. To listen to the stories of ourselves and others and in this process begin to experience our experiences. "We must begin to see that love is justice" we act our way into feeling (Heyward, 1989:295).

Love is understood to be passionate. Love is understood to be invested in another and a deep realisation of the relation between people, nature, God. Love lived is seen in a person of passion. It is visible in the love for humanity. Love is seen and lived when one enters earnestly and purposely into human experience (Heyward, 1989:296).

> "Our passion as lovers is what fuels both our rage at injustice – including that which is done to us – and our compassion, or our passion, which is on behalf of/in empathy with those who violate us and hurt us and would even destroy us. Rage and compassion, far from being mutually exclusive belong together"
>
> (Heyward, 1989:196)

It is necessary to note that regardless of good intentions, in one way or another "our feet will always be placed squarely on someone's neck". This can be without even realising that this is the case. As Heyward states (1989:297), to say that a person is a lesbian is to make a statement that is personal and at the same time political (Heyward, 1989:297-298). "Loving is always a revolutionary act" (Heyward, 1989:300). Lay spirituality finds place in community. This community consists of mutual personal relations. Although Waaijman places feminist spiritualities as liberation spirituality there are certain elements of lay spirituality that seem to

overlap. Mercy is seen when these relationships are threatened by injustice or social isolation (Waaijman, 2002:19). Injustice or social isolation can be seen in the examples of sexual assault, the death of a partner, droughts and floods, robbery, there are numerous examples. In these situations, mercy is acted out practically. "Mercy is a spontaneous act of kindness motivated by the distress of the other. It sits down next to the other and offers concrete help" (Waaijman, 2002:86).

3.4.4 Feminist spiritualities are focused on liberating the earth

The fourth characteristic is the importance of the liberation of the earth as women show how the neglect of the earth and women goes hand in hand. Liberation of women automatically includes liberation of the earth[44]. A feminist spirituality is strongly committed to a new relation to the earth (Slee, 2002: loc 4243). There is an intrinsic connection between men's possession of women and violence that is inflicted on the environment (Waaijman, 2002:218-219).

> "All creation is groaning, pressing toward a peace and well-being
> that continually elude us with every new outbreak of political,
> personal, and natural disaster. In the Christian community
> women and men experience that they are inspired and
> galvanised by God's Spirit to be wise and bold of speech and
> courageous in action, engaging the many tasks involved in
> renewing, healing, and liberating the world from the grip of sin
> and suffering. Toward this end they find their path along the way
> of Jesus, empowered by the narrative memory of his ways, his
> imaginative stories of God, his drinking the cup of pain and
> death, and the ringing hope and life that flow from this to their
> own life praxis. In the solidarity of community, they experience
> at the same time that their own lives and whole earth are gifts,
> at once tenacious and fragile, freely given from an unspeakably

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[44] "The new science shows us that we are related very closely not only to other creatures, but also to all things" (Velasquez:1996:332). This holistic, interrelated world view affects how a person or group acts.

rich source of life that they mirror in their own creative generativity"

(Johnson, 1992:213)

Halkes (1996:138-140) reflects: "my position is that as long as patriarchy endures an ecology that leads to real change is impossible". Halkes makes this statement whilst understanding patriarchy as the organisation of a society in the form of a pyramid. In this pyramid those with power is at the top and there is a chain of command coming down. This requires obedience. Domination is the main thought process where minds, mostly associated with men, is seen as superior to body, mostly associated with women. Patriarchy understood in this way will ensure progress at the expense of marginal figures including nature. Women are being liberated through the feminist movement and can discover who they are in becoming aware of their own roots and experiences. This enabled women to see what the effect on other marginal groups is and to affirm solidarity with them. In this process the interrelatedness of the whole creation is celebrated. Understanding this interrelatedness, environmental problems are understood as societal problems. The road forward is to find strategies that will show this interrelatedness for a spirituality of compassion to reach all groups, all marginal figures including nature (Halkes, 1996:139,140).

Multiplicity, diversity, and interdependence[45] is crucial for the spirituality of feminists. Interdependence has several components and is viewed and understood differently between feminists. There are several shared principles that sketch a collective foundation that forms part of this worldview. Firstly, the principle that every living being needs to be recognised and acknowledged. There is no superiority and inferiority. The second principle is that all humans have individual identities that should be developed. This process of developing as an individual happens through our relationships with others, with God or the divine and with the natural world.

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[45]In 2018 Kim-Cragg published "Interdependence: A Postcolonial Practical Theology". Musa Dube writes in the foreword (2018: xi) "The book weaves a postcolonial feminist discourse of practical theology that calls into being modes of community building that are knitted by the values of interdependence". Interdependence is crucial as is embraces community and this enables power imbalances to be challenged. Interdependence is a "communal way of life" (Kim-Cragg, 2018:33).

Interdependence understood and built from this understanding results in us perceiving ourselves as essentially related to every other living being (Zaponne, 2010:343). Awareness of this interconnectedness calls for a radical revisioning of the relation between God and nature. Wholeness and flourishing with freedom for all can happen when God is seen and envisioned as part of the natural life process. Interdependence is the common thread that is present in the spirituality of feminists (Zaponne, 2010:344).

This interdependence as is seen in feminist theology includes seeing sacred symbols anew and reinterpreting religious stories with a feminist consciousness. Language and symbols are constantly being made new, understood differently, and embraced holistically in feminist spiritualities. Language and symbols of the earth that are used by feminist theologies are grounded in human life and nature being sacred. In this process a consciousness is raised beyond patriarchy. These spiritualties of feminists are creating life in a new way and imagining relationships amongst God, humans, and earth anew. This is an ongoing process in learning how to interpret the meaning of experiences as these are not static (Zaponne, 2010:338). Feminist spiritualities enable growth in the spiritual path of a person in dialogue with other spiritual journeys that move towards wholeness and is grounded in interdependence. Feminist spiritualities are constantly aware of interrelatedness and the hope for wholeness (Zaponne, 2010:346). Passion and compassion can only be found in relation, and this is true across barriers that divide such as race, class, and ethnic divisions. Mutual relations are a force that sustains the wellbeing of the earth (Zaponne, 2010:347).

Ecofeminism is an important expression of this characteristic of feminist spiritualities. Ecofeminism is built on ecology and feminism. "Ecofeminism is a recent word created by women as a reaction against destruction of life carried out by patriarchal systems" (Gebara, 1996:76). There are many works available on ecofeminism. Ecofeminism can further be described as "a philosophy, theology and wisdom" that is at work in life that is understood interdependently (Gebara, 1996:76). Ecofeminism recognises and strongly condemns the society where subtle domination of women is still present (Gebara, 1996:77). "Multiplicity and unity are present in all processes of

life. There is no unity without diversity, and no diversity without unity as a force of convergence that links everything" (Gebara, 1996:78). Monotheistic religions grounded in patriarchy have had negative structural results (Gebara, 1996:77). Patriarchy as a social system result in slavery, creating hierarchy, sexism and treating animals and land as property. Rosemary Radford Ruether (1998:224) believes that this is a time where there needs to be chosen to learn new ways to recapture mutuality on a conscious level. If this does not happen, we will destroy ourselves and life forms of the earth,

3.4.5 Feminist spiritualities focus on inclusivity, a holistic view and integration

The fifth trend is intricately connected to the justice and life orientation of feminist spiritualities. There is a stress on holism, integration, and inclusivity. The spirit is at work in the world to push human efforts towards truth and justice. Feminist's aim to eliminate divisions such as spirit-body, human-nonhuman creation, transcendence, and immanence, rational and intuitive, intelligence and emotion. Dualism is always challenged. Feminist spiritualities challenges the dualism between "super-nature and nature, mind and body, spirituality and sexuality" and it rather affirms that all things are interdependent (Slee, 2002: loc 4250); (Waaijman, 2002:218-219). There is an emphasis on rituals that asks participation, are aesthetic and affirm life. As feminist spiritualities views the world holistically these rituals should not only be verbal and hierarchical (Waaijman, 2002:218-219). Rituals are those patterns that are agreed upon often entailing emotional responses and feelings. Rituals can hold values and intentions of a specific community. Symbolic acts make what is not seen visible. Women's rituals often have similar characteristics. Firstly, emotions and intellect are connected. Secondly, images of the body and nature are used. The third characteristic is seen in the way rituals are conducted. This is always circular; hierarchy and leadership are not prominent. Women's rituals play a very important role as it legitimises the existence of alternate realities to the patriarchal reality that is the reality for most women (Clark, 1996:251).

Interdependence as a key element in feminist spiritualities is proposed as counter to the destructiveness of a dualistic worldview (Zaponne, 2010:342). Rosemary Ruether analysed the implications of dualistic philosophy for women. There are

many dualisms that are present that are grounded in the distinction between two separate levels. The levels of supernatural or a higher level and of a natural or lower level. These levels enforce a gulf between God and humans. This space between levels enforced hierarchy and domination. In dualisms we see that images of maleness are real and powerful and good and higher where female images the inferior, lower, less good reality (Zaponne, 2010:342). The God of the west is primarily described in masculine terms. Feminists operate using a different paradigm where difference is seen as a necessity and multiplicity is celebrated (Hampson, 1990:148-153). When the world is lived in this way and perceived in this way it becomes part of the social fibre and construction of reality[46]. This will then affect the maintenance of these structures (Zaponne, 2010:342). With dualisms structured as social reality it proposes philosophical and theological justification for economic, religious, and political pursuits that treat people in different ways. This treatment continually chooses the side of power in the dualism (Zaponne, 2010:343). Feminist spiritualties rejects dualisms and proposes that women's experience provides better way for perceiving connectedness between dimensions of reality (Zaponne, 2010:343). Inclusivity and relatedness as one of the characteristics of feminist spiritualities results in a life that is lived in this understanding. The reality that one strives towards is the reality that one practices daily and that guides one's life with the goal of the reality being realised - when lives are lived daily within relationships that value, and are valued, by every form and every kind of person. Every dualism that devalues the natural and justifies the brokenness of those who are not socially superior is rejected. Interrelatedness as a consciousness can only result in promotion of fullness and flourishing of all life on earth. When one group on earth,

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[46]Lived spirituality, analogous to morality, is concerned with the "practice of transformative, affective, practical and holistic disciplines that seeks to connect the persons with reality's deepest meaning". Morality differs from lived spirituality because lived spirituality is concerned with personal transformation and holistic integration which morality is not (Spohn 1997:111). Reflective spirituality, analogous to ethics, is concerned with experience as experience itself. Ethics will reflect on theology, history, context, art, anthropology, and hermeneutics and analyse this lived experience (Spohn 1997:112). A relationship between a lived and reflective spirituality is necessary, when lived spirituality is cut off from tradition and communities that provide categories of theology and ethics, these spiritual practices can become self-obsessed good feelings (Spohn 1997:113).

and earth itself is dying, this fullness and wholeness cannot be experienced (Zaponne, 2010:344).

Mary John Mananzan, from the Philippines, and Sui Ai Park from Korea, wrote an essay titled "Emerging spirituality of Asian women". In this essay spirituality describe various realities that have overlapping aspects. Christian theology and practice were based on the understanding that theology is applied to daily life, this can be in your personal life of prayer and ascetism. The emerging understanding is that the inner core of a person is made up of all the experiences and encounters that a person has in their life. This includes the motivations, inspirations, and the life commitment to live in a particular way. This is the shape in which the Holy Spirit has shaped into your life (Mananzan & Park, 1989: 77). Prophetic theologians today, specifically Latin American liberation theologians and feminist theologians are bold in their holistic liberation message. This message is found at the core of the Judeo-Christian religion. These theologians also point out that this message is misunderstood They argue that traditional church theology has built in dualisms that separates the spiritual from the bodily and material realms. These dualisms can also be found in the concerns of separating the other worldly from this world. This dualism divides men from women and is specifically attributed to patriarchy by feminist theologians (Mananzan & Park, 1989:78). The women's liberation movement challenged women and men to envision a new way of being in the world. Women can find freedom when they can think differently and act in ways that does not fit the past patterns. In these women will establish new kinds of relationships. This way of being resulted in feminist theory. Women searching for freedom and being enabled to construct this in a theoretical framework. This framework can shape thought, deeds, and relates to other fields in order for the liberation of all people (Zaponne, 2010:336). Mananzan and Park (1989:78) point out that the struggle of women is part of the historical struggle of the salvation of all humanity. It is seen and experienced holistically. The contribution that women make is unique as they have a unique spirituality that is formed through their lives in their way of living and the experiences that they have. The culture of patriarchy has negative effects as it is demeaning and ignores the spiritualities of women. The spirituality of feminist women is orientated towards sustaining life and love. This spirituality reached out for the liberation of all women

and all humanity and is rising all over the world. The liberation movement enabled women to live relationships differently. They did not need to relate to a powerless self. Women were able to experience themselves as agents of their own histories and not the subjects, not objects, in the social system. Women's behaviour started to change as they moved beyond the patterns of inferiority and superiority in relationships. Socially powerful women reached out to women who differed from them, "and, eventually, women's relationships with the God of their fathers started to change" (Zaponne, 2010:336). Out of lived experience in these relationships a theoretical response was created addressing how to live in relation to yourself, others, God, and the earth (Zaponne, 2010:336). Justice in relation is seen in feminist spiritualities. The women's movements in South America, Africa and Asia have seen a metaphor arising from Christian feminism. This metaphor is that God is seen as our passion for justice (Grey, 2001:45). God whose passion for justice arises from the concrete experience of struggle stand in relation with us. This metaphor and use of language enables movement. "The naming of God in a new and creative way leads to a revolution of God as compassionate with our suffering and suffering with us" (Grey, 2001:46). Hayward focuses on the relational feature of God in her theology. Here God is seen as the source of right and just relations because God is relating to all. "To speak of relating at all, means that this naming of God is rooted and embodied among people, among different types of relationships, among communities of women, men, and children" (Grey, 2001:49). God as relational is characterised by a thirst for justice. God is revealed through relational power. The process of redemption and transformation. God is also embodied within physical relationships. It carries the double strength of being rooted in lived experience of God in relation, a relationality corporately as well as individually understood, as well as issuing from the concreteness of the struggle for justice (Grey, 2001:50-52).

3.4.6 Feminist spiritualities are always grounded in experience

Kees Waaijman (2002:218) notes a trend that is present in most of the literature on feminist spiritualities. This characteristic is the sixth characteristic and is the departure point of women's experience, especially the experience of women's

disempowerment and empowerment. When women's experience is shared it functions as mutual support as well as raising consciousness of the situation. Sandra Schneiders (2003:167) indicates that one cannot separate experience and spirituality. She uses this as the first typical feature of spirituality. Spirituality is a personal lived reality of a person and group with both active and passive dimensions. The second feature of spirituality, according to Schneiders, is that it enables a person or group to experience being part of a specific project or being consciously involved in something specific that is not an accidental experience or a structured set of practices. Spirituality and this experience of being part of something is a long-term conscious and dynamic approach to life. Thirdly spirituality is holistic as it involves all aspects of life, mind, body, spirit, emotion and thought in an integrative manner. The fourth feature of spirituality is the occurrence of life integration that is consistently pursued by self-transcendence towards ultimate value. These broad features of spiritualities may enable one to group certain definitions together. Plaskow and Christ (1989) underline the importance of the role of women's experiences. Women claim and name their own experience and women's experience should be explored to see how it might transform traditional religion or lead to forming new traditions. Women's experience has broadened. Who are women and what is experience? The diversity should be explored. "The experience of being a woman is inseparable from being the kind of woman one is" (Christ & Plaskow: 1989:3). Women recognise and acknowledge that the activity of living, the way they create their own experiences is immensely influenced and conditioned by the patriarchal system (Zaponne, 2010:339). The articulation of the critique on tradition was the first task of feminist scholars in religion. There was also the need to move beyond criticism. A spirituality of feminists breaks open these experiences and deconstruct what it is that is expected and what are the real thoughts and emotions authentic to themselves. When women engage in this activity, they start to identify the "the myth of the eternal feminine". This myth strengthens those women who are passive and closer to nature than men. This myth enforces that women are emotional and unable to lead in the public domain. Deconstructing experiences enable women to name and engage in the meaning making of their own experiences (Zaponne, 2010:339). Feminist theologians also believe in the value of dialogue between present feminist consciousness and religious tradition (Zaponne, 2010:340). Women's experiences

cannot be generalised. Each experience of a women and each personal story contains reasons and an own feminist awareness. The reasons for feminist consciousness vary from individuals to communities. It is influenced by race, a person's educational experience, sexual orientation, and psychological makeup. The reasons differ especially because of the forms and extent of their personal suffering due to patriarchal religious symbols and histories. It is key that insights that differs from ours needs to be respected. Acknowledging different experiences creates the space for dialogue (Zaponne, 2010:341342). "Traditional sacred symbols and stories have been fashioned from men's, not women's, experience of living in the world" (Zaponne, 2010:339). Women's experiences were not valued in the past. For religion to affirm the truth and real value of women it is necessary that symbols and stories must change. Stories and symbols within religion need to incorporate women's experiences. Exum wants to give a different voice to reading texts, specifically biblical texts to offer alternative readings of women's stories. "My first step has been to claim that a crime has been committed. Proving it depends upon taking the woman's word for it and taking the woman's word for it is crucial for recovering women's experience in patriarchal literature" (Exum, 2016:162).

A feminist experience of being in the world is the redemptive activity of recognising (and controlling?) women's social oppressions. A feminist experience of being in the world reinterprets the traditional experiences associated with being female through feminist consciousness. These experiences include but are not limited to motherhood and nurturing relations, the ability to menstruate. Reinterpreting these experiences provides a source for transformation of religion and spirituality (Zaponne, 2010:339). It is commonly accepted by all feminists that women's experience holds authority. Different feminist theologians differ in the judgement regarding the use of experience (Zaponne, 2010:340).

In "Womanspirit Rising" women's experience is an important norm for feminist theology.

> "When we learn to claim the diversity of women's lives as an
> important resource and to appreciate the various strategies for

survival and resistance that come out of our particular histories,

the concept of women's experience takes on new richness and

meaning"

(Christ & Plaskow: 1989:4)

Women's experience cannot be heard from one voice: "in the rising chorus that speaks from many standpoints, pressing toward the creation of a society in which all can be heard"[47] (Christ & Plaskow, 1989:4). Experience enables women to get in touch with their own experience. Consciousness raising leads to a critique of culture and to the tasks of transforming or recreating it (1979:6,7). The inclusion of personal experience in feminist work is a way of addressing the critique of false universalism. A personal resource for our work also helps not talking in the third person, saves us from false generalisations[48] (Christ & Plaskow, 1989:5). Spirituality does form part of a person's identity. Identity is formed through internalisation and identification. Spirituality is an individual, personal, and communal phenomenon. Spirituality is focused on who we are whereas orthodoxy is focused on what we believe. The process of identity formation is an all-encompassing process of socialization in your community (Dreyer, 1999:362). Feminist spiritualities orients a person's life. Spirituality influences one's identity as it forms part hereof. There are three types of identity, attributed identity, subjective identity, and optative identity. Women's ideal cannot relate with their own self-perception as the socialization in the institutional structure does not allow them to create an independent and strong self-image (Dreyer, 1999:370).

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[47]Speaking from a South African context, Nadar (2004:354) reflects on women's voices and the church "If we want to listen to women's voices and see their visions of being church, then we need to listen to *all* the women's voices and see *all* the women's visions who belong to all the churches - and not simply those churches which happen to belong to a particular conciliar body".

[48] The identification of feminists as persons that are weaved into a web of relationships is interconnectedness. "Interdependency encompasses and requires both autonomy and relationality" (Griffin, 1996:154-155). Global and interpersonal interdependence is grounded in the experience of women. These experiences differ among classes, races, and religions. Feminist interdependence cannot be seen separately from ecology. Interdependence always values the experience of the individual. Individuality does not mean isolation (Griffin, 1996:155).

Spohn (1997:114) states that "perception, motivation, and identity are three regions of moral experience where the concerns and practices of spirituality are supplementing, if not supplanting, formal ethical approaches". Perception refers to that which we value because we pay attention to it and also the way in which we pay attention. We can only make choices because we have noticed something, what we notice shape our thoughts and heart. Attentiveness may be derived from spirituality as well as morality and ethics (Spohn 1997:115). Motivation refers to our virtues and vices. There is a connection between vision and virtue (Spohn 1997:117). Identity is important for both spirituality and ethics. Both spirituality and ethics understand that a person's actions are a result of the identity of a person. A person's habits, what a person is committed to, and a person's emotions form a person's identity. Spirituality has a transformative effect on the questions of a person's identity (Spohn 1997:119). The person is viewed holistically. Spohn (2011:270) makes the statement "I take Christian spirituality[49] to be the practical, affective, and transformative dimension to authentic Christian faith."

Feminist spiritualities values and uses women's experiences in many ways to form new symbols and stories that interpret the meaning of the relationships presently. Women's experiences are also used to sketch and envision future patterns of relationality, whilst balancing individual experience as well as generalised experiences. Each woman, unique, contributes to the creation of feminist spiritualties (Zaponne, 2010:341). This meaningful diversity in feminist spiritualties calls us to listen deeply. It calls us to be committed to being inclusive and creates a space for individual and communal differences to emerge (Christ & Plaskow, 1989:12).

3.5 Conclusion

In Chapter 3 the history of the feminist movement with specific focus on feminist spiritualities was introduced. The specific focus of this chapter is the characteristics of feminist spiritualities. These characteristics identified and explored functions on a

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[49]Young (2005:156) studies Christian Spirituality in different context. Young makes the following statement: "Whether the context is Western or non-Western, literature is a useful resource for revealing the multi-faceted nature of Christian Spirituality".

different level in the next Chapter. In Chapter 4 the characteristics of feminist spiritualities will be used as guideposts in the works and lives of different scholars in different contexts.

CHAPTER 4

MAPPING FEMINIST SPIRITUALITIES: FOUR WOMEN THEOLOGIANS

Navigating the landscape as a feminist theologian the world is viewed and understood in a certain way. These characteristics of feminist spiritualities, as described in the previous chapter, become markers or guideposts[50] as one navigates the terrain. The world as experienced by women, making sense, and meaning of what is happening around them is a form of hidden knowledge. By using these characteristics of feminist spiritualities as guideposts remapping certain terrains, not always in conversation with one another, can be remapped. Studying feminist theologians while using the characteristics as guideposts, this chapter aims to see if the same vision is shared and connected by feminist spiritualities enabling women to navigate a previously unknown terrain. A detailed inquiry will be done on specific theologians with a focus on their understanding of feminist spiritualities. The characteristics that are present in feminist spiritualties or in the spiritualities of feminists can be a helpful guide in the terrain regarding gender equity[51]. Scholars that identify as Christian, feminist and have a focus on religion and spirituality were identified. There are numerous theologians to choose from and preference was given to scholars from the global South. A detailed enquiry will be done on these theological scholars while looking at their life as theologians in terms of their academic contributions as well as their understanding of their role as feminist theologians in their daily lives.

The characteristics of feminist spiritualities that were identified in Chapter Three will be used as guideposts in the enquiry into these scholars. The scholars that will be studied are Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Kwok Pui-Lan and Susan

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[50] Mapping as a method enables the researcher to function as a cartographer. Serene Jones (2002:19) use the phrase markers, in this chapter guideposts will be used to enable remapping of the field. Mapping as a method does not mean to reconstruct theological fields but to look in a new way as the terrain is marked off in a certain way.

[51] See the discussion on the difference between equity and equality and the preference for the term equity in Chapter 5.

(Sue) Rakoczy. Using the characteristics of feminist spiritualities as seen in the work and lives of each theologian as guideposts could assist in the conversation between feminist spiritualties and the targets of SDG 5 in the next chapter.

4.1 Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz was born in Cuba in 1943. Isasi-Diaz moved to America with her family at 18 years old, fleeing the regime of Castro and became a political refugee (Delgado, n.d.:1 & Ruether, 1998:234). Isasi-Diaz is described in her memoriam from Iona College in New York as "a theologian and ethicist who advocated for and with the poor and vulnerable whenever she encountered them" (Delgado, n.d.:1). This awareness and approach in her life stems from her early years. Being raised in Cuba, Isasi-Diaz witnessed poverty. During her years in Cuba her parents inspired an intense consciousness in her of the poor and those who are oppressed. It was during these years with a specific Catholic religious upbringing that empathy was instilled in her. A deep empathy grew for the poor and was cultivated by her mother in particular. Isasi-Diaz's mother imprinted on her the willpower of never giving up on the struggle, the *la lucha* (Delgado, n.d.:1). Before starting her studies, Isasi-Diaz was a missionary for 3 years in Lima, Peru. This experience became a critical moment and key in understanding her commitment of a liberation perspective on behalf of those who are poor. These years had a profound effect on her, as she explains: "it was there that the poor taught me the gospel message of justice. It was there that I learned to respect and admire religious understandings and practices of the poor and the oppressed and the importance of their everyday struggles, of *lo cotodiano*" (Delgado, n.d.:1 & Ruether, 1998:234).

4.1.1 "Born a feminist"

The Women's Ordination Movement in 1975 began to gain momentum. It was during this time that Isasi-Diaz "became deeply aware of sexism in the church" (Ruether, 1998:234). It was at the Women's Ordination Conference in Rochester that Isasi-Diaz was "born a feminist". This conference gave her a deeper awareness of "the intersections of sexism, racism, and ethnic prejudice, classism and economic oppression – this interconnection of oppression…" (Delgado, n.d.:2). This

consciousness of the intersections and interconnectedness of oppression became a guide in the following years for Isasi-Diaz (Delgado, n.d.:2). Isasi-Diaz completed her masters and doctoral studies in theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York. In this phase of her life, she became more conscious of anti-Hispanic ethnic prejudice. Isasi-Diaz began to formulate the *mujerista* perspective on theology whereafter she published the book, "Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church" (Ruether, 1998:235). The lived experience of women and their life stories are always a key component in the work of Isasi-Diaz.

The methodology that she used was doing theology in the community. She would gather Hispanic women on retreats. At these events the women would reflect on their daily lives and what they experience as Hispanic women. They would share experiences and reflections on survival and faith. She used the same methodology in the process of writing her second book. This methodology of retreats and listening to the stories and experiences of women created the interconnected opportunity for "storytelling, analysing, liturgising, and strategy" (Ruether, 1998:235). When stories can be told by women of their own experiences as women, they gain their own voices. These events facilitated the space and gave the opportunity for women to articulate what they experienced. This articulation of their experiences was not always possible in the societies and communities these women lived in. When these stories and experiences are analysed, they serve as a source of reflection. Issues of oppression can be identified more clearly and become a resource for resistance and functions to liberate[52]. "Liturgising puts this resistance and hope in a context of celebratory self-expression in a way that allows Hispanic women to claim their experience in worship" (Ruether, 1998:235).

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[52] Feminist theologies firstly focused on uncovering and understanding the injustices women are exposed to in order to reject oppression. Secondly women saw that women are unable to express their needs, thoughts, and their feelings effectively when they are oppressed (Isasi-Diaz, 1996:159). Exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and systemic violence are forms of oppression that women are exposed to (Isasi-Diaz, 1996:160,161).

4.1.2 We have a name, we have a voice: *Mujeristas*

"To be able to name oneself is one of the most powerful acts any human person can do" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:410). Explaining this further, Isasi Diaz (1989:410) writes: "A name is not just a word by which one is identified. A name also provides the conceptual framework, the mental constructs that are used in thinking, understanding, and relating to a person." Isasi-Diaz (1989:410) further notes how the majority of Hispanic women in the USA struggle against ethnic prejudice, sexism and classism and struggle to find a name. Names that are used to describe Hispanic women are *Cubanas*, *Chicanas*, *Feministas Hispanas* and others. *Feministas Hispanas* as a term have been isolating for many reasons. This name marginalizes the group from the Anglo feminist community because of racial and ethnic prejudice. This term also marginalizes the group from the Hispanic community because of the feminist preoccupation of Anglo women. "Yet Hispanic women widely agree with an analysis of sexism as an evil within our communities, an evil that plays into the hands of the dominant forces of society that helps to repress and exploit us in such a way that we constitute the largest number of those at the lowest economic stratum" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:410). The search for a name as Hispanic women continued, the search "...for a name that will call us together, that will help us to understand our oppression, that will identify the specificity of our struggle without separating us from our own communities" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:410). Part of this search is also a turn to music that forms a crucial part of Hispanic culture. It is in love songs and protest songs that Hispanic women are called *mujer*, meaning woman (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:410). In a song, by Rosa Marta, Isasi-Diaz (1989:411) illustrates how the song elaborates on a *mujerista* as a woman who struggles to liberate herself. This is a woman who is sanctified by God, she is the one who proclaims hope for her people. *Mujerista* is faithful in the struggle to realize justice, she helps peace to flourish. *Mujerista* is the one who always chooses the cause of God and lives the law of love. In the *Mujerista* it is seen how God revindicates the divine image and likeness of women. The M*ujerista* is called to conceive a strong people, comprised of all people. "*Mujeristas* are anointed by God as servants, prophets, and witnesses of redemption. *Mujeristas* will echo God's reconciling love; their song will be a two-edged sword, and they will proclaim the gospel of liberation" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:411).

In naming oneself and a group *Mujerista* was in itself liberating. The name further reaches to their theological enterprise. Hispanic women's liberation theology was renamed as *Mujerista* theology (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:411). *Mujerista* theology can be a voice of *Mujeristas*, as Christianity is an innate facet of the Hispanic culture. *Mujerista* theology looks through a liberative lens and gives words and deeper meaning to the religious understandings of Hispanic women (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:411). "For Isasi-Diaz *Mujerista* theology is first of all the liberatory praxis of Hispanic women oppressed by ethnic prejudice, sexism, and poverty in the United States. Its dimension of theoretical reflection is never separated from praxis but is an integral part of praxis" (Ruether, 1998:235). *Mujerista* theology is communal in itself and is practiced by the community of Hispanic women. This community engages in liberation praxis. Theologically educated professionals can also be enablers of *Mujerista* theology even though this is not where *Mujerista* theology is primarily practiced (Ruether, 1998:235). "...The *Mujerista* position that the real theologian is the community and not exclusively those of us with academic training" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:411). Isasi-Diaz validates this by affirming the *Mujerista* position that is epistemologically privileged as the persons who are oppressed, and liberation theologies is about doing theology directly means that it cannot be done without a community. One of the most pervasive themes of *Mujerista* theology is the "preferential option for the poor and oppressed... because they can see what the rich and privileged cannot" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:412). *Mujerista* theology, like other liberation theologies, indebted to the theological work of Gustavo Gutierrez. "Theological reflection cannot be separated from *theological* action in the doing of theology" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:412). "Because *Mujerista* theology is a praxis, it is, therefore, the community as a whole that engages in the theological enterprise" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:412). "*Mujerista* theology brings together elements of feminist theology, Latin American liberation theology, and cultural theology, three perspectives that intertwine to form a whole." These three different perspectives engage critically with one another and pose different challenges. This enables new elements to emerge and a new reality to be realized (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:411). *Mujeristas* see the primary role of the bible as a lens to interpret reality. "This biblical influence mainly yields the ethical model of relationality and responsibility that is/can be/should be operative in the struggle for liberation" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:413).

4.1.3 Relational community

Isasi-Diaz distinguishes between equality and liberation in the application of *Mujerista* theology. Equality involves the oppressed taking part in existing structures where liberation changes oppressive societal structures in a fundamental way. Isasi-Diaz stresses that equality for all is not possible within the structures of society as they are now (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:145). Power, as understood by *Mujeristas* is the ability of enabling all persons to become the most that they can be. This should not be understood in terms of individuals as this is not culturally correct. *Mujeristas*, as part of the Hispanic culture, does not separate this understanding of power and community as persons can only fully become who they are in relation to the community (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:416). "The centrality of women's experience to the theological enterprises of women's liberation is nowhere more evident than in dealing with justice and social change" (Isasi-Diaz, 1996:159). Isasi-Diaz further states that "Our understanding of power demands that we work incessantly to create the political, economic, and social conditions needed for the self-realization of all persons". The creativity of all persons should be harnessed to fully comprehend this power and in order to contribute in an efficient manner to the common good" (Isasi-Diaz, 1989:146). Radical social change is possible when oppression is analysed in many forms. Justice for feminists means to "establish justice in concrete relationships, situations, and places" (Isasi-Diaz, 1996:159). Justice is a "theological-ethical praxis-reflective action geared to radical change at both the personal and the societal level" (Isasi-Diaz, 1996:159). The personal and societal levels is never understood separately by feminists.

Mujerista theology, based on lived experiences of women, can be seen practically in the life of Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. Isasi-Diaz lived collaboratively. She was extremely aware of giving a voice to the voiceless. In the women she mentored she kept instilling an urgency and a passion for justice. She encouraged her students to be well informed and ready to react when needed. (Delgado, n.d.:3). Isasi-Diaz was a member of EATWOT and worked hard to form positive dialogues and engage in works of transformation. She believed in working towards the flourishing of all people as all people stand in relation to one another, the creation and God. She strived to

be grounded in justice and love and not enforce or promote hierarchies (Delgado, n.d.:3).

4.1.4 Guideposts in the work of Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz

The life experience and formative years of Isasi-Diaz informs her whole life. The experiences of women are taken seriously and informs theological constructions. The methodology of storytelling and creating space for women's voices is liberating. The invaluable contribution of *Mujerista* theology and the power of having a name and platform for voices to be raised cannot be understated. Community, living together, using one's own experience in worship stands central. The liberation perspective of *Mujerista* theology and the focus on those who are poor and oppressed is always connected to transformation. All the characteristics of feminist spiritualties are present in the life and work of Ada-Maria Isasi-Diaz in a unique way.

4.2 Mercy Amba Oduyoye

Mercy Amba Oduyoye was born in Ghana in 1934. She is an academic who has lectured worldwide (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1996:261). Oduyoye introduces herself with these words in a contribution on "Poverty and Motherhood":

> "I am Ghanian an Akan with both my parents and their parents
> on both sides belonging to mother-cantered groups. *My* political
> and economic status in Akan structures depends on who my
> mother is. I am who I am because of who my mother is. I have
> no biological children, but I am the first of my parent's nine
> children. Any Akan daughter will tell you what that means. I have
> not experienced motherhood, but I know what "mothering"
> means[53]. I have accompanied my mother through her

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[53]Oduyoye did not have biological children. Motherhood as a theme can be seen in her work. She did have the role of mother with her siblings, students, and the Circle women. Oduyoye did speak about the pain of childlessness in a culture where children are valued. Her journey through childlessness is explained profoundly in her article *"A Coming Home to Myself: A Childless Woman in the West African Space"* (1999). As the Mother of African women's theology, she has truly embodied God's call to "increase and multiply" (Oduyoye, 1999: 118).

motherhood. Motherhood has not made my mother poor. *My mother is rich.* She has a community and hold a special place in it. I am not a mother but I have children"

(Oduyoye; 1996:124)

Being raised among Akan people in Ghana within a mother-cantered culture instilled certain understandings into Oduyoye. This culture instilled in her a sense of being needed and being important in her community. As a firstborn child there is extra expectations to be a good example. This meant playing her part in the family. In this environment it is understood that if there are no women, there are no clan (*abusa*) (Oduyoye, 1989:442). Throughout Oduyoye's life and career, themes in her work can be seen developing from her own lived experience.

4.2.1 A teacher, specializing in religion

Oduyoye first completed her education qualification before studying theology. Oduyoye continued her studies, graduating with the Bachelor of Arts honours degree in the study of Religion from the University of Ghana. She was the first woman to graduate this program.[54] Oduyoye was appointed by the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) and the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches as the Youth Education Secretary from 1967-1970 (Smith, n.d.). Mercy Oduyoye married Adedoyin Modupe Oduyoye in 1968. This further developed her ecumenical work and passion for ecumenism as he was from Nigeria and a member of the Anglican church. She came from an Akan matrilineal context in the Methodist church (Smith, n.d.). These cultural differences became a catalyst for her work on gender sensitivity and women's rights (Smith, n.d.). From 1982-1987 Oduyoye lectured at the University of Ibadan in the Religious Studies Department. In 1987 Oduyoye

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[54]Her decision to study Religion was questioned by the community. Oduyoye, first being a teacher explained that she is a teacher, specializing in religion. Teaching gave her public speaking and writing; theology further instilled the passion for justice and dignity (Oduyoye, 2004: xiv).

served as the deputy general secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. She was the first African to hold this position[55] (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1996:261).

4.2.2 Speaking up and participating fully

While always focusing on the lived experiences of women, Oduyoye (1995:1) begins her book "Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy" in an appropriate way with the explanation that for "the majority of African women, there is no food without fire". She explains how firewood fire that produces smoke is necessary. "One ought really to say there is no life without smoke in Africa". Throughout the whole book relationship and relationality is stressed. African culture that functions communally is celebrated. Oduyoye also shows how African culture can be an oppressive force for women as the multitude of group is always chosen before the individual. This double-edged sword is demonstrated throughout her book and has been a theme before this book was published as is seen in Oduyoye's previous statement: "My contention is that any element in African culture that is not liberating for women will not liberate all the energy required for Africa's well-being". She further notes that "whatever is deemed appropriate for Africa must first past the test of being appropriate for the daughters of Africa" (Oduyoye, 1989:441). Whilst community and connectedness are always important for Oduyoye, justice as a theme stands central in her work. Using your platform to facilitate change and raise awareness is seen in her life and work. It is necessary to speak up where you are, in your environment for justice to prevail. Oduyoye regularly emphasizes the importance of raising your voice. "African women theologians have come to realize that as long as men and foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals, and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead" (Kanyoro & Oduyoye, 1992:1). Oduyoye (1995:170-171) speaks about breaking the silence. The strategy of voicing needs to be used in any way to gain power. Raising voices raises

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[55]There were many voices of opposition and concern over her holding this position. She was discouraged, told the position was not ready to be filled by a woman and was requested to support a letter of approval from her husband. In support of Mercy and in protest of this policy, Oduyoye's husband physically took his letter to the Methodist Church office in Lagos and demanded a note saying they have received the letter. He agreed with his wife's decision and supported her move to Geneva.

awareness. She urges to not let voices grow quiet as there are also voices that are speaking against change. "Dealing justly with African women must begin with taking seriously women's questions and concerns about their status". Religio-culture needs to be challenged until it is understood that all women are equally human. This is the way to ensure the full participation of every person and of all genders.

4.2.3 Spirituality: a dynamic force

Oduyoye writes about spirituality in "African Women's Theologies, Spirituality, and Healing: Theological Perspectives from the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians" (2019)[56]. She notes how the word spirituality is difficult to describe as it does not translate into her mother-tongue. The word often comes coupled with words such as "*combat, justice, mutual respect, sustenance,* and *empowerment* in the face of hostile environments" (Udoyoye, 2019). Spirituality is described further as that which cannot be separated from practice and revolves around the will to make the quality of life better for others and oneself. "There is spirituality of resistance, of reconciliation, and of discipleship". Oduyoye reflects on spirituality in her communal and holistic[57] understanding: "the Spirit, unseen, moves and inspires, and the result is what the body does" (Udoyoye, 2019). Spirituality is an active part of faith lives and cannot be seen as functioning separate. It is a way of living out one's faith. "Spirituality has to do with concretizing one's faith" (Udoyoye, 2019). "Spirituality for life is evidenced in a search for alternatives that are dynamic and generate dignity and opportunity to contribute to wholeness of life for all". Community, relationality and reacting practically is central to Oduyoye's understanding of spirituality. Spirituality is also understood as a force of transformation. "The spirituality of resistance and reconstruction by which African women seek to transform the communities to which they belong is what manifested in their participation in the quest for health and healing". Hierarchies and structures that do not promote relationships that are healthy does not have a place in the spirituality of Christians.

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[56] "Many women of the Circle, but especially Ackermann, have focused on the need for word to become action and for theory to engineer praxis" (Udoyoye, 2019).
[57] An example of the holistic understanding seen in the work and life of Udoyoye is seen in the work of Pemberton (2003:127) when she rightly notes that if one is to speak about violence against women one should be "mindful of Mercy Oduyoye's claim that to isolate 'violence against women' in Africa 'is like complaining one had stepped on hot embers when one's house is on fire'"

Unity and peace cannot be separated from justice (Udoyoye, 2019). Oduyoye understands spirituality as an interrelated force, persons are viewed and understood holistically. Communities and the world are not understood individually but in the life of the community. Oduyoye (1992:9) stresses how African religion is integral to African culture. Women, speaking from their own experience can bring transformation. "As women relate to their own experience, the churches in Africa will be forced to listen to a people who have until now been denied a voice. The church will not only listen but will be enriched by talents and gifts that have remained untapped until today" (Kanyoro & Oduyoye, 1992:5). When the stories of women are told, and their voices heard holistic transformation can take place. "Women will gain more courage and respect. As they hear each other, East and West and South and North, African women will begin to see their stories as collective and corporate stories of God's people of faith" (Kanyoro & Oduyoye, 1992:5).

4.2.4 Participation resulting in transformation

Oduyoye sees that women are not always allowed to participate as equals. Women are not always able or allowed to participate in religious rituals. Reflecting on this Oduyoye asks if this is fair (Oduyoye, 1995: 195). The conversation between African cultures and Christianity needs to be constantly assessed. "We need to do a thorough job of filtering Christianity to determine what really liberates us to be the church". African rituals are an important part of African people as is functions on a psychological, spiritual, political, and social level (Oduyoye, 1992:9). By listening to more voices and understanding that integration and inclusivity is beneficial to all Oduyoye states: "...the study of African religion through its rituals can provide an intercultural perspective to illuminate the various religions of the world" (Oduyoye,1992:10). Different rituals and practices play a crucial role in communities. Ritual is important as it marks a person's life and the cycles of the community. Some rituals such as birth, puberty, marriage, birthing, death, mourning is some examples (Oduyoye, 1992: 10-16). Religion is involved at every stage of a person's life (Oduyoye, 1992:16). Oduyoye shows how the subordinate position of women in rituals reflects their roles in society and church (Kanyoro & Oduyoye, 1992:2). Oduyoye continuously assesses the cultural practices in order to see if it is liberating for all if it enables space for all voices to be heard. Hospitality is a crucial part of

African culture. Oduyoye provides a definition of hospitality in which four concepts that help to provide meaning are explained. The first concept of hospitality is the welcoming of receiving of a person or group. Secondly there is charity or the practice of almsgiving. The third concept is where a person or group is taken into your home for boarding or lodging, this can also be in the form of hospitalisation. Fourthly there is the function of providing protection or sanctuary and fostering integration. Some of these elements have monetary consequences. In African tradition, reciprocity is only required should the need arise (Oduyoye, 2001:93). Explaining this practice, Oduyoye inquires to see if this practice is liberating for all. Hospitality can often become something that is the burden of women to bear. Women respond differently to this, some by saying that self-sacrifice is a choice, when the choice is taken away you are an unwilling victim (Oduyoye, 2001:91). Hospitality is starting to change as the life situations are changing. Transforming practices is important whilst keeping the central values. Relationships and relations are still a central element (Oduyoye, 2001:92). Hospitality protects life of individuals and communities. Hospitality is built on reciprocity and there is always risk (Oduyoye, 2001:93). Oduyoye reflects on a practical case and notes "therefore, as Christians, we have no choice but to obey Jesus even in the context of the changing culture" (Oduyoye, 2001:90).

4.2.5 Ecumenism

Oduyoye's involvement in the ecumenical movement[58] spans over 48 years (1966-present). Oduyoye's ecumenical work includes not only attending a myriad of conferences and meetings around the world, but also her active involvement as keynote speaker and workshop leader, Bible study developer and teacher, moderator, staff member of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical

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[58] Her sensibilities toward ecumenism were shaped at an early age from her family's welcoming spirit towards strangers in their home to her experience at Achimota, the secondary school she attended that brought together children from diverse racial, ethnic, language, and denominational backgrounds. Her "first ecumenical conference outside of Ghana was at Bolden, Switzerland." And, as noted earlier, "the theme was 'Christian Education and Ecumenical Commitment." This conference was followed by her attendance at the Assembly in Nairobi, 1966, at which the World Sunday Schools Association merged with the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) to create a Department of Christian Education at the WCC. This merger took place during the WCC's (Fourth) Assembly at Uppsala. Afaithful participant in the WCC for years, Oduyoye proudly asserts, "I have been to every WCC Assembly since Uppsala including the meeting in Busan, South Korea in 2013" (Oduyoye, 2004, p. xiii) (Smith, nd).

organizations, executive committee member and officer, book editor, journal editor, and conference organizer. Most recently she served as a presenter for the ecumenical conference titled "Over 30 Years of Women's Ministry: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities" in Limuru, Kenya (Smith, n,d,). While Oduyoye has contributed widely to the ecumenical movement, two of her most notable contributions include her work with the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998)[59] and her work with the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT).

4.2.5.1 The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT)
Oduyoye attended the 1977 EATWOT Africa Continental Conference in Accra and continually stayed involved with EATWOT which formed in 1976[60]. The theme of the first conference was "The Christian Commitment in Africa Today: Concerns of Emerging Christian Theologies." Oduyoye was one of few women at this conference and presented her paper "The Value of African Religious Beliefs and Practices for Christian Theology" (Oduyoye, 1979). Oduyoye's presentation focused on African religious themes and practices regarding "stewardship of the earth, community life, women, the divine right of kings, and human wholeness, to making covenants, the power of evil, reconciliation, rites of passage, and liturgical practices". Oduyoye argued that these themes have the potential to expand and challenge Christianity[61]. "But more importantly, since African religious beliefs emphasize the "common origin of all humanity" they can facilitate one's sense of dignity and human responsibility toward self and others while inspiring people throughout the world to return to "basic principles of human community and the religious basis of life" (Oduyoye, 1979:115-

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[59]Oduyoye played a significant role in the efforts to initiate and support the Ecumenical Decade. Prior to the launch of the decade, she participated in a broad-based four-year study (1978-1981) titled the "Community of Women and Men in Church and Society." (Smith, nd) This laid the groundwork for the ecumenical decade.

[60]EATWOT is "a force within global theological formation, with its self-conscious post-colonial southern identity and rapid secondary development of the EATWOT Women's Commission (EWC)" in 1986 (Pemberton, 2003:28). EATWOT is ecumenical and fuelled by Vatican II and the liberation theologies of South America (Pemberton, 2003:41).

[61]Oduyoye goes on to suggest that African Christian theologians must draw from this context as they engage in theological work and integrate their African religious heritage into Christian theology. She also acknowledges the mutual contributions of both traditions and the need to draw upon them. Equally in a genuine effort to shape a theology that is inclusive, empowering, and life-giving for all of humanity including women (Smith, n.d.).

116). Continuing her involvement in EATWOT she brought more attention to violence against women and oppression of women under the patriarchal system and structures in the church as well as in EATWOT as a society (Smith, n.d.). Oduyoye continuously called for "inclusivity, leadership opportunities, and gender equality" (Smith, n.d.). Furthermore, she persisted in her work to empower women as well as other oppressed communities to resist oppression and to continue in their struggle for justice (Smith, n.d.).

4.2.5.2 Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

Many perspectives abound on how and why the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians originated (Oduyoye, 2008: 87-91)[62]. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians came from the struggle for political, cultural, and religious independence. This struggle is marked by international collaboration (Pemberton, 2003:1). The limitation on African women's involvement in EATWOT became a strong incentive for Oduyoye to create a forum for them to connect with one another and to voice their concerns (Oduyoye, 2008: 89-90). Oduyoye does not see herself as the founder of the Circle but the "initiator" of the organization (Oduyoye, 2008:89-90); (Pemberton, 2003:60). The more formal idea for the Circle came in 1985 as Oduyoye participated in the Women in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School (Oduyoye, 2008:89-90). During the first decade of the Circle of Concerned African Women Oduyoye published numerous works to advocate for the movement (Pemberton, 2003:60). While doing research for the *book* "Daughters of Anowa", she struggled to find works by African women of Theology. She found three novels by African women and several works about African women written by men in sociology and religion. There was no book in Theology by African women. African women were mostly referred to as wife, mother, and witch "I wondered whether we are part of the human family . . ." she recalled. This discrepancy prompted her to start looking more

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[62] And while Oduyoye acknowledges the multiple perspectives on the founding of the Circle, she contends that the Circle started informally in 1976 with her determination to invite African women in religious studies and theology to join EATWOT. But she was limited in the number of women she could invite due to a quota system that only allowed a certain number of delegates from the three regions-- Africa, Asia, and Latin America--and a smaller number from North America and the Caribbean (Smith, n.d.).

intensely for the women (Oduyoye, 2004: xiii & Smith, n.d.). During this time, she also shared her vision of creating the Circle with Constance Buchanan who was the Director of the Women's Studies in Religion program at Harvard, she encouraged the project (Smith, n.d.).

In the early years, Oduyoye encouraged women to write their own stories arguing along with Musimbi Kanyoro that "as long as men and foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals, and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead"[63] (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:1). Mercy therefore urged African women to explore what it means to be a woman in the church, in school, in the community, at home, and in the larger society.

Women were required to write papers to attend the meeting and to gain membership into the organization. Membership also required a genuine concern about the death of theological materials by African women and a commitment to develop compelling, assessable, and life-giving resources. A press release dated September 25, 1989, echoed this sentiment stating that members of the Circle would "concentrate their efforts on producing literature from the base of religion and culture to enrich the critical study and empowering practice of religion in Africa" (See Kanyoro, 2006: 21-22). The response was very positive. Sixty-nine women shared their writings and over two hundred Ghanaian women from surrounding churches participated in the Circle inauguration. Nine days of inspirational dialogue, paper presentations, mentoring, Bible studies, storytelling, and dramatic performances culminated in the formal initiation and celebration of the Circle (Oduyoye, 2008:84) (Kanyoro, 2006:24). At the conclusion of this meeting, Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro co-edited the proceedings of the inaugural conference titled "Talitha, Qumi!" (1990, 2001). The Circle has become a safe space for African women to engage in transformative theological reflection and a tangible representation of Rosemary Radford Ruether's prophetic words that have emboldened women to speak out of their own experience of agony and victimization, survival, empowerment, and new

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[63] From its inception, Oduyoye emphasized writing as a central part of the Circle (Smith, nd).

life as places of Divine presence and out of these revelatory experiences. To write new stories that can tell of God's presence in experiences where God's presence was never allowed or imagined before in a religious culture controlled by men and defined by men's experience (Ruether, 1987:147, quoted in Kanyoro, 2006:39).

4.2.6 Collaboration

"African Christian theology is decidedly contextual" (Oduyoye, 2002:151). Out of these different contexts collaboration is necessary. Oduyoye's approach to life and theology, in leadership and education is one of collaboration. She works with a variety of "faith-based organizations, churches, educational institutions, and individuals to engage their collective wisdom and contributions". Her collaborative method has enabled her to create and integrate curriculum and resources with rich leadership development strategies and educational methodology that is grounded in liberation patterns. Oduyoye's liberation orientation and her collaborative educational process has reflected in a serious consideration of power. Her understanding of power is that it is not for the benefit of the individual or one group but for the flourishing of the whole community (Oduyoye, 2001). "The only sacrifice that will be life-giving is a systemic sacrifice in which all participate and do so by letting go and sharing power" (Oduyoye, 2001:108).

4.2.7 Motherhood and sisterhood

The theme of motherhood and sisterhood stands central and functions in various ways in Oduyoye's work and life. As women that are part of the church, Mother's unions should be transformed into women's unions to be more inclusive. Marginalisation is always built on exclusion. There is a growing solidarity of sisterhood growing worldwide that needs to be nurtured (Oduyoye, 1995:198-199). "For Oduyoye, family, marriage and beliefs surrounding procreation are some of the essential moments where inequalities between 'male-female relations' are reproduced" (Pemberton, 2003:88). "The women who are named Christian feminists are those of the global sisterhood who have refused to give up the church and who are putting up resistance to the male takeover of the religion of Jesus of Nazareth" (Oduyoye, 1989:441). The sisterhood is more inclusive, collaborative, and redemptive. "An African who is a Christian and who feels herself part of the global

sisterhood has to cope not only with all that Western Christian women have to contend with, but in addition there are elements of African culture even more deeply rooted than Christianity that militate against her image of herself as a genuine and full member of those who see themselves as created in the image of God" (Oduyoye, 1989:441). Oduyoye's own life experiences are always part of her theology. This poem was written by her in 1995:

I am Woman
I am African
My beads mark my presence
Beads of wisdom, beads of sweat
I am Woman
I am Bota
The precious black bead
Skilfully crafted from black stone
I do not speak much
but I am not without a voice
the authentic black bead does not rattle noisily
I am an African woman, wearing beads ground
by Anowa and from the womb of Anowa
Other beads I have which do not belong to her
They have come from over the seas
They are glass and easily shattered
Created by humans they can be ground
back to powder and remodelled.

I am Woman
I am African
Here I sit - not idle
But busy stringing my beads
I wear them in my hair
I wear them in my ears
They go round my neck, my arms

My wrist, my calves and my ankles

Around my waist will go the

Most precious of them all

And from this hidden strength

Will burst forth the New Me - for

I am in the process of giving birth

To myself - recreating Me

Of being, the Me that God sees.

I am Woman

I am African

My beads mark my presence

And when I am gone

My beads

will remain.

(Mercy Amba Oduyoye, 1995)

4.2.8 Guideposts in the work of Mercy Amba Oduyoye

Oduyoye affirms that every person has value. Navigating from her own culture, upbringing and understanding of religion she works toward a community that is liberating for all. She works with themes that are currently not serving justice and fullness for everyone. She always works together with different role players. Ecumenical work, integration and interrelations stand central. Odyuoye understands feminist spiritualties as encapsulating bodies, holistically and in relation. A community where the dignity of all people is acknowledged and wholeness of life is made possible for all. Injustice that is witnessed needs to be addressed and she urges women to use their voices, platforms, and writings to work towards justice for all. She always works towards the full participation of all people by using your platform to foster transformation. In her own life and teachings, she is seen being practically involved in social issues. Oduyoye believes the voices of women brings liberation and sees this as a crucial part of feminist spiritualities.

4.3 Kwok Pui-Lan

"Kwok Pui-Lan, the foremost Chinese feminist theologian, received her doctorate at Harvard Divinity School and was formerly on the faculty of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is currently on the faculty of the Episcopal Divinity school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*" (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1996:360-361). In Pui-Lan's CV on Emory University Website Pui-Lan's academic career is briefly outlined by her various roles which is diverse. Pui-Lan has received numerous awards[64] in different terrains. Pui-Lan has received honorary doctorates[65] and published extensively in collaboration with many authors and organisations. Pui-Lan is also Editor and Co-Editor of many ground-breaking works[66]. Some of her professional activities include Chairing the Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession in 2003-2005, becoming Vice-President 2010 and President, 2011. Pui-Lan is on various

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[64] Selected Honours includes:

- 2009 Gutenberg Research Award, Gutenberg Research College of the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany,
- 2015 Excellence in Mentoring Award, Forum for Theological Exploration and Mentoring Consortium, 2016 Named one of the 95 people in the National Special Exhibition "Luther! 95 Treasures – 95 People," in Wittenberg, Germany.

[65] Honorary Doctorates:

- Kampen Theological University, 2004.
- Uppsala University, 2011.
- Employment Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1980-84, 1988-91.
- Auburn Theological Seminary, 1991-92.
- Episcopal Divinity School, 1992-2017.

[66] Selected Publications:
- Postcolonial Practice of Ministry (co-editor). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016.
- Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis (co-editor). Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015.
- Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude. With Joerg Rieger. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012.
- Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue. New York: Paulist, 2012.
- Women and Christianity (editor), 4 vols. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Empire and the Christian Tradition: New Readings of Classical Theologians (co-editor). Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007 (Reference Book of the Year Award, 2008).
- Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.
- Introducing Asian Feminist Theology. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.

editorial boards such as: Teaching Theology and Religion (Associate editor); Journal of Asian/North American Theological Educators; Ching Feng; Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion and Spiritus. Rita Nakashima Brock and Tat-Siong Benny Liew edited the book "Theologies of the Multitude for the Multitudes: The legacy of Kwok Pui-Lan" that was published in 2021. Brock & Liew (2021:1) introduces their work with the fitting words "throughout her remarkable career, Kwok Pui-Lan has demonstrated an uncanny ability to work with a multitude of people. Her contribution to feminist theological scholarship and to Asian and Asian American studies of religion and theology are extraordinary both for her publications and for her decades of involvement in grassroot movements that have become enduring organisations". Two of these organisations are PANAAWTM (Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry) and ATSI (Asian Theological Summer Institute) (Brock & Liew, 2021:1).

4.3.1 Feet in different worlds: lifting hidden discourses

Pui-Lan successfully navigates between global North and South and engages in both academic work and praxis even beyond theology (Brock & Liew, 2021:1). Pui-Lan demonstrates that working with different groups of people is important as this results in lasting change (Brock & Liew, 2021:2). Pui-Lan, from the early 1990's lifted the hidden discourses of Chinese women. This opened avenues for Asian and Asian-American women to build new theologies (Brock & Liew, 2021:5). Working with multitudes provides complex situations. It also allows for "incongruencies and intersecting collaborations". The incongruencies emphasise that working with multitudes does not mean the disappearance or denial of "privileges, prejudices, or power differentials". Collaborations provide the opportunity to consider different theological propositions. This enables us to see and consider a variety of theological positions and understandings which could disrupt set positions. This can also facilitate transformation as it identifies and take apart systems of oppression while at the same time enabling work that promotes justice and the flourishing of all (Brock & Liew, 2021:6-7).

4.3.2 Shifting relations

Working with the multitudes and in various countries Pui-Lan has spoken critically about what counts as religion and is of meaning that it is being restricted by categories and definitions (Brock & Liew, 2021:12). Pui-Lan always argues for inclusivity and interrelatedness. Pui-Lan promotes the shift from hierarchical relations tot horizontal relations. In the book "Theologies of the Multitude for the Multitudes: The legacy of Kwok Pui-Lan", this shift in relations can be seen in the different contributions (Brock & Liew, 2021:17). Themes that are present in the work of Pui-Lan and in these contributions are re signifying gender, requeering theology, redoing theology, shift from hierarchical to horizontal relations (Brock & Liew, 2021:17). Pui-Lan's own experience and observations, her own conversations influence her work and understanding of community. This is continuously broadening. Pui-Lan asks for cooperation. "The separation of women into different categories prevents them from forming female bonding among themselves.... in order to struggle in solidarity with each other, women must resist the false categorisation which places some women on top of others" (Pui-Lan, 1996:257). Seeing the various struggles between different women as intertwined and interrelated are crucial. Respecting differences and recognising that each woman is rooted in a different culture will create space for dialogue. This space for dialogue can have a unifying effect rather than disconnectedness. This will promote co-existence within many cultures, within many ethnicities (Pui-Lan, 1996:257). "As Helen Kim reminds us, Kwok's scholarship and reaching are inseparable from her commitments to mentoring students, speaking to diverse populations, and building community" (Brock & Liew, 2021:17).

4.3.3 Women standing in solidarity: hope for the future

When reflecting on feminist theology Pui-Lan (2002:23) notes that feminist theology does not belong to one group, "it has become a global movement as women with different histories and cultures challenge patriarchal teachings and practices of the church and articulate their faith and understanding of God". Feminist theology have changed because of certain challenges. Cultural diversity has resulted in intercultural critique, dialogue, and partnerships (Pui-Lan, 2002:23). Women's experience differs while also having related factors. On women's experience: Pui-Lan (2002:23,24) "Feminist theology must pay attention to how women from diverse cultural and social

contexts articulate their differences as a result of culture, language, and social realities, without assuming that women's experience is everywhere the same". This understanding is present in many of Pui-Lan's works. Pui-Lan writes an essay "Mending of Creation: Women, Nature, and Hope in her book (2005) Postcolonial imagination and feminist theology" where she reflects on women in third world countries eschatological hope for the future (2005:228). Pui-Lan notes that firstly, in several Third World and Indigenous countries women believe that their own traditions, which many think is not present anymore, is an integrated whole. The natural is not separate from that which is cultural and spiritual. When the world is understood in this manner, it can present many contributions "to saving ourselves and our planets" (Pui-Lan, 2005:228). In the second place, the eschatological hope of women of colour is "grounded in their continual struggle and resistance, creating new resources for survival". There is a reconnection with a person's culture and the spiritual traditions one form part of. This is not accepting the past or overlooking the fact that in the past culture has been abused and transformed in a political and spiritual conquest by the West. By reconnecting in this way, it is rather a commitment to keep on searching and growing in cultural and spiritual resources and to live by this in a world that is not like this. The world as it is known mostly is dominated by "white supremacy, capitalist creed, and patriarchy" (Pui-Lan, 2005:228). Thirdly, there is always the hope from Indigenous women as well as women of color to work in solidarity with people of all races. This is the hope even though in the past this has created an environment of exploitation (Pui-Lan, 2005:228). In the fourth place Pui-Lan (2005:229) notes that even in a dire and desperate situation woman of color do not believe that they are alone or that they are alone in their struggle "because the tender web of life still holds".

4.3.4 "The tender web of life still holds"

Seeing the struggle of women relationally, Pui-Lan works collaboratively. Pui-Lan (2002:27) elaborates on the understanding of *Mujerista's* struggle for liberation as a communal praxis. *Mujerista* theology as introduced by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. Pui-Lan (2002:27) notes how Mercy Amba Oduyoye has been critical of Western feminists in saying that they are obsessed with female circumcision and do not pay enough attention to the survival of African women and the countless ways in

which they are being exploited. Oduyoye also criticizes African men of creating myths of a homogenous cultural identity. This is not true as the experience of women differs. Pui-Lan draws from different traditions, cultures, and scholars to strengthen the web. "Third World feminist theologians have the double tasks of challenging androcentric myths and practices in their culture and in Christianity. They have also creatively used women's cultural resources such as songs, writings, poetry, and performances" Pui-Lan (2002:28).

4.3.5 Guideposts in the work of Kwok Pui-Lan

Kwok Pui-Lan's understanding of theology and spirituality is that of collaboration. Praxis and theology cannot be separated from one another. Pui-Lan has successfully navigated many different terrains with various groups and voices to create a meaningful dialogue and discourse of cooperation. She implores women to struggle in solidarity and not step into the pitfalls of hierarchy. Pui-Lan's theology is holistic, with a focus on ecology, inclusive, and always founded in the daily life experiences. As seen in her work as editor of various volumes of works she has a unique understanding of relationality, working towards justice and calling out behaviours that do not foster this.

4.4 Sue (Susan) Rakoczy

Sue Rakoczy was a Professor at St Joseph's Theological Institute and University of KwaZulu-Natal with fields of interest including Spirituality; Feminist Theology; Ecofeminism; Mysticism and the Interface of spirituality and psychology. After completing her theological education, Rakoczy came to work in Africa in the 1980s and moved to South Africa in 1989 to teach at St Joseph's College. With time she also became the coordinator of the postgraduate program for Catholic theology and Christian spirituality at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal. Kerkbode, the newspaper of the Dutch Reformed Church published a interview of Rakoczy by Rethie van Niekerk, a reverend in the Dutch Reformed Church on 12/05/2022. Van Niekerk interviewed Sue Rakoczy after moving back to the United States. The interview followed the CLF – Elise Tempelhoff award that Rakoczy won "vir omgewingsbewaring en -geregtigheid" with the publication of her academic article "God as father: patriarchy and climate change in the Handbook on Christian

Theology and Climate Change" published in 2019. Van Niekerk reflects on how she knew about the work of Rakoczy but they formed a deeper relationship from 2020 in the lockdown period of the Covid 19 pandemic. During this time a group of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians met weekly in conversation, reflection, and prayer. During this time Rakoczy became a spiritual mentor for van Niekerk. Van Niekerk became acutely aware of the wisdom Rakoczy holds in the way in which she conducts herself theologically, in her daily life and spiritually as an integrated person. Rakoczy moved back to the US in 2022. Rakoczy is a member of the Catholic community. The Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. During the interview van Niekerk asks Rakoczy what she hopes her legacy will be. Rakoczy answers "several things. One, as a feminist theologian, to alert people in the churches to the importance of women's theological reflection. To foreground the work of women in the theological community". The voices of women need to be heard. She continues "a particular theological interest of mine has been the intersection of social justice and spirituality. I wrote this book a number of years ago, *Great mystics and social justice: Walking on the two feet of love*, but I've written extensively on that theme in other publications. To be a voice for women. As a catholic woman to challenge the church in many ways. People will say to me: "If you criticize the church, why don't you leave?" Why should I leave? Why should all the thinking women leave?" Nadar reflects on the contributions of Sue Rakoczy (2004:561) on discernment and the work of the Spirit. According to Nadar one need to ask if people are freer, liberated from interior and exterior enslavement and if people are freer to be their best selves in God. Given that women are still not allowed to be ordained, Nadar means women are denied the fullness of life in ministry.

4.4.1 Language and the creation of reality

Van Niekerk reflects with Rakoczy on the article "God as father: patriarchy and climate change in the Handbook on Christian Theology and Climate Change*"* (2019). Rakoczy says "What I demonstrated was this: that because the language about God throughout the Christian tradition is overwhelmingly masculine, it links up strongly with the patriarchy, which is driving what is happening to the earth. If we go back to Genesis 1, basically translations use the word "domination". Sociologically, that's

how human society has functioned, in terms of men running things. It's a very small step from men over women to men over the earth. It's a critique of the whole system." Sue Rakoczy is known for her practical approach and taking the lives and bodies of people and the earth seriously. She is focused on the right relations and community.

4.4.2 Eco-feminism and the experiences of women

In the question van Niekerk asks Rakoczy "what is ecofeminism" one clearly sees the role of feminist spiritualties in the being of Rakoczy. She answered "feminism as a whole is a philosophical, sociological, theological movement, which emphasises the experience of women. Ecofeminism looks at ecological issues through the lens of women's experience, because the literature clearly shows that it is women, especially poor women, who are most impacted by ecological crises and problems. I'm currently working on an article on the ecofeminist writings in the Circle [of Concerned African Feminist Theologians]. Their writings range over all kinds of topics, like land and water. I have 70 references already!" This interview was held just after heavy floods in Kwa-Zulu Natal, there is also drought in South Africa and a swarm of locusts that wreaked havoc. The question van Niekerk posed next was for Rakoczy's ecofeminist perspective on the current situation. Rakoczy answered "Who is most affected? [The research shows it] is the women who are primarily affected. This is because often – not always – the men swim to save themselves. They abandon their families. The women are left to somehow get the children to safety, and if there are little ones, towing little ones and towing elderly family members. Then, when they get to safety – if they get to safety –there is an horrendous amount of sexual violence in the camps, in the shelters. So, the effects of climate change are always worse for women. Always worse for women." Eco-feminist theology rejects the stewardship model of the relation of humans and creation because it continues a hierarchical perspective. Humanity remains over and against creation. Rakoczy argues that a kinship model more accurately reflects the reality of interdependence (Rakoczy, 2012:400).

4.4.3 Eco-feminist spirituality

Spirituality is elastic as it includes everything from practices inside traditional religions as well as outside these core understanding. Spirituality and the search for self-transcendence is connected (Rakoczy, 2012:401). "Two Asian women, Mary John Mananzan and Sun Ai Park, have beautifully described spirituality as "the shape in which the Holy Spirit has molded herself into one's life" (Mananzan and Park 1988:77). Sandra Schneiders stresses that Christian spirituality is "essentially Trinitarian, Christocentric and ecclesial" (Schneiders 1986, 1996:31). For Christian women, this means that these symbols of their faith must be reinterpreted in life-affirming ways" (Rakoczy, 2012:401). The foundation of Christian feminist spirituality is life and liberation. This follows the understanding that Jesus came to give the fullness of life to everyone. Spirituality can then be described as the approach with which one seeks to find God, seeking God in all life's circumstances in a life affirming way of oneself, others, and the earth around you, working towards the flourishing and wholeness of right relationships in all structures and forms (Rakoczy 2012:374); (Rakoczy, 2012:401). Christian feminist spirituality sees religious experience as part of an integrative whole. Dualisms are rejected and a holistic understanding of the self and world is embraced. Christian faith and spirituality have been skeptical of the human body for a long time as can particularly be seen in the suspicion towards the female body. This has often been transferred onto the reality that we create and live in. Fortunately, this is slowly changing after the second Vatican council (Rakoczy, 2012:401-402). Christian feminist spirituality places a strong focus on justice. This is understood as standing in the right relationships and living communally. Justice is also understood as justice for the Earth. "We can echo the insights of Francis of Assisi who addressed creation as Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brothers Wind and Air, Sister Fire and Mother Earth and knew that he was part of a much larger community than only human persons" (Rakoczy, 2012:402).

There is no personal transformation without social transformation. Our relationship with God and one another cannot be separated from one another as it is integrated and lived out in this way (Rakoczy, 2012:402). The earth is sacred, and a Christian feminist spirituality embraces the earth (Rakoczy, 2012:402). Rakoczy quotes Reuther: "Rosemary Radford Reuther asserts that "ecological spirituality needs to be

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built on three premises: the transience of selves, the living interdependency of all things, and the value of the personal in communion" (Ruether 1992:250); (Rakoczy, 2012:402). Rakoczy sees that the personal and political are intertwined and therefore need to work together for a fuller life for all. We need to be the voice for the voiceless, this includes the earth (Rakoczy, 2012:403). In the last question of the interview for Kerkbode 2022 Rakoczy leaves with these words "All over the world, especially in SA, we have really realised we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Yes, there are significant differences, still. But the differences are less than they were a hundred years ago. The theological writings of all the churches are available to everyone. My writings as a catholic ecofeminist and teacher of spirituality are available to everybody. That means I need to make considered effort to read the writings of people of other Christian communities. The body of Christ really is one. Paul says in Romans 12, when he describes the body, he says: and so, it is with Christ. We are one. We don't recognise the unity. Some Christians don't want the unity. And just like with the flood relief, hopefully (though I can't imagine that this is happening), nobody asks for a church affiliation. Here are gifts. Here are donations. Just form a queue and you'll get what you need."

4.4.4 Guideposts in the work of Sue Rakoczy

Susan (Sue) Rakoczy grew up in The United States but spent most of her life in Africa and South Africa, this enables her to understand different perspectives and listen to many voices. She always fosters relationships and hope. With a specific feminist approach in exposing and dismantling patriarchy Rakoczy works towards the mending of relations and seeing each other as equal. This is realised in her work through her Catholic understanding that there should be fullness of life for all. She has a specific focus as an eco-feminist in her holistic approach to life and theology. Rakoczy regards the realisation of justice and the connection of justice and spirituality highly. As a Christian Feminist theologian Rakoczy has done remarkable work in lifting the voices of catholic theologians in a system where their voices are continually pushed down.

4.5 Conclusion

The characteristics of feminist spiritualities functions on different levels and in unique ways in the lives and works of the different scholars in Chapter 4. This is illustrated by focusing on each theologian in her specific context, with her specific personal history and experiences. The characteristics of feminist spiritualities acting as guideposts illustrates how feminist spiritualities are realised in different contexts. The characteristics as instruments that bring transformation is seen in the different contexts. In the next Chapter sustainable development and gender equity is mapped with feminist spiritualities as guideposts. The next Chapter investigates the transformation potential of feminist spiritualities on another level that what was seen as being possible in this Chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5 AND FEMINIST SPIRITUALITIES

5.1 A short history on the relationship between religion and sustainable development

"Religion is a major cultural, social, political, and economic factor in many official development assistance (ODA) recipient countries. Understanding religious dynamics and the role of faith communities and actors is crucial for sustainable development" (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:102). Sociological scholars predicted that the role of religion in modern societies would shrink, and religion would eventually become irrelevant and ultimately disappear. The prediction was made in the light of the growing post-modern and secular world. This has not been the case. The role of faith actors and faith communities in the lives of individuals and communities is continually inhabiting an important and significant space (Carbonnier, 2013:1,2 & Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:102). The lack of research and interest by international development players, attention to religion and the role of faith in development policy and practice does not seem to be on par with the role that religion and faith-based organizations play in the daily lives of individuals and communities in the aid industry, especially in the global South. Religious actors have made and are making significant contributions to various works of development (Carbonnier, 2013: 2 & Tomalin 2015:1).

5.1.1 Development, developing, developed, dependent – whose path is followed?

In the mid-20th century development was seen as a linear path that would ultimately end because of modernisation. The end would be a future that all accepted and desired. This theory was based on developed countries that assumed developing countries would follow this path. This theory was criticised and later rejected. Development's mainstream thinking and model that followed was ultimately the result of the disappearance of the term modernity in mainstream development discourse (Rakodi, 2015:17). The development and mission context were

intertwined. The result was that those traditional aspects of society, such as values, beliefs and pre-existing religious and cultural traditions were taken for granted. For a couple of decades in the mid-20th century the approaches to development were dominant in influencing the thinking and actions of southern and northern governments and aid agencies alike (Rakodi, 2015:23). The first set of challenges to the dominant development theories and models of the 1950s and 1960s arose out of the experience of Latin American countries (Rakodi, 2015:23). Attention to development policies by feminist was seen in the 1980s. Development was critiques. There were certain points of friction among feminists such as race and class. The feminist groups could agree on certain shared goals. National economic development should be dispersed evenly. Development should encapsulate the whole person. Social development needs to work with all sectors. External debt should be absolved as a necessity for effective development (Gudorf, 1996:66). The model of dependency and underdevelopment was challenged, the entire development model was challenged with a variety of perspectives grouped as post-development (Rakodi, 2015:24). Development policy and praxis were influenced by the constructivist turn. The idea that development was founded upon European traditions of knowing creates its grounds for logically dominating and forcibly eliminating non-European forms of knowledge. Criticism came regarding the undermining of authentic values of indigenous cultures and not recognizing other sources of knowledge (Rakodi, 2015:24).

The global development discourses of the 1960's and onward focused more on secularity. Religious values were not a priority. With the change happening in the last decade, it can be seen that modernization and secularization are not parallel to one another. This also brought the realization that religious values and faith actors play a crucial role in poverty reduction and addressing structural inequalities (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:107). With the postmodernist turn, alternative models

advanced[67]. The value of these practical contributions has been recognized by some governments and development agencies (Rakodi, 2015:27).

5.1.2 The 'turn to religion'

In the mid-1990s under the leadership of President James Wolfersohn and former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey of Clifton, the World Bank first engaged in a global initiative with religion and faith-based organizations (Carbonnier, 2013: 2); (Tomalin 2015:2). International agencies, like the World Bank, have been reluctant to be associated with a spiritual dimension of development. This is primary because of the perceived division between spirituality and economics (Narayanan, 2016:150). As modernisation, and modernisation development processes were set in place after WWII, became a global phenomenon, religion did not disappear. Religions and development are seen during secularisation and in a post-secular era. The focus on secularisation was widely criticised for only reflecting on a normative western perspective and going against evidence. It was clear that religion was not fading but even growing in some diverse areas. Debates about the global resurgence of religion has been building momentum since the 1980s. This was seen as a threat to some, others formed joint movements that were based on freedom, to be tolerant, individualism and globalised values such as human rights, gender issues and the environment (Tomalin, 2015:4). Globalization resulted in diverse styles of religiosity that was not predicted. Religion did not become irrelevant; a diversity can rather be observed. Religious diversity is seen in traditional and conservative styles as well as modern and liberated forms of religion. Institutional religion and publicly influential religion are present, privatized religion is observed as well as religions in other forms with other functions. Globalization enabled religion to flourish (Tomalin, 2015:5).

To make a distinction between what is religious and what is secular is a prominent feature of the secular age. The view that my religion is placed in my private sphere can be traced back to the 16th century. The split between secular and religious in the era of the Protestant Reformation did not have the effect of religion disappearing.

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[67] These models can be seen in different faith traditions such as liberation theology, engaged Buddhism and Islamic economics (Rakodi, 2015:27).

Religion could be reconfigured as it was not part of the state anymore. In the mission and colonial expansion era religious activities that took place in new settings became critical (Tomalin, 2015:7). Precise theories of secularization, what secularism is and how it will spread is not accepted anymore. Theories regarding contemporary religion paves the way towards a paradigm where multiple modernities coexist with each other in a post secular age (Tomalin, 2015:9).

5.1.3 Research on religion and development

It is only in the last decade that significant research on religions and global development began to emerge[68], and religion is seen as a relevant actor. Inclusion of religious leaders into initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals is also evidence of this shift. Funding and engagement with faith-based organizations, an uptick in publications in development studies, journals invested in the relationship between religions and international development are starting to become more common[69] (Tomalin, 2015:1). Several other international organizations have also drawn attention to the importance of understanding religion and engaging with religious actors across development goals. In 2009 the UN SPA produced guidelines for engaging faith-based organizations as cultural agents of change. More recently the Joint Learning Initiative on faith and local communities aimed to bring together academic's development practitioners and faith groups around the goal of working to increase the quality and quantity of robust practical evidence on the pervasive but poorly understood and unmapped role of faith communities in community health and development (Tomalin, 2015:2). The field of religion and sustainable development is growing, and faith communities are continuously playing a greater role. Religion

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[68]Religion as a main concept in the study and practice of development has remained marginal in academic and public policy circles. The early theories of development were built on Enlightenment and modernization traditions who did not have a focus on religion (Carbonnier, 2013:2).

[69]The UN Women Press release, released a statement on 25 November 2020 that was originally published by ReliefWeb. The press release stated that "The United Nations humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock has released $25 million from the UN's emergency fund to support women-led organizations that prevent and respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. The funding has gone to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women who have been asked to channel at least 30 percent of it to organizations run by women that prevent violence against women and girls and help victims and survivors with access to medical care, family planning, legal advice, safe spaces, mental health services and counselling".

seen as an integral part of human development should be explored further (Sidibé, 2016:1). Post-colonial and post-development critiques of modernity and mainstream developments model are welcomed by scholars. A plurality of voices is encouraged as well as marginalized individuals and groups to give their own accounts of their conditions and aspirations. This view recognizes the multiplicity of local practices (Rakodi, 2015:27).

5.1.4 The "turn to religion": not everyone is equally excited

There are different opinions to the "turn to religion". Many faith and secular development actors consider this as a progressive move. Others are critical (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:107). Secular nations largely restrict themselves to analysing religion in populations rather than also looking into development policies. Institutions focused on global development are mainly reliant on secularist approaches and understandings of religion. The contribution of faith actors is not part of the mainstream discourse (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:107). This difference in opinion about the "turn to religion" has many facets. This relationship between religion and development can be both positive and negative. Some development practitioners are cautious of engaging with religious institutions and faith actors as they are suspicious that their interesting development and humanitarianism is used to proselytise. Others are wary that the conservatism and sectarianism that is part of many religions and faith communities can clash with certain development goals such as gender equality (SDG 5) or peace and inclusion (SDG 16, SDG 10). They assert that universal human rights are better pursued on secular routes (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:107). Religious traditions have contributed greatly to humanitarian relief and development work for many centuries. At the same time religions are also implicated in sustaining different sorts of injustice. These injustices range from violence to gender discrimination (Tomalin, 2015:1,2). Therefore, while many welcome the turn to religion others are more cautious especially when engagement with religious leaders or organizations may risk undermining progressive

development goals such as gender equality[70] (Tomalin, 2015:3). A partial explanation assumes that religion is opposed to economic development and that societies will become less religious when they modernise (Tomalin, 2015:1). This can also be of a fear for compromising their secularity (Narayanan, 2016:150). These simplistic theories of modernization and secularization have been critiqued and debunked because, rather than disappearing or completely diminishing in significance, it is now widely recognized that the significance and continuing role of religion in public life and private lives, whether it has increased or just simply being recognized, demands that the relationship between religion and society though being complex and controversial needs to be taken seriously (Tomalin, 2015:1). It is true that many in the global development community are now more likely to think of religion as a topic that is relevant to their work and reflects on broader social cultural and political shift, they have thrust religion back into the public sphere. Decades or centuries of neglect of religion in public life and policy arenas coupled with a fear of and even negative feelings about religion means that many development policymakers and practitioners are poorly equipped to deal with religion when they encounter it. Levels of religious literacy are low[71]. "Religious literacy refers to the ability to be able to sift through scriptural, popular and fundamentalist versions and interpretations of religions" (Narayanan, 2016:151). Religious literacy in terms of knowledge about the beliefs and practices within different religious traditions and in

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[70]Assumptions on religion need to be deconstructed. Assumptions on religion should first be acknowledged as assumptions affects actions. Certain conditioning results in prejudices which results in judgements being made before a situation is examined (Meral, 2018:8,9).
[71]There is a need for an increase in religious literacy. This need is seen by members of NGOs and governments. This increase in literacy is not only in terms of the history, teachings, and practices of different world religions, but also with respect to how religion manifests in diverse settings (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:116). Tomalin identifies three areas where skills need to be developed to promote religious literacy. Firstly, the world religious paradigm concludes that a person or group belong to one religion. Religious exclusivity is not a prerequisite for being religious. The second area is distinction between religions that focus on orthodoxy or right belief and religions that focus on orthopraxy which is right action. Definitions of religion can highlight belief and doctrine where other religions may not be in the obvious places such as religious leaders, a sacred text, or institutions. Religious literacy asks one to look further than the Abrahamic traditions to identify patterns of religiosity. Thirdly, the world religion paradigm draws the distinction between religious and secular practices. This is not always possible to separate in highly religious contexts. People may act in a way of being influenced by their context and not see it as religious. It can also happen that apparently religious organizations are not clearly labelled as faith-based (Tomalin, 2015:8,9).

terms of how religion manifests differently in different settings in ways that do not match the western Christianized view of what a religion should be (Tomalin, 2015:3). Research on religions and global developments need to investigate how governments and communities of the global South engage with the nexus between religions and development and find useful ways of engagement to reflect their own political context. The context of development needs to be broadened (Tomalin, 2015:1).

5.1.5 Tread lightly…

It is necessary that policy makers can distinguish between religious sanctions and the fundamental visionaries of a religion. "In this way the fundamental principles of religion are retained and in fact actively mainstreaming into society via development policy, but at the same time outdated interpretations that keep women and other minority groups in submissive positions are deconstructed and invalidated. In partnership with development policy, the reform capacity of each religion would be foregrounded, rather than its chauvinistic aspects" (Narayanan, 2016:151,152). The social context and religious symbols influence each other and should not be studied separately (Narayanan, 2016:152).

5.2 How to define religion and development in the development context
5.2.1 Whose religion, what religion, what is religion?

There are a range of definitions of what religion and development means.
A universal definition of religion will not be true. A definition of religion is composed of the essential elements needed and the relationships that are historically specific. The definition is a "product of discursive processes" (Tomalin 2015:8). When a definition of religion is attempted, it is in terms of the essential cross-cultural attributes. It is also to be able to distinguish religion from other social phenomena. This is specifically belief in a transcendental reality and or spiritual beings. If being religious is only indicated by beliefs that are held and practices that are adhered to as well as being affiliated to a religious organization, Tomalin (2015:8) argues that a western view of what a religion should be is reinforced.

There is little agreement around the content and character of religion. This is also because of the rich diversity of religions in the world. It is almost impossible to distill all religions into certain traits and characteristics (Hefferan, 2015: 40). The term religiosity is often used and refers to how people are religious as well to how religious people are (Hefferan, 2015: 42). Some scholars and religious actors make the distinction between faith and religion. The understanding is that faith attempts to capture certain dimensions of religion that moves beyond the set of values, rules, and social practices in that specific religion. Religion is then understood to be more formal and organized where faith is more expansive. This view is not accepted by all scholars and religious actors as the counter argument is that this distinction is for political reasons (Hefferan, 2015: 41).

There is a relationship between religion and culture. Some scholars see this relationship as necessary to understand the broader contexts in which religion is lived and experienced. This also enables scholars to see how religion fits with other dimensions of society. One should tread cautiously on this terrain as religion can easily be reduced to culture in the field of International Development. Religion can be framed as a cultural thing that can be manipulated, used, or erased (Hefferan, 2015: 41).

5.2.2 Whose development, what development, what is development?

Development is a contentious term understood in a variety of ways across both scholarly and applied realms. A dominant view suggests that development is both an ideology and the set of practices that arose in the post Second World War[72] era to socially engineer progress modernity and economic growth in the global South. According to this perspective the world is divided into centers of economic and scientific progress and areas of poverty and backwardness (Hefferan, 2015: 42).

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[72] The idea of development and the policies and practices associated with the contemporary understanding of development can be traced to the time after the Second World War (Rakodi, 2015:18).

How development is defined, conceptualised, and interpreted reflects historical experience and individual values. This is due to intellectual and practical reasons. Using the term "development" already implies that there is a notion of change. This historic change is a consequent of Western European secular and scientific thought. Change is assumed as being linear rather than seen as cyclical (Charlton, 1997: 7). While growth-oriented development continues to occupy a privileged spot in development thinking and practice there are simultaneously several competing approaches. These approaches emphasize micro level processes or personhood and that critique capitalism. There are scholars that actively oppose the continuation of development thinking and practice. These scholars see development as being a destructive force replacing overt colonial management with a seemingly more benign development regime. Ultimately development is an anti-politics machine turning exploitation, suffering, resource imbalances and the like into political problems that can be addressed through technical solutions that reproduce and consolidate existing power structures. While the approaches to development just discussed vary significantly in terms of focus and goals, they all share a tendency to dismiss religion (Hefferan, 2015: 43).

5.3 Developments relationship with women

Development researchers and practitioners has made used of three theoretical frameworks that developed with time. These frameworks are Women in Development (WID); Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) (Visvanathan, 1997:17).

5.3.1 Women in Development (WID)

The term Women in Development was first used in the early 1970s by American liberal feminists. This marked the first time the role of women in international development was recognised and examined. WID as a term originated after the publication of "Women's role in Economic Development" by Ester Boserup in 1970. Boserup's book posed an argument for the central position women occupy in their communities and development processes (Visvanathan, 1997:18 & Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:25). The WID framework is connected and grounded in modernisation theory. It stems from the realisation that the effects and benefits of modernisations did not

reach all women. The focus of WID was to integrate women into systems already present. WID also recognised that certain systemic and societal changes were necessary for this integration to be successful (Visvanathan, 1997:18,19). The Women in Development framework do not address the role of underlying structures and the role that men occupy as reasons for gender inequality (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:25). Critique arose toward the WID framework as it focussed specifically on instrumentalising women for productivity and other goals. There was an exclusive focus on women (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:25). Women in Development are materialistic and instrumentalist in nature. This framework sees women more as instruments of development for other goals "rather than promoting equality as an end in itself" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:3). Women as agents of productivity were emphasised in the WID framework. The questions that women raised became visible in development theory and practice (Visvanathan, 1997:18,19).

5.3.2 Women and Development (WAD)

Following critique of modernisation theory and the WID framework, the Women and Development (WAD) framework emerged. This shift is seen in the latter half of the 1970's (Visvanathan, 1997:18). WAD shifts the focus and highlights that women have always been a part of development processes. It is therefore a myth to say that women would only now be integrated in development discourse and practice. A strong focus is placed on the relationship between women and development processes. The WAD framework made the meaningful contribution that women are accepted and recognised and important and crucial economic actors in their societies. The work that women do in both the public and private sphere is crucial for the maintenance of societal structures. WAD concentrates on the integration of women and development that sustains the existing international structures of inequality. The WAD framework did not analyse the relationship between patriarchy, modes of production and the subordination and oppression of women. The WAD framework discourages a strict analytical focus on the problems of women independent of the problems of men. WAD rather places the focus on the disadvantages of all sexes because of oppressive global structures based on your class and capital. The WAD approach moves from the assumption that if international structures can become more equitable, the positions of women will

automatically improve. There is not a specific focus placed on the relation between different gender roles (Visvanathan, 1997:18,19). A conceptual shift can be seen from WID to GAD. This was announced in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. "The study of women and development processes is located at the intersection of development studies and women's studies. Each of these fields has evolved from study and research, which draw from one or more of the social sciences for knowledge of historical events and academically grounded theories" (Visvanathan, 1997: 1). The activist nature of women's studies has been seen as a movement in the direction of changing the status of women. This movement has redefined dominant paradigms and redefined boundaries of knowledge. This movement changed what was set patterns in the rules that governs social research as it used diverse methods of inquiry. Through activism in public arenas and academic forums, women's studies scholars and students have initiated societal changes (Visvanathan,1997:1).

5.3.3 Gender and Development (GAD)

The Gender and Development (GAD) framework was developed in the 1980s and strongly influenced by social feminist thought. GAD embraces a holistic perspective when looking at all aspects of the lives of women. The GAD framework questions the basis of assigning specific gender roles to specific sexes. The GAD approach was announced in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. It was intended to replace its predecessor, the WID approach, which was introduced in the 1970s and marked the first time the role of women in international development was recognised and discussed (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:2). GAD is strongly influenced by social feminist thought. The GAD framework places a specific focus on the social construction of gender roles in relation to structural inequalities and gender relations (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:3).

A holistic approach to all aspects of women's lives is used. GAD does not accept the basis of assigning specific gender roles to specific sexes. This framework contributes in a way that women's solidarity is not the only emphasis. Women contribute inside and outside of the households and can also be contributions in non-commodity production. The GAD framework does not function with the separation of public and

private, therefore special attention is given to women who are oppressed in their private lives, in their families and homes. GAD emphasised that the state has an obligation to provide social services that will enable the emancipation of women. Women are not seen as passive recipients of development but as agents of change. Women need to organise themselves to have an effective political voice. The GAD framework recognises the oppressive role that patriarchy holds. GAD places special attention to strengthen the legal rights of women and focuses on destabilising the existing power structures in society between men and women (Visvanathan, 1997:18,19).

The GAD framework does not specifically mention religion. It does however pave the way for an intersectional study of gender norms and roles and the surrounding power structures thereof. The current institutional power imbalances and the attitudes of practitioners have kept these intersectional subjects like religion and gender at the margin (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:3). Khalaf-Eledge (2022:3,25,26) argues that the GAD paradigm in practice is only a name changes as gender initiatives in development continue to only focus on women in isolation. The solution that are offered are materialistic to women who occupy subordinated roles. The GAD "...argues that a focus on women in isolation means to ignore women's structural subordination to men, which is the *real* problem".

Khalaf-Eledge presents her research to show that the gap between GAD theory and practice must first take place before religious partnerships are formed. This would be the opposite of what is true for the last two decades (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:3). "Feminist writers have thus called for the decolonisation of development. They argue that development must be seen as a global project rather than a Western service. This entails ending the idea of the 'western expert' and conceptions of religions as either regressive or an instrument for development. A decolonial GAD approach would recognise that feminist movements do not only exist in the west and that gender discrimination and political religion is not unique to the global south" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:3). Many different theoretical models and frameworks are constructed. "There is no evidence that the framework that do exist in theory are in fact used in development practice" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:30). Nora Khalaf-Eledge (2022:2)

argues that for development to appropriately address the religion-gender nexus, GAD must be better implemented overall.

5.4 The United Nations and Gender Equality
5.4.1 Gender equality or gender equity?

There is a definite growth in literature that is critical towards discrimination of race and gender as well as sexual harassment. This is also seen in the public sphere in movements such as #MeToo, #TimesUp and Black Lives Matter (Fenner, 2020:619). A Lack of diversity halts creativity and promotes a culture where discrimination is accepted (Fenner, 2020:619). Speaking from the medicine context, Fenner (2020:619) notes that the lack of equity and equality is not only present in that field. "'Equality' refers to the idea that all human beings have intrinsic worth" (Riggs, 1996:84). Theologically equality is based on humans created in God's image. From a philosophical understanding equality is based on respect to other humans as rational beings. Equality is realised when humans can rise above empirical differences and see that which is essential, that we all share humanity (Riggs, 1996:84).

As Fenner states: "It is often a misconception that treating everyone the same (equally) is good enough, but this magnifies the problem" (Fenner, 2020:620) and "equality implies that the playing field is equal for all and that everyone benefits from the same support" (Fenner, 2020:620). The playing field is not the same for everyone, this cannot be used as the starting point of the discussion. An example that illustrates this difference is seen in the article by England & Gad (2002) studying equality and equity in the paid employment of women in Canada. The point of departure was the question "what is meant by equal opportunity?". The equal employment of women in Canada developed at the same time as the liberal rights discourse which stated that everyone should be treated similarly, and women should not be treated any different than men. With this as a starting reference equality "means equal or the same" (England & Gad, 2002: 283). Equity refers to justice or what is fair and morally right. When these definitions of equity are used equality does not necessarily involve equity and the other way around. Discussing these terms is important so help structure public and political debates (England & Gad, 2002: 283). Daniels, Creese, Hey, Leonard, & Smith (2001:112) did a study on "Gender and

learning: equity equality and pedagogy" where they note that "the pursuit of equity in education has been guided and enhanced by an analysis focused on equality of opportunity".

Other studies have also been done where only a single category is the driver. They are one in that equity in education cannot be based on the equal allocation of resources to all the pupils. Equity as approach should rather be how differences can be recognized and how there can be responded in an equitable manner (Daniels et al, 2001:112). Equity as a concept may be embedded in two distinct sources. In the first-place equity is in reference to equality which means equity can be realized through central and decentralizing actions by certain agencies that are identified for example the state. In the second place, equity can be in reference to diversity when it is realized in settings, regions, and locations (Daniels et al, 2001:112). Equality does not mean to be the same one should rather think of equality in difference (Daniels et al, 2001:112). In practice this would mean that not everyone will be treated the same. When treating people equally it does mean that everyone should be treated fairly (Daniels et al, 2001:113). The starting point is important when looking at policies, is the focus of policies the equality input or the equality of the outcomes. For equality to be present in the outcomes it should require or could require unequal inputs (England & Gad, 2002: 283). When looking at wage differences between genders, employment equity policies often aim to improve the opportunities that women have for employment (England & Gad, 2002: 283). A misconception is often present when wages are compared in the same occupation, as women are not always in the same occupations as men. "Pay equity policies attempt to compensate for the discriminatory effects created by occupational and industrial sector segregation" (England & Gad, 2002: 283). Equity legislation is the mechanism that is used to enforce equality The other way that is used is the compliant based mechanism and another way is proactive mechanisms. All these different mechanisms have different requirements of women, for example in some areas women individually or through unions should lodge complaints (England & Gad, 2002: 285).

Fenner (2020:620) states that equality and equity is not enough, justice is necessary. Justice is realised by "breaking down the barriers" (Fenner, 2020:620). In feminist thought transcending empirical differences as seeing that we all share the essence that makes us human and therefore equal is emphasised by the notion of embodiment. Embodiment as a way to correct the essentialist proposition. The Image of God embraced difference and particularity. Equality is feminist thoughts founded in relationality. "Equality thus refers to relationships that empower groups of people who have been considered unequal on the basis of differences, such as race, gender, and class" (Riggs, 1996:85).

5.4.2 The United Nations

According to the United Nations (n.d.), The UN[73] was founded in 1945. The structure was also established in this year and is formed by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. According to UN Women (n.d.), the United Nations faced difficult challenges to promote gender equality globally. These challenges include limited funding and "no single recognized driver to direct UN activities on gender equality issues". In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women[74], the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to address such challenges. This enabled UN Member States to accelerate the goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women was part of the UN reform agenda where resources and mandates were grouped together for more efficiency and impact. UN Women (n.d.) has certain priorities: UN Women is the specific entity of the UN that is focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The UN Women

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[73]UN is described as follows by United Nations (n.d.) "As the world's only truly universal global organization, the United Nations has become the foremost forum to address issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone".

[74]UN Women (n.d.) builds on four previously distinct parts of the UN with a specific focus on gender equality and women's empowerment: Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW); International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI); United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

is a "global champion for women and girls". UN Women was founded to speed up progress on meeting worldwide needs. The work of UN women is further described by the support to UN Member states "as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes, and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities:"

The four strategic priorities as set out by UN Women are as follows:
1. Women lead, participate in, and benefit equally from governance systems.
2. Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy.
3. All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence.
4. Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action.

UN Women (n.d.) coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality with focus on the agreements linked to the 2030 agenda. "The entity works to position gender equality as fundamental to the Sustainable Development Goals, and a more inclusive world." Gender equality is one of the main foci, "gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth. Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes".

UN Women have seen progress in the goals to reach gender equality by themselves and the UN over the past decades. One of the great moments of progress was the agreement Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the

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Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). "Achieving women's full equality in all areas is also the object and purpose of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979" (Rudolf, 2020: 75). CEDAW, that helped to pave a way for reaching equality of women describes its purpose as "eradicating individual and structural discrimination of women in all areas - political, economic and social life" (Rudolf, 2020: 78). The UN website (n.d.) also states that working for the empowerment and rights of women and girls globally, UN Women's (n.d.) main roles are:

1. To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
2. To help Member States implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
3. To lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality, as well as promote accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

SDG 5 has its foundation in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Program for Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The BPFA was the most influential platform for gender equality in terms of policies and practices until 2015 (Odera & Mulusa, 2020:97). A global binding standard is necessary to achieve gender equality, the recommendations from CEDAW can prove useful for the SDGs as well (Rudolf, 2020:79). The root causes of discrimination need to be addressed, a blueprint for comprehensive action which ensures interlinking issues are seen and addressed appropriately (Rudolf, 2020: 83).

5.5 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

On 25 September 2015, the 193 member states of the United Nations (UN) unanimously adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 goals

and 169 targets aiming to transform the world over the next 15 years. "The SDGs comprise 17 goals with 169 targets that were signed by the 193 UN member states in 2015. They have replaced the MDGs, which ran from 2000 to 2015, and are part of a broader Agenda 2030, reflecting the aim that they should be achieved by the year 2030" (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1 & Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:102). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ran from 2000-2015. SDGs are also known as "Agenda 2030" (Haustein & Tomalin, 2019:5). According to the Sustainable Development Goals website (n.d), the SDGs are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich, and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go together with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. More important than ever, the goals provide a critical framework for COVID-19 recovery.

Global goals are instruments that translate norms from the language of words to numbers. Time-bound targets are set in place to meet the goals. Reaching the SDGs is voluntary which makes the goals harder to reach[75] (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021,28,29). The progress on the 2030 agenda was slow and criticisms started to come forward[76]. Some criticisms include the lack of funding and the lack of government commitment. Other critics argue that the SDG targets are conceptually too complex and struggle to be converted to targets that can be measured. The SDGs can be problematic as they lack prioritization and there are many goals with little focus for meaningful policymaking (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:29 & Odera & Mulusa, 2020:100). Criticisms also appears from work that was done before the SDGs. CEDAW can be used to promote a gender-sensitive SDG implementation. "It is striking that, despite the strong commitment to gender mainstreaming in the 2030 agenda, the resolution on

[75]The UN lack sanctions, there are very few mechanisms in place to ensure that the targets are reached by 2030. Agenda 2030 is a form of soft international law (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021: 28,29).
[76] The Corona pandemic significantly impacted progress on Agenda 2030. UN secretary general called the corona virus the most challenging crisis since WWII. SDGs are interrelated problems (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:29).

follow-up and review does not contain any provision on how to ensure that this commitment is honoured" (Rudolf, 2020: 84).

5.5.1 Different approaches: especially in terms of consultation

Sidibé (2016:1) rightly notes that "the sun has set on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the era of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) has dawned". The SDGs use a progressive approach to development that is multisectoral, weaving together different global efforts that are people centered to transform development. This is different from the MDGs that measured progress with averages that is not always able to show gaps between countries and communities. "The MDGs were also perceived by many as a top-down Global North to Global South exercise, whereas the SDGs apply equally and contain goals and targets for countries of the Global North and South" (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:103). SDGs are a welcome change to the MDGs. The MDGs made progress on some indicators, however they were not very effective in reducing inequality. The persistence of violence against women still has a crippling effect on the ability of women to contribute and benefit from broader developmental processes. This was after 15 years of MDGs. Although improvement was seen, gender disparities still exist (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1).

A central commitment of the SDGs is to make sure that no-one is "left behind," which in essence seeks to support a more inclusive approach to development that ensures the poorest and most marginalized do not lose out (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:103). The SDGs has the potential to bring more transformation than the MDGs. The SDGs and SDG 5 are more direct in addressing specific issues in the lives of women (Odera & Mulusa, 2020:97). The SDGs aim to ensure a grassroot and locally owned development. This approach moves from the understanding that people that are local in an area can better understand and respond to development challenges. "Since local societies in development aid recipient countries are often centered around faith communities, the engagement and role played by them becomes even more critical to the discussion on sustainable development" (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:103).

The MDGs were set whilst only consulting within the United Nations and not civil society. There SDGs followed a different approach which included a "wide-reaching negotiation process within the UN as well as what was claimed to be the largest civil society consultation ever held in its history" made possible via the use of a website (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:102). In the consultation process as well as the implementation phase, there has been a coordinated effort from within the UN to engage with civil society actors, including those who are faith-based. The UN inter-agency task force on engaging faith-based actors for sustainable development played a leading role. The Emergence of the Post-2015 Agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were the outcome of several years of discussion and negotiation, hosted by the UN, that began in 2012 as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were reaching their cut-off date of 2015[77] (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:108).

The SDG consultation process, starting in 2012, noted how civil society and the private sector in becoming ever more involved in different approaches and techniques, to executing the goals[78] (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:103). Although the SDG consultation process claimed to be the largest ever held in the UN's history and gathered the views of a wide range of stakeholders in many different parts of the globe, there was also criticism that the consultation did not extend as far as it could have done and that the negotiations were biased in favor of state inputs. It was, however, a considerable improvement on the MDGs selection process, meaning that governments and civil society actors were likely to feel more committed to the SDGs (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:109). Moreover, the fact that they are global in nature

[77]The process of consultation aimed to reach as many stakeholders as possible. These stakeholders include governments, NGOs, the private sector, and universities as well as the general public. "The SDGOWG completed its work in July 2014 and in October 2014 Ambassador David Donoghue of Ireland and Ambassador Macharia Kamau were appointed as co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations that would finalize the post 2015 development agenda and to produce the text of Transforming our World: the2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:108) These negotiations ran from December 2014 to August 2015 and involved all 193 member states as well as structures for input from NGO's (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:109).
[78]Civil society actors participated in the UN High-Level Political forums on Sustainable Development meetings. States carried out country level consultations to help with deciding the SDG indicators and data collection points. The role of civil society actors was highly increased during the consultation process (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:108).

and that they aim to directly tackle inequality is of great appeal to those in the Global South (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:109).

5.5.2 The significant role of religion

The significant role of religion is also seen in the global development discourse and practice. More and more development aid is being directed through faith-based initiatives and organizations. Religion is ever more being recognized as a human resource and not as an obstacle to development (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:102). More faith actors are being included in development policy. May faith actors adopted the MDGs and also joined the cooperation to achieve the SDGs (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:102). It is worth to note and critical to understand that none of these sustainable development goals can be achieved in isolation[79]. The sustainable development goals require everybody: governments, multilaterals, the private sector, and civil society as well as faith communities to build strong connections between efforts to address health injustice, inequality, poverty, and conflict (Sidibé:2016:1).

5.5.3 Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality (Equity?)

Gender equality was an MDG, known as MDG-3. SDG 5 is part of the 2030 Agenda to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. This will be achieved by eliminating gender disparities, discrimination and violence against women and girls. All harmful practices and forms of violence are targeted by setting specific targets and indicators (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1 & Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:29). The SDGs gave explicit focus on eliminating all violence everywhere and identified social and political enablers of gender equality that eventually reduce violence against women and girls (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1). "Thus, SDGs recognised the impact of violence against women and girls on well-being of women in specific and on developmental agenda in general and acknowledges tacitly that violence against women and girls

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[79] SDG 16 has targets that equality contributes to this goal. SDG 5 and 16 addresses violence against women and girls through four targets, 5,2; 5.3; 16.1 and 16.2 (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1).

are preventable" (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1). This is an important recognition. "It is known that violence against women and girls are widespread and are rooted in the gender inequalities of power and resources."Institutionalised inequalities are rooted in government policies, the laws that govern and societal norms that deny certain rights to women and grant them to men (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1). It therefore requires a multi-faceted approach to prevent and end this violence. These interventions need to be taken on all levels of societies (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1)."They must include policy reforms addressing violence directly and indirect drivers like economic and gender inequalities; reorient and prepare the public health system and engaging communities for violence prevention. Multi-sectional programmes engaging multiple stakeholders seem to be successful to transforms deeply entrenched attitudes and behaviours" (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 1,2). The prevention of violence against women and girls is possible. The implementation and accountability of implementation needs to be taken seriously. Systematic discrimination needs to be recognised (Babu & Kusuma, 2017: 2).

5.6 Gender… the problem that not everyone wants to talk about

Eden and Wagstaff (2021:30) define SDG 5 as a wicked problem[80]. Wicked problems refer to those problems that are in effect unsolvable. The solution for a wicked problem can be good or bad but not right or wrong. Wicked problems are defined by certain features. It cannot be certain that a wicked problem will stop being a problem in the future. Wicked problems can be symptomatic of other problems that are present. Wicked problems cannot be solved in a specific way, and no test can immediately be used to calculate if the solution was effective. Possible solutions may also have negative effects (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:30). A wicked problem is complex and become more complex when the diversity of stakeholders and institutional contexts rise. The rise in stakeholders effectively means a rise in the number of preferences and interests which can result in an increase of conflict (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:30,31). New and different ways of thinking are needed while partnering and collaborating with societal actors can help to share the joint

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[80] Wicked problems and literature on wicked problems arose as a critique to the systems approach to policymaking (Eden &Wagstaff, 2020:30).

responsibility for possible solutions. SDG 5 can be seen as a wicked problem as the problem is systemically grounded. SDG 5 is inherently complex, interrelated and is materialized between public and private sphere. Specific vulnerable groups are mentioned: women, children, minorities, migrants, and refugees as no vulnerable group can be left behind.

SDG 5 with 9 targets and 14 indicators as well as others gender specific indicators result that 22% of the indicators for the 17 sustainable development goals are gender specific. Gender[81] equality is intersectional and very important as a goal for the 2030 agenda (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:31) as is seen in other gender specific targets in the SDGs. These include SDG 4.5 to eliminate gender disparity in education; SDG 6.2 ensure women's access to adequate sanitation; SDG 8.5 equal pay for work of equal value; SDG 11.3 safe and affordable transport for women. SDG 17 is seen as a way of implementation, which is made possible by changing policies and institutional change that will bring transformation (Odera & Mulusa, 2020:98).

5.6.1 How to measure gender (in)equality

There are different ways to measure gender (in)equality. One way is to use gender inequality indexes. There are several gender inequality indexes, government policies and laws promoting gender equality. Policies on paper are not the same as policies in practice. The second way is to examine gender-based statistics. Statistical indexes are the most common empirical method for estimating differences between men and women. The two best known indexes are the United Nations development program UNDP[82] global inequality index GII which is available since 2010. The second index is the World Economic forum's WEF global gender gap index GGGI[83] which is available since 2006. NGOs have started to build new indexes for SDG 5 in

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[81] Gender refers to roles that are socially constructed and responsibilities that societies consider appropriate for men and women (Eden & Wagstaff, 2020:31).
[82] The UNDP global inequality index knows as GII is designed to measure the human development cost of gender inequality (Eden & Wagstaff, 2020:33).
[83] The WEF global gender gap index GGG I measure the gap between men and women in four target areas. Firstly, economic participation and opportunity. Secondly, health and survival. Thirdly, political empowerment and lastly, educational attainment (Eden & Wagstaff, 2020:34).

response to the United Nations' decision to measure gender equality across countries and time by collecting a broad set of socio-economic indicators on workplace gender inequality and women empowerment. There are five indexes that compare them in terms of the SDG 5 targets and indicators[84] (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:33). SDG 5 is designed to capture both gender inequality and empowerment particularly for marginalized groups and others that are left behind. The SDG 5 targets also consider not only gender inequality outcomes but their antecedents such as government policies laws and customs (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:37). In the past measuring gender equality was mainly done with a focus on workplace equality. SDG 5 is about the empowerment of women and girls' equality. This equality is between men and women and includes all rights and opportunities, the value and treatment, and the empowerment of women. Empowerment has been known to be a fundamental and necessary input for economic and social development. Women's disempowerment is pervasive and embedded in societies around the world. This empowerment has four dimensions. Firstly, regarding decision making which entails whether decisions are made by one or both groups. Secondly, conflict resolution, this is how disagreements are resolved. Thirdly is resource distribution. The last dimension is status. The true clash of civilizations is not about religion or ethnicity, but about the subordination of women (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021:33).

5.7 Sustainable Development goal 5: Targets and Indicators

- Target 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

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[84] The OECD social institutions and gender index (SIGI) was created to track progress on gender equality for the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. It has five targets and scores 120 countries which organizes them into quantiles. The SIGI has a shorter time series and includes fewer countries than either the G II or the GGG I equal measures 2030 SDG gender index. The EM2030 index was using indicators developed by the interagency and expert group on SDG indicators. This index was developed from several frameworks using the United Nations women sustainable development goal indicator framework and women turning promises into action report. The United Nations minimum set of gender indicators agreed by the United Nations statistical Commission in 2013 and they're ready to measure study produced by data 2X. There are now 2E M 2030 indexes a broad index including 51 gender related indicators from 14 SDGS and narrow index for only SDG 5 indicators (Eden & Wagstaff, 2020:34).

- o Indicator 5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
- Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
  - o Indicator 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
  - o Indicator 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
- Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
  - o Indicator 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
  - o Indicator 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
- Target 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
  - o Indicator 5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
- Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
  - o Indicator 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (*a*) national parliaments and (*b*) local governments
  - o Indicator 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions

- Target 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
  - o Indicator 5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
  - o Indicator 5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
- Target 5a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
  - o Indicators 5.a.1 Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (*b*) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
  - o Indicator 5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
- Target 5b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
  - o Indicators 5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
- Target 5c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels
  - o Indicators 5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

5.8 Religion, Gender, and Development – The religion-gender nexus

Nora Khalaf-Eledge (2022:1) notes how over the last two decades there is a definite relationship between development organisations and religious actors. The collaboration ranges between several issues such as "healthcare, humanitarian assistance, access to finance, peacebuilding, education, and gender equality". Gender is one of the issues that can often hinder collaboration. Gender can also be an issue that hampers working effectively towards certain goals. As Khalaf-Eledge (2022:1) notes: "gender is not just *one* of these issues, when it comes to religion and development, gender can easily be considered *the* issue". The religious beliefs and practices of individuals and communities are central in shaping and maintaining gender roles in their societies. Religious beliefs and practices have inspired patriarchal and emancipatory change (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:1).

The nexus that exists between religion and development is recognised by scholars. The implications regarding the implementation for development policies are not explored enough (Narayanan, 2016:149). In engaging with faith actors, governments and NGOs need to recognize that some areas are sensitive due to the impact of religious teachings and theologies. This includes debates over gender equality and LGBT rights (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:115). These issues are important to address so that the SDGs can be met and recognizing that some areas are sensitive does not mean that they should be avoided or ignored[85]. However, addressing them is likely to require time and space for dialogue, including gaining a sense of doctrinal diversity on this issue and seeking alliances with faith actors[86] who are committed to equality in all areas (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:115).

When religion enters the public domain or become an important political agent it tends to circle around gender issues. Gender norms define the power structures of

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[85] A result of difficult problems for policymakers, or defining a problem as a wicked problem, can cause an overwhelming effect that results in these issues being avoided. Policymakers are rather encouraged to search for different modes of imperfect governance and focusing on small wins with difficult issues (Eden & Wagstaff, 2020:31).

[86] FBOs can be very helpful in the role of mediator between secular human rights goals and conservative religious ideologies. FBOs can give the necessary language between the groups and help to construct a shared moral vision (Tomalin, 2019:115).

communities, therefore the specific focus on gender issues in political religion[87].
Gender norms can preserve traditional divisions of labour and can maintain the
status quo in communities. The language of religion also adds legitimacy as can be
seen in patriarchal gender norms. Using language in this way makes these norms
seem divinely ordained and static (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:1). "Patriarchies are the
most common gendered systems of power. Therefore, they are a key focus in
feminist theory" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:12). There are not always clear boundaries
between patriarchy and religion. Patriarchal systems often use religion to enhance
and legitimise the existing power structures that maintains current gender norms.
Religion can legitimise and conceal patriarchy. Patriarchal power structures can
shed light with the interaction of religion and gender as patriarchies are systems in
which men are more likely to be in position of power (be it social, economic, or
political) than women[88] (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:12). These structural inequalities that
exist can be structured in a way that women still have agency. This can be true even
if the system is designed not to prioritise their interests. Women may also benefit
from patriarchal norms in certain situations and support ideologies that are gender
oppressive. Understanding this is important for development practitioners because
there is a "widespread belief that increasing women's participation alone or
partnering with women will automatically generate more 'women-friendly' results"
(Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:13). Religious arguments can be used and are used to
condone domestic violence, issues such as marital rape, child marriage and female
genital mutilation. Patriarchal interpretations of religions discriminate against all
genders whose behaviour or appearance is not in line with what is considered a
traditional norm. It is universally propagated that patriarchy and religion are
connected and cannot be separated. This is seen in political authorities and in high-
and low-income countries. This narrative keeps power where it is and enforces social

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[87] Issues that consistently features in political religions include same-sex marriage, reproductive health,
and sex education (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:1).
[88] Hegemonic masculinity how men maintain dominance in societies. "Hegemonic masculinity refers to
the collective learnt patterns of behaviour that perpetuate men's dominance over women" concept has
received criticism. unity of all men? "The concepts of hegemonic masculinity in the context of religion
remains unexplored. Nevertheless, sociologists have observed patriarchal structures within many
religions" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:13).

norms (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:1). "This global (re)emergence of political religion has been interpreted as a direct patriarchal response to the perceived threat of gender equality, feminism and the emancipations of women" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:2). The religion-gender nexus is a global occurrence. Development practitioners should be aware of this and acknowledge the need to engage in a critical and direct manner with this intersection. Development practitioners are increasingly reliant on faith partnerships. They have been slow to address the gender implications of these partnerships (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:2).

A review as part of a prevention series published by the UN 'local faith actors: learning from practice' (2021) states that faith-based actors (such as formal and informal faith-based leaders and organizations) and traditional actors (such as chiefs, traditional healers, elders, and mothers-in-law) are increasingly recognized as key to preventing violence against women and girls and crucial to realizing the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5 (achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030). These actors can promote beliefs, norms and practices that support and enable prevention of violence against women and girls, but they can also encourage and legitimize certain forms of violence. Therefore, their reach and influence cannot be ignored, especially given their unique position in households and communities. Khalaf-Eledge (2022:2) warns that: "if development continues to ignore this issue, it perpetuates the dangerous confusion of religion and patriarchy which not only obstructs gender equality but also sacralises it". Religion and development are connected but there is very limited literature available on the religion-gender nexus. (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:11). "Gender inequality in religious traditions is produced by the same structures that maintain it anywhere" Gender inequality is not driven by another agenda in religious traditions. It is a misconception that religion is more prone to gender inequality than other social systems. This misconception is continually being promoted within development practice. A conceptual focus recognises that the religions are context dependant and situated within histories. Universal and timeless claims about individual religious traditions are irresponsible

(Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:12). Gender essentialism[89], the idea that genders are inherently different, is critiqued by feminist theory. Feminist theory suggest, in contrast to gender essentialism, that the assumed differences between genders are socially constructed. These norms are maintained by gender hierarchies and the patterns of inequality. "Social constructionist theory has provided the basis for feminist critiques of gender essentialism" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:15). The social constructionist theory was applied to gender by post-structural feminist philosopher, Butler in 1990. She created the theory of gender performativity [90]. Individuals continue to participate in the lifelong construction of their gendered identity. "The concept of gender performativity remains under-analysed in the realm of religion (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:15). Gender norms are constantly constructed, while religious interpretations can enforce, modify, or mirror current power dynamics (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:19). Religion and development are weaved together, they are entangled. This global phenomenon shapes the daily lives of billions of people. It has far-reaching influences. This is enough reason to argue that "this intersection merits development's immediate attention" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:20).

Khalaf-Eledge (2022:50) distinguished four main ways in which religion and development have crossed paths. Firstly, religious institutions have a history of providing welfare and offering humanitarian assistance as well as social services. Secondly, "religious actors' contributions and oppositions to the gender goals of the Beijing Platforms for Action over the past 25 years". Thirdly, development and religions have a relationship with "spanning Christianity-infused colonial missions, a secular post-war era, and a recent turn to religious partners". Fourthly, "Development's current religious partnerships and their potential negative gender impacts" (Khalaf-Elledge 2022:50).

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[89] Gender essentialism versus social constructionism "Gender essentialism refers to the idea that men and women are inherently different and that this difference is based on unique and natural attributes that qualify them as separate genders". "Essentialist theories present a binary understanding of gender that pits all women against all men, and vice versa" (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:14).
[90] Performative gender is when people live out certain gender roles until they believe that they were born with those specific roles (Khalaf-Eledge, 2022:15).

5.9 Religion and Sustainable Development

Faith-based organizations are unique, and it is essential that partners and stakeholders understand how to work with faith-based organizations. This is necessary to overcome theological and ideological challenges to partnerships that all are already part of the landscape. This is a very important relationship that the United Nations (UN) recognizes. Therefore, the interagency task force on engaging with faith-based organizations for sustainable development was formed in 2009 under the aegis of the United Nations development group (UNDG). This brought together several United Nations entities such as the United nations population fund (UNFPA), The United nations children emergency fund (UNICEF), United Nations development program (UNDP), World Health Organization(WHO), the joint United Nations programme on HIV and AIDS(UNAIDS), The United nations alliance of civilizations, The United nations department of economic and social affairs (DESA), The United nations educational scientific and cultural organization(UNESCO), UNhabitat and the United nations environment program (UNEP) with the World Bank as an observer (Sidibé:2016:1,2.) "The group has grown and is now referred to as the "Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development", AITF (Sidibé:2016:2).

The interagency task force on religion and development has the mandate to seek and share knowledge to build United Nations staff and system capacities to partner with faith-based actors and address questions of religion around the Millennium Development Goals and now the sustainable development goals (Sidibé, 2016:2). Faith Based organizations are central to development work and the promotion of human rights there are the expectation that representatives of religious organizations will be held more accountable for the protection and promotion of human rights as this partnership has increased (Sidibé, 2016:2). The sustainable development goals provide a variety and range of opportunities for faith-based organizations to engage. This growing interest from international organizations to build partnerships with faith-based organizations has made for a crowded and growing field but as the author notes it is also a minefield. The influence of religion in areas such as sexual and reproductive health issues such as gender equality and in situations of conflict and crisis can be both extremely positive and profoundly negative. Therefore, the IATF can play a role (Sidibé: 2016:3).

5.10 SDG 5 in conversation with the characteristics of feminist spiritualities

Having established a clear link between religion and sustainable development and the importance of focusing on gender within this discourse, it is now also important to emphasise why this study focuses on feminist spirituality as a way to realise the outcomes of the sustainable development goal of gender equality(equity).

The link between religion and sustainable development as indicated above challenges binary hierarchical and patriarchal epistemologies and constructions of knowledge. For any aspect of the SDG 5 to be realised deconstruction and critique of binary, hierarchical and patriarchal epistemologies are necessary.

It is necessary because for women's equality to be realised women have to be recognised as co-creators of knowledge and co-creators of their own realities. Feminist spiritualities' characteristics exhibits exactly this challenge. Namely, how women's ways of knowing and understanding through their own spiritualities are recognised. The link between religion and spirituality, as explored in Chapter 1, proves valuable in this discussion. The characteristics of feminist spiritualities were discussed more broadly in Chapter Three. Feminist spiritualities values bodies, emotions, and their aspirations. Feminist spiritualities understands relationships relationally and place a great emphasis on connectedness and community. Feminist spiritualities is focused on liberating the earth. Inclusivity, a holistic worldview, and an integrated worldview are present in feminist spiritualities. One characteristic that is always present in feminist spiritualities is the foundation of women's own experience. The targets of SDG 5 are weaved together as one will influence the others. These targets are also in conversation with the characteristics of feminist spiritualities.

The SDGs focus on a grassroot approach where problems are identified from local communities. Possible solutions and action plans gain valuable input from local organisations and communities. Structural inequalities are being addressed through the SDGs. Community and religious leaders are participating to effectively reach the targets and are already bringing sustainable change. SDGs aim to listen and consult more broadly. This creates an opportunity for dialogue between feminist spiritualties which can help with the friction in the relationship between religion and sustainable

development. Feminist spiritualities and the value of the physical body is important for SDG 5. Bodies being taken seriously, autonomy over your own body and making decisions regarding your body is critical for feminist spiritualities. Emotions and aspirations of women are taken seriously, SDG 5's targets and indicators want to enable women and girls to be able to participate on equal terms in systems that do not currently provide this opportunity. Certain targets of SDG 5 place a prominent focus on the bodies of women. This is seen in Target 5.2[91] "Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation" and in Target 5.3[92] "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation". Target 5.6[93] "Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences" is another target that is in direct conversation with feminist spiritualities.

When looking at previous studies' certain areas of friction in the field of religion and development can be identified. Family planning, child protection, the practice of child marriage, female genital mutilation and the issue of immunization are some that are relevant to SDG 5. Other issues can be seen such as harm reduction, violence against women, discrimination and stigma around sexuality and gender identity. Reproductive health and services, life issues, and faith activities such as prayer has also been identified. Faith based actors that are engaging in development may have

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[91] This target will be measured by two indicators. Indicator 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age. Indicator 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
[92] This target will be measured by two indicators. Indicator 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18. Indicator 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
[93] This target will be measured by two indicators. Indicator 5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care. Indicator 5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information, and education

conflicts of interests when religious doctrine is an important part of the conflict (Sidibé: 2016:3). Faith-based organizations are unique and can contribute in a unique way to global efforts. It would be unfair and unjust to not mobilize and utilize all that they can offer at this moment (Sidibé: 2016:4).

The religion-gender nexus and the lack of research in this area creates an opportunity for dialogue with feminist spiritualities. To have a productive relationship between religion and development three challenges should be addressed. Firstly, a way forward needs to be set in place where ideological differences are set aside. In this way violence can be eliminated and the needs of adolescent girls can be addressed. Girls and women should be able to be in control of their own sexual and reproductive health, their decision to get married and to whom, their decision to have children, and how to be safe in reproductive health (Sidibé: 2016:4). This challenge makes it clear that SDG 5 as well as Feminist spiritualties takes the bodies and autonomy in decision making of all people seriously. Secondly, the positive power that lies within religion should be used in such a way that religious extremism is challenged. This can curb the violent conflict that is the drivers of stigma and discrimination (Sidibé: 2016:4). This approach to religion acknowledges the intersections and connectedness of religion and development as well as the spiritualties that enables this change. Conversation and the challenge of dualisms play an important part in this challenge. Thirdly, more effective strategies need to be put in place to partner with the health and educational infrastructure. In many cases these bodies are managed by religious structures and community networks (Sidibé: 2016:4). The SDG targets are interweaved. In addressing one, others are automatically challenged or changed. The structures that need to be addressed can and should start from local communities. Feminist spiritualties acknowledges that the power of change lies within individuals and groups that live these characteristics. Where the private and political, personal, and communal, religious, and secular are not separated and where change is possible from all perspectives.

A specific focus of feminist spiritualties is focused on the liberation of the earth. Another characteristic of feminist spiritualities is the focus on inclusivity, a holistic view and integration. A holistic worldview cannot separate the liberation of

marginalised groups from the liberation of the earth. A study with a systematic review was done to evaluate the impacts of urban adaptation options on SDG 5. The authors also identified key knowledge gaps and reflects on expanding the scope of SDG 5 to take a more intersectional and relational approach to gender equality (Divya, Farhana, Singh, 2021:1). More than half of the world's inhabitants live in cities. This means that they stand on the frontline of climate change and sustainable development (Divya, Farhana, Singh, 2021:1). Normative patriarchal social structures in certain communities and countries guarantee that the positions of women stay subordinate. The subordination of women is present in the family structure and community structure as their socially described gender roles forms barriers to change. It should be noted that not all men or all women are equally vulnerable or resilient. Vulnerabilities can differ between different groups as the intersections of public, financial, political, environmental, and cultural conditions are also at play (Divya, Farhana, Singh, 2021:2). A landscape of 'gender differentiated vulnerability' shows how change of climate can play a very important role in maintaining or changing equalities that are present (Divya, Farhana, Singh, 2021:2). Here it is proved how different SDGs affect one another. SDG 5 provides a valuable starting point for identifying the potential of adaptation strategies in enhancing or depreciating discrimination against women (Divya, Farhana, Singh, 2021:2). The results of this particular study of climate change in cities showed that cities are at the forefront of climate action. Cities are key to the transformation agenda as cities are deeply unequal spaces. Climate changes are not experienced the same way by all. The experiences are highly gendered as certain groups are more marginalized (Divya, Farhana, Singh, 2021:8). Regional power dynamics should be studied and challenged as local social and cultural contexts shape these dynamics. The structural drivers of gender inequalities need to be engaged. If this is not done there is the risk of repeating or strengthening gender inequalities that are present in local communities which will lead to unequal outcomes. Women are the first to experience the negative outcomes in regions where adaptations do not challenge the existing biases in their local structures (Divya, Farhana, Singh, 2021:9). Gender equality and ecological decision-making should not be addressed separately. The targets of SDG 5 are linked with one another and to the everyday lives of women and men in forests. To effectively enable change, one target would affect the others.

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This shines light on the important need to understand the systemic connections in a broader context (Arora-Jonsson; Agarwal; Colfer; Keene; Kurian & Larson, 2019:147). When looking at the forest context, Arora-Jonnson argues that gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable forestry. The goal of SDG 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, brings attention to different aspects of livelihood in forests contexts. Forest livelihoods are often only recognized for their more conventional definitions and connections with timber. SDG 5 in relation with forestry contexts shifts the focus to relationships between humans in the forests and with the forests. These relationships ultimately determine the outcome of the forests (Arora-Jonsson et al, 2019:147). As was seen in urban areas, forests and gender disparities are interweaved. Gender, as understood by SDG 5, is not synonymous with women, which is seen in many human rights approaches. SDG 5 aims to capture the struggle with gendered systems of power. Positions of power are also studied with notable intersections such as class, age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (Arora-Jonsson et al, 2019:148). The study done by these researchers concluded that it is important to understand the contextual and systemic nature of inequalities to achieve justice and sustainable forestry. Gender equality is not automatically achieved or improved by enhancing developments or expanding markets for women. Forms of poverty alleviation will not automatically improve gender equality. Some economic benefits can be acquired but at the same time can worsen already bad conditions for others (Arora-Jonsson et al, 2019:168). Taking SDG 5 seriously implies that there is a fundamental change in approaches to forests and the environment. A different approach can bring change to systemic and contextual factors and influence personal relations to those outside of the forest (Arora-Jonsson et al.: 2019:169). Progress will entail considering connections between the global North and South (Arora-Jonsson et al, 2019:169).

Mainstream development policies have incorporated alternative development. Respect for cultural diversity and religious traditions as well as the importance of local and grassroot activity is promoted. These efforts have been criticized as simplifying culture and religion, instrumentalizing it and seeing it as static or passive. Participation is critical in these activities (Rakodi, 2015: 27).

Feminist spiritualities focus on the right relation in all relationships. Certain targets of SDG 5 are directly linked to this focus. Target 5.1[94] End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and Target 5.4[95] Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. Historical and recent experiences show the family work of women does not stop when they enter the world of wage world. Even when women generate cash income, they still have most of the household chores such as food preparation, cleaning, and childcare. "Typically, unpaid work is not considered 'productive' activity or is simply overlooked by economic analysts and policymakers, as well as by the men who benefit directly from the gender division of labour" (Duggan, 1997:103). In 1995 at the Beijing platform for Action the UN passed a resolution assigning member governments the responsibility to estimate the value of non-market work and include this in satellite accounts to national income or other official accounts (Duggan, 1997:103). Target 5.5[96] is to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" and Target 5a[97] "undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws" as well as Target 5b[98] "enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women". Target 5c[99] is to "adopt and strengthen sound policies and

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[94]Indicator 5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.

[95]Indicator 5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location

[96]Indicator 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (*a*) national parliaments and (*b*) local governments and Indicator 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions

[97]Indicators 5.a.1 Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (*b*) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure and Indicator 5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control

[98]Indicators 5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex.

[99]Indicators 5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels". As seen in the GAD framework, interconnected systemic injustices that continue to supress women and minorities need to be addressed. This can be done through policy changes, recommendations from research findings, and practical implementation of targets.

Haustein & Tomalin (2019:4) had findings from a research project funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research council (AHRC) titled 'Keeping the faith in 2030: Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals'.[100] One of the findings was regarding the issue of specifically stating your religious identity in relation to the religions and SDG process. "On the whole, the negotiation process employed to decide on the SDGs considered faith actors to be civil society actors meaning that their religious identity did not make a notable difference" (Haustein & Tomalin, 2019: 9). Another interviewee did not agree with this and cautioned against treating faith groups as a separate group of stakeholders. When this happen and meetings are specifically set up to cater for this group, their influences can become silenced (Haustein & Tomalin, 2019: 9). Haustein & Tomalin (2019) makes certain policy recommendations. The first recommendation is that "Faith-actors should not be brought in solely as 'religious voices' but as development partners like all others" (Haustein & Tomalin, 2019: 24). This enhances diversity and act as a counterforce to

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[100] The main findings of the research project are firstly: "all workshops on Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals attracted a broad range of participants and represented organisation with a stake in this debate". Secondly: "We did not find any evidence of a systematic of significant inclusion of faith actors in the SDG consultation and implementation processes". Thirdly: "Faith actors did not take issue with the SDG framework as such, not the formulations of its goals. They did note, however, that religions did add value with regards to the successful implementation of the SDGs." This finding further notes that potential issues for conflict in the achievement of specifically SDG 5 and SDG 16 can be attributed to culture and political factors rather than religious factors. The fourth finding: "Faith actors tended to appreciate the SDG framework by its utility for their development practice and advocacy rather than for programmatic guidance". Fifthly: "Faith-based organisations expect to be treated like any other non-governmental development organisation and did not argue for a distinct religious approach to development practice". The next finding was "The effectiveness of the SDG process for harnessing the contribution of faith actors is largely driven by local politics and administrative procedures". This finding further notes that the implementation of the SDGs remained a top-down process despite consultations in setting the goals. Lastly "There is evidence that the SDGs can be useful for faith actors as a resource for advocacy" (Haustein & Tomalin, 2019: 22,23).

dualistic thinking. Community and the different relationships and actors that are present can be strengthened. The second policy recommendation, that "Members of NGO's and governments should increase their religious literacy, not only in terms of the history, teachings and practices of different world religions, but also with respect to how religion actually manifests in diverse settings" (Haustein & Tomalin, 2019: 24) can prove very useful to ensure effective dialogue. The third recommendation is "identifying which faith actors to engage with according to their relative background and expertise, and on what issues, should be given careful consideration" (Haustein & Tomalin, 2019: 24). The authors further notes... "in meeting the aim to 'leave no one behind', faith actors can play an important role in changing attitudes, in supporting those in need and in transforming their lives"(Haustein & Tomalin, 2019: 25). The fourth recommendation is that the "perceived tensions between certain SDG goals of targets and religious values should be approached by recognising that faith actors can be important mediators for gaining a more specific understanding of such tensions and finding ways of addressing them" (Haustein & Tomalin, 2019: 25). The next recommendation gives insight into intersectional relationship building: " in building partnerships with faith actors, it is important that they are listened to and included on their terms rather than being instrumentalised to achieve pre-defined developmental goals". The last recommendation is that "more investment in needed to spread knowledge about the SDG agenda to local faith actors to enable them to participate in the international conversation and mobilise local resources for the sustainable development agenda" (Haustein, Kidy & Tomalin, 2019: 25).

Feminist spiritualities lives relationally, connected and in community. While religious actors are being incorporated more into the consultation process of development discourse and policy certain faith actors feel there is not space for them to "be taken seriously in terms of the intangible aspects of their religion and the relevance of the relationship between the human and the divine, or in terms of teachings and practice that point beyond the ultimate significance of the material and social world" (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:115). These aspects are hidden or reduced in their interaction with global development institutions and processes (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:115). Although there are reasons for this, a warning is given that "the "turn to religion" risks missing out what might be "distinctive" about the ways that

religion shapes the things that people value in their lives and how these impacts on understandings of what counts as development and how to achieve it" (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:115-116). While this kind of incorporation of religion is not appropriate to every development collaboration, and indeed many faith actors appreciate the existence of religious neutral discussion forums for development, investment in the creation of effective processes to accommodate the epistemological differences between secular and religious worldviews on development, including better dialogue between faith-based and development actors and their perspectives on desirable societal trajectories, could be beneficial in fostering closer collaboration (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:116).

Haustein, Kidy and Tomalin (2019:116) note that three factors need to be considered when looking at religion in the Global South. Rather than viewing religion in the Global South in terms of the "world religions paradigm" alone, it is important to also consider the following three factors: The paradigm of world religions tends to prioritize texts over lived religion and religious leaders are official representatives of the communities they live in. Religious dynamics is not always understood in this way. Secondly, the world religions paradigm us mostly understood that religious individuals belong to one tradition. In the global South boundaries between religions are not always that distinct. Thirdly, the world religions paradigm assumes a clear boundary between religions as well as the secular and religious. This binary thinking does not reflect the thoughts of people in the Global south. Religion is part of their private, public, and political lives (Haustein, Kidy, Tomalin, 2019:116).

As the experiences of women are always central to feminist spiritualities it is interesting to see the different approaches to ideological differences. The Development sector means that ideological differences should be set aside or overcome. Bell Hooks follows another approach. Hooks (1986:137) indicates that women should come together when there are certain situations where ideological differences occur. They should work together to change the interaction and communicate effectively. Women that come together and know that there are ideological differences and even disagree with one another should be honest about this. Hooks indicates it is more effective to acknowledge that women are divided than

to pretend there is union. This enables the group to develop useful plans that acknowledges and rises above fears, preconceptions, possible resentments, and any other dividing factor that can be present (Hooks, 1986:137).

When women try in a very supportive way to understand differences between one another and to change perspectives that are not true a foundation can be laid for the experience of political solidarity. Solidarity and support are not the same. For solidarity to be experienced, one should have a community of interests. There are shared beliefs and goals. Support on the other hand can only be on occasion. It can be given up, but solidarity is a sustained commitment. The feminist movement acknowledges that there is a need for diversity and disagreement and deference if we are to grow (Hooks, 1986:138). In the Global South and in South Africa religion continues to function prominently in society. Christian churches occupy an important space in South African society. Churches has the potential to be agents of change, as was seen in the struggle against Apartheid (Pillay, 2003:142). Churches can however also be forces of oppression. Miranda Pillay (2003:142) is a female theologian in the Christian tradition and writes from her experience. Pillay reflects on the idea of human rights in South Africa and her experience of excitement and anxiety. Excitement about opportunities and structural change. She experiences anxiety from the people that are in positions of power. Pillay does research on transformative and liberating principles in the early Christian tradition from a feminist theological perspective. While reflecting on her own life, Pillay remembers that when she was younger, she regarded the subordination of women in the church as a natural occurrence (Pillay, 2003:143). Seeing this tension of subordination and domination between inferiority and being superior. This experience of her own life provoked certain questions in her academic life as theologian. Questions such as the influence of an engendered God on power relations. What can be learned from early Christianity. Pillay also reflects on how "sexism sets the stage for dualism in which relationships of domination control and oppression are sustained" (Pillay, 2003:144). Certain cultures and communities see legal rights, domestic violence, and women's autonomy over their bodies as part of the natural order. This effectively means these issues are not challenges. It can only be challenged and changed when women share knowledge about the possibility of change. Pillay (2003:157) argues that

women in the church and in positions of leadership should explore transformation routes. They have a responsibility to inspire and motivate all genders to challenge gender power relations that are not just (Pillay, 2003:157). Churches are always grounded in communities. It is within this space where people gather out of their own choice in the spirit of community. This is valuable for effective change as life can only be experienced fully while in community. Community should be fostered. The church as the Christian Church with God being Trinitarian provides a unique symbol of community as even in the Trinity relationships are present. The Trinity is in the first place a community of relationships that are ultimately sustained mutually and reciprocity (Pillay, 2003:157).

5.11 Conclusion

Development that can be characterized as hope[101] (Rakodi, 2015:30). A gender transformative approach can be useful in the reaching of the SDG 5 targets. Odera & Mulusa (2020:108) works with the definition as set forth by Hukkenbrand et al: "a gender transformative approach is one that aims to move beyond individual self-improvement among women towards transforming the power dynamics and structures that serve to reinforce gendered equities". This approach does not only treat symptoms of inequality but focuses on the issues that underlies them. Certain lessons have proved useful and certain lessons have been learned to effectively implement transformative strategies (Odera & Mulusa, 2020:109). Firstly, Accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened. Soft law should be used to set up consensus. The economy should be transformed to achieve gender equality. More investments should be made in gender equality. "Engendering climate change with a view to attaining gender equality and sustainable development" and to ensure that women participate fully in decision making (Odera & Mulusa, 2020:109-114).

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[101] It carries ideas about shaping a better future it can also be characterized as administration as it has been since the 1950s and it can also be characterized as a critical understanding because it constitutes a site of knowledge about the world development according to records can be best understood as states of social practices or technologies of rule the organization and effects of what needs to be contested and subjected to political and scholarly review while development studies is a discursive field at both local and global levels (Rakodi, 2015:30).

The characteristics of feminist spiritualties can be useful in ensuring the effective implementation of SDG 5. When looking at the lessons that have been learned and what is required for effective implementation, the characteristics can provide the necessary language and meaning making to help with transformation.

CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS AND RECCOMENDATIONS: UNCOVERING, LISTENING, SEEING

To be seen and recognised, to be heard and listened to is part of the plea of the chorus of women through the ages in all places. This chorus still echoes today. In this study the terrain of Christian feminist spiritualities and the terrain of sustainable development is explored with the goal of remapping to effectively see gender equality (as understood by the United Nations SDG 5) realised by using the characteristics of feminist spiritualities as guideposts.

The South African context is used as the point of departure as this is the context that I am exposed to. In South Africa and Africa religion and spirituality are key components that shape the fabric of the lives of those living on the continent. Religion plays an important role in both the oppression and liberation of women. This chapter provides the findings of the research as well as recommendations for further research and implementation.

6.1. Listening to the whispers: spirituality, an active force of transformation through the ages

Spirituality and religion have been seen as agents that enable women to change their position in society by means of authorization. Spirituality and religion have also been seen to enforce tradition and cultural practices that can be harmful to women. This study focuses specifically on feminist spiritualties as this enables women to raise their voices individually and communally. Part of the interesting finding in the phenomenon of feminist spiritualities is that "uncovering" or "listening" to voices that are not always heard is not a new phenomenon. In many ways feminist spiritualities enables one to see a reality that is already present. Mapping and remapping as method proved useful in guiding one along different terrain and seeing the contours that were not already mapped. Feminist spiritualities and specifically the characteristics of feminist spiritualities proved helpful in the process of weaving the threads of liberation, listening, seeing, and voicing that which are already taking

place. Feminist spiritualties in many ways are an instrument to weave the threads that are already present.

As Schüssler Fiorenza (1993:93) stated almost 30 years ago, the Goddess of "radical feminist spirituality" is very close to the God that Jesus invites us to stand in a relationship with and who Jesus calls "Father". It is the knowledge and images still present such as the image of life, the understanding of love, themes such as compassion and mercy. Caring and striving for peace and community that are present in feminist literature as well as the New Testament. The New Testament invites us into relationship with the God that gives life and works through the Spirit. Feminist spiritualities harnesses these images to provide a framework and the necessary language to bridge gaps between disciplines.

Spirituality can be described in a variety of ways as is seen in this study. All of the definitions and descriptions of spirituality refer to the transformational power that spirituality holds as the power of God or the Divine. In Christian spirituality this source of the Divine refers to the Trinitarian God. Living spiritually entails that we experience the Divine in our different relationships. In a holistic worldview this experience is with the people that we meet and know, with nature and with ourselves (Martin, 1993:106). Spirituality as a force of movement has been seen through the ages. It is seen in individuals mobilizing change, people on the margins of society facilitating awareness and becoming a voice to be heard and in communities that unite in spite of difficulties and diversity.

According to Schneiders (2010:243) spirituality resurfaces in the mid twentieth century as the existential concern of many Christians. Spirituality also surfaced in the academic field. Many factors could be given to explain this occurrence. Schneiders (2010:243) acknowledges the variety of reasons that can be given to explain this phenomenon and contributes that the disconnection between immanence and transcendence after the second world war was a big contributing factor to the resurgence in the interest in spirituality (Schneiders, 2010:243). The resurfacing of the field of spirituality highlights the fact that certain fields of knowledge are not always recognised in the mainstream knowledge paradigm and might get "lost". This is visible when Criado Perez writes that Invisible Women "is a story about absence – and that

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sometimes makes it hard to write about." This invisibility and the lack of resources as a result of the hegemony of knowledge can also be seen in the work of Gerda Lerner when she writes: (1993:4) "what women have done and experienced has been left unrecorded, neglected, and ignored in interpretation". It is hard to work with stories that have been hidden, destroyed, written out of history. It is interesting to see that the holistic worldwide embraces different voices and specifically those that were being kept at the noise level of a whisper. As a holistic worldview was starting to emerge as a priority, this priority resulted in spirituality as a field seeing more books on self-improvement and individualistic spirituality. This resurfacing also brought new life to spiritualities that are communal. Much the literature emerging in that time focused on the early church and mystic spiritualities. There were scholars of religion who searched further than what was available in the academic field and recognised in the discipline. It is interesting that the mystics of their own tradition and others' were often studied. "People whose intense experience of the "beyond" was deeply rooted in religious-theological traditions concerning the Transcendent". The first scholars in the field of spirituality focused on mystics and mystical texts (Schneiders, 2010:244).

Mystics and mystical texts were often at the periphery of society. These voices became a voice of consciousness in some sense. Mystics were people on the margins, from the margins, those who did not follow the mainstream society. Mystics are also characterised by those who want to be seen as fully human, who through spirituality realised their individuality and communally fostered positive change.

Listening to the voices already present, but largely unheard as a result of other voices screaming louder, this study recommends that the listening and consultation process of sustainable development agencies as well as religious communities providing aid, should be broadened to include the whispers and not just the screams. In the academic milieu listening to marginal voices or consulting sources that does not fit into the mainstream academic discourse is often discouraged. Seeing the way women specifically authorised themselves through history should be encouraging to see what forces of transformation still lies at the periphery.

6.2 Including all voices: feminist spiritualities - providing language to mainstreaming knowledge otherwise not always recognized

The literature that is available on feminist spiritualities is not part of the mainstream theological discussion. It is regarded by many as only being part of liberation theology and liberation spirituality. This study provides the history and value of spirituality as a force of transformation that proves this should not stay on the margins.

Spirituality (especially feminist spiritualities) should have a prominent place in development literature as there is an integral link between spirituality (specifically feminist spiritualities) and issues of sustainable development (ver Beek, 2000:36,37). The link between feminist spiritualities and sustainable development was illustrated in this study by focusing on the characteristics of feminist spiritualities in relation to the targets of SDG 5. These characteristics are hermeneutical keys to realise the change that is aimed for in SDG 5. The scholars that were identified and analysed in Chapter 4 clearly illustrated that feminist spiritualities is diverse and can be implemented in multiple ways as the context and life experience of women are crucial for the implementation thereof.

When the link between feminist spiritualties (which includes gender) and sustainable development is seen, the targets that are set by SDG 5 can be realised more effectively.

This study therefore argues that it is necessary to include feminist spiritualities into the mainstream academic field as it is then possible to function as a space of recovery and open new possibilities. Therefore, the recommendation is to broaden the understanding of what knowledge is, how knowledge functions and who has knowledge to reveal where power lies, and address this accordingly.

6.3 Looking at the guideposts of development, transformation and feminist spiritualities: envisioning the terrain already present

The relationship between religion and sustainable development that is freeing and restricting at times is indicated in this study. This provides opportunities for discussion as the conversation between religion, gender and development is multi-

facetted. King (2011:20) explores the models as developed by Eileen Barker that provide multi-layered and nuanced orientation towards social change and religious dynamics. The focus is on cooperation rather than that which separates the development and religion.

The interaction between religion and development, both phenomena that is difficult to grasp in a single definition, holds the power to facilitate change. There is, as Adogame (2016:1) calls it, a "creative interaction and intrinsic connectedness" between these phenomena. This intrinsic connection, when recognised, provides the possibility for effective dialogue and implementation. This study aims to showcase the connections already present between feminist spiritualties and sustainable development, especially in the difficult area of gender equity, as these two phenomena are still distinct from one another. As King rightly notes, there can be a continuum between religion and development even thought this is not necessarily always the case (King, 2011:20). This connection or continuum, when realised, can provide the chance for colourful new opportunities.

Therefore, this study wants to underline what Nora Khalaf Eledge states in her article "'It's a tricky one' - development practitioners' attitudes towards religion" (2020) and it conclude with a discussion about the "trickiness" of religion:

> "I conclude that the real *trickiness* then lies in navigating this messiness, abstaining from generalisations and orientalist essentialisations, and – as one activist said – address "the really terrible imperialist dynamics" at home that normalise such representations"

Research and discussions both in the academic and personal context is needed for an effective way forward. This study hopes to be a contribution to the discussion of the importance of religion for sustainable development as well as literacy on the so called "subjectivity" of religion and "objectivity" of the secular world. By mainstreaming feminist spiritualities the hegemony of knowledge is challenged, and change can happen on a personal as well as a political level.

6.4 Identify leaders whose lives and organisations' values are in line with the characteristics of feminist spiritualties to ensure change that contributes to the realisation of the SDG 5 targets

To effectively connect feminist spiritualties with the realisation of the targets and indicators of SDG 5, effective leadership is necessary. The leaders do not necessarily have to be women. This is necessary to stipulate as patriarchy functions on a deep level and women-led organisations are not necessarily organisations that focus on gender equity as is understood by the UN. Different genders in leadership with a focus on including more genders is necessary to ensure a more balanced discussion, more diverse opportunities, and more balanced outcomes. The bridge between feminist spiritualities and the successful implementation of SDG 5 can more easily be realised by identifying leaders on grassroot level that already exhibits characteristics of feminist spiritualties and can, through their presence, effectively help to reach the targets of SDG 5.

South African scholar, Louise Kretschmar, has done extensive research on leadership and spiritual formation. In her work "The indispensability of spiritual formation for Christian leaders" published in 2006, Kretschmar mentions five points that is necessary for spiritual formation.

Kretzschmar (2006:344) defines spiritual formation as the following:

> "Spiritual formation is first and foremost an activity of God. It is the Holy Spirit who draws believers into a life of the Spirit; it is God's presence, love, and to that renew disciples. Humanly speaking, spiritual formation occurs when persons consciously and voluntarily enter a God-initiated process of becoming like Christ. It is an inner journey or pilgrimage (towards God and our true selves), a shared journey (genuine Christian fellowship) and an outer journey (in mission and service to the world)."

The importance of spiritual formation cannot be understated. Spiritual formation is absolutely necessary because it will form a leader that is engaged in society and have a wider vision of reality. A Christian's spirituality creates the overall framework

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for one to perceive the world around you. When spiritual formation takes place, a leader is able to see that their own social and personal reality is seen in relationship with their spiritual reality. The different aspects of one's reality is integrated in this journey (Kretzschmar 2006:346). All aspects of life need to be integrated: sadness and joy, worship as well as service, inner growth as well as outward living one. When this happens under the arch of Christian spirituality one is able to see the word of God more clearly and see your place in this world as well as opportunities for engagement into action (Kertzchmar 2006:346). Spiritual formation and the characteristics of feminist spiritualities are weaved together in beautiful threads as a life that is deepening in spiritual formation will be seen in the way that this life is lived and the effect that this life will have on those around them. Spiritual formation enables a person to live in the light of the Christian gospel and contributing to making the church, the Christian community, what it should be. Leaders need to have a personal spiritual relationship with God, living in the love that Christ lived on earth (Kretzchmar 2006:347). Standing in a relationship with God a person is able to look back, be present and look forward while being grounded in the knowledge that we are all created by God, in the image of God and redeemed by God (Kretzschmar 2006:347) When a leader lives this, transformation is inevitable. Kretzschmar (2006:350) rightly states that if the church does not become what it should be, we only have leaders that are promoting their own ideologies. When the Christian community does not live the truth of Christianity, we are only doing what is comfortable to us and we cannot be a credible witness in the world. Feminist spiritualties, grounded in the experience of women, living the love of God, moves us to tread where it is not always comfortable resulting in a more diverse, more effective impact on the communities we live in. These communities will differ, the people will differ, even in this love for God and our neighbour will prosper. Kretzschmar (2006:351) quotes Ashley in Culligan 1983:194 "for both Thomas [Aquinas] and Catherine [of Siena] the holiness, which is the goal of spiritual direction, is a transformation, not destruction, of human nature. This transformation is also a restoration of the image of the Trinity according to which we are created". Spiritual formation will also help a leader to avoid moral pitfalls. Spiritual formation is necessary for a person to gain wisdom, not fall in the worldly pitfalls that will create a privatised or socially irrelevant spirituality that enables poverty and injustice

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(Kretzschmar 2006:352). Kretzschmar (2006:252-254) points to the importance of listening to the context around you, this was emphasized extensively in this study as the experience of the lives of women and girls is crucial to the effective realisation of gender equity. The possibility of changing ones understanding of reality has to be present as there is not just one way, one answer and one "ultimate truth". A spirituality that is closed off to new possibilities, that fears change and is self-defensive is not Christian and likely also shows a narrow view of reality. Spiritual formation is also the formation in our relationship with God as this will result in a more conscious life and more consciously experiencing the workings of God in different contexts, in different times. The last point that Kretzschmar (2006:254) points out in the spiritual formation of leaders is that leaders need to act with discernment. This proves to be true for the effectiveness of reaching the targets of SDG 5 as leaders need to implement strategies that will resonate with their context and communities in such a way that gender equity is realised effectively. A holistic understanding of reality and life, as seen in a characteristic of feminist spiritualities, is crucial for the spiritual formation of a person as spiritual formation encapsulates the whole person. The person's whole life, with all the different facets, seeks holiness. All of the person's activities inward as well as outward, success as well as failure, prayer as well as struggle for justice must be integrated (Schneiders 1986:268). When one understands that spirituality cannot and should not be individualistic you begin to understand that spirituality takes the holistic human being as well as the social reality seriously.

Spiritual formation is both personal formation as well as relational formation. When spiritual formation takes place a person's character will mature, a person will gain the capacity to have meaningful and healthy relationships with God, people as well as creation. The recommendation in light of spiritual formation of leaders is to ensure that the religious communities and leaders of faith-based organisations are leaders that do not just 'tick boxes' in the sense that they are women, but rather that they are leaders that are continuously seeking and growing and will effectively contribute to the implementation of the SDG 5 targets.

6.5 Feminist spiritualities acknowledges that context matters: that which binds us is seen as unity in diversity

All societies and all contexts do not need to look and function the same for gender equity to be realised. As Nordling (2017) illustrates in a report on the role of women in various African societies, the discussion is nuanced. Women hold power in different ways in patriarchal societies. In this study the importance of diversity is continually echoed, working towards creative change is more effective than trying to enforce a uniform policy.

In the South African context as part of the bigger African continent, Moyo (2004:72), building on the work of John Mbiti explains:

> "The Africans' worldview is very religio-centric, with religion permeating all realms of life to the extent that life is perceived holistically without separating the 'sacred' from the profane"

Understanding the African and South African context is crucial for effectively reaching the targets of SDG 5. As Moyo (2004:72) correctly states, if you live in Africa, you live in community. Understanding the context with many facets will be a guideline to understand the power relations present. There is a conception that many third world countries are oppressed by religion. As was clearly illustrated in this study, this is not always the case. Religion should not be seen as a force of oppression. Feminist spiritualties functions as a transformative force as it fosters relationality, inclusivity, and holism. Legislation, different laws, cultural and religious traditions, and power relations are observed anew and seen in a different light. Communication in this way enables positive dialogue with a deeper understanding for diversity. The sustainable development goals have a holistic approach. If the Sustainable development goals is to be implemented successfully and realised effectively all sectors needs to be involved. Everyone differs, it is therefore imperative to make time to understand, appreciate and embrace these differences. Feminist spiritualties, in this way, effectively contributes as an instrument towards achieving gender equity.

6.6 Belonging – to be fully human and fully participating: realised in community

Religious communities: facilitators of change or enablers of oppression? This question is asked by many, and religious illiteracy often contributes to misconceptions of religion. Women that form part of Christian communities as well as women who are in positions of leadership need to ask this question regularly. South African feminist theological scholar, Denise Ackermann, asks what equality and religious freedom as well as respect for human dignity means for South African women that belong to religious institutions (Ackermann, 2003:181). In South Africa women are equal before the law. In reality though, women are not equal, and women are not alike. Women are different as they come from various places, they dress differently, their race, economic status, sexual orientations, nationality, ethnicity, and cultures undergirds these differences. Ackermann makes this statement that "universal sisterhood is a myth" (Ackermann, 2003:181). Religious contexts differ from each other, in different traditions it may also be true that women accept being participatory members. This is not true for all women (Ackermann, 2003:181). Ackerman points out that the relationship between human rights and religion is complex and contradictory, but it cannot be ignored. Religions have been instruments of helping along concepts such as self-worth and the dignity of people which can also be seen in human rights; however, it should also be noted that religions have sanctioned wars, have persecuted people, oppressed many people and is sometimes at the forefront of racial and gender discrimination which does not help or facilitate human worth and dignity (Ackermann, 2003:182).

Patriarchal traditions and practices are not dead, they are however still part of the problem when speaking about equality for women and freedom of religion (Ackermann, 2003:186). Belonging to a religious institution is a sociological fact and it helps with the existence of a community that has its own practices and traditions. This can provide solidarity and opportunities for engagement. Belonging to a particular church community provides a space to engage in theological understandings with specific spiritual and moral insights. This in turn helps to shape identities.

To belong to a community is not equal to fitting in. It is not always easy to walk away from a place that has helped shape your relationship with the Divine. The Bible also gives courage to those that are in institutions that they struggle with as is seen in liberation theology and bible narratives that encourage hope (Ackermann, 2003:187). Feminist spiritualties highlights that difference and multiplicity is encouraged as this provides a more colorful community. Belonging, for women in church communities, often results in challenging the systems that aim to make everyone the same. Women often stay in communities that they disagree with to be present and provide resistance. Most Christian women will not easily quit their religious tradition as there is an entangled relationship of religion and culture. Women find their identity in the church community and thus they are able to challenge the oppressive cultural and religious norms that are oppressive. Women, as a force of resistance, can find meaning in their religion in the midst of this conflict (Ackermann, 2003:188).

It is possible to internalize oppressive images and, in this way, continue with oppressive practices. The fear of women being isolated from their communities' functions as a way to keep women quiet (Ackermann, 2003:187). The resounding chorus of feminist spiritualities provides a song that unites and liberates. Feminist theologians does not accept interpretations where women are subordinate and also rejects the dualisms from which this comes. Women claim that all people have full humanity. This is an inclusive approach which moves against every intersection of injustice such as race and class (Ackermann, 2003:190,191). Women understand that community is necessary, as is seen in the theology of the Trinity. Dignity and freedom of one woman does not function separately from the dignity and freedom of another woman. Your burden becomes my burden. To live a life of dignity and equality, one needs the right to freedom in your religious community. Equality and human dignity are also determined by the nature of our relationships, that we are all made in the image of God and therefore are imbued with dignity (Ackermann, 2003:191).

> "Human dignity, equality and freedom are, in fact, as much
> religious dispositions as they are legal rights. herein lies
> women hope for their rightful place in their religious institutions"

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6.7 Solidarity: authorization and sisterhood

The experiences of women are different. In different times this has been seen as a challenge, feminist spiritualities encourages difference as this enriches the conversation.

> "For feminists, experience refers simply to the fabric of life as it
> is lived"

<p align="right">(La Cunga: 1979:6)</p>

The history of women finding ways to authorise themselves through time proved that women, although not always visible in power structures, do hold power as was mentioned previously. This is done in different ways throughout time. Feminist spiritualities is a way of women to authorise themselves. It is a way of life, that binds women together towards a mutual goal with the same fundamental understanding of God and the Spirit that moves to action. Feminist spiritualities and their characteristics are described in Chapter 4, it can also be seen in the works and lives of different scholars. The religion-gender nexus is an important field of study if gender equality is to be addressed successfully. It is in this connection that feminist spiritualities can prove very useful.

As the experiences of women differ and a multiplicity of voices is not always a comfortable space for everyone, women, as a group, often faces difficulties when standing in solidarity with each other. This is one of the biggest challenges feminist groups often find themselves facing. The feminist movement, in the early stages, did not place emphasis on sisterhood in this time of political solidarity as this was not seen as an idea of importance. The focus of the time was the idea of common oppression (Hooks, 1986:127). This gap in the importance of sisterhood was rediscovered and is continually being rediscovered. Hooks (1986:127) notes how feminists feel that unity between women is not always possible. Abandoning the idea of sisterhood solidarity can in effect help to strengthen the struggle. Barriers between women need to be

acknowledged, to show that these barriers are separating women. It is then that it can be eliminated, and solidarity can be realised.

> "To develop political solidarity between women feminist activists cannot bond on the terms set by the dominant ideology of the culture. We must define our own terms rather than bond on the basis of shared victimization or in response to a false sense of a common enemy, we can bond on the basis of our political commitment to a feminist movement that aims to end sexist oppression"

(Hooks, 1986:129)

By having a unified goal women are enabled to work together. Women can address and eliminate socialization to which we are continuously exposed. Women can strengthen each other to build a solid foundation and develop political solidarity (Hooks, 1986:129). Women should work together. Women should be dedicated to overcoming that which alienate them from one another. Barriers to solidarity can be cultural, racial, or religious. Sexist socialization needs to be unlearned (Hooks, 1986:130-132). Communication is key when there are differences in ideologies. Women need to interact in a way where dialogue is possible and fruitful. Hooks (1986:137) rightly notes that women should not pretend there is unity but recognize what is bringing division and build strategies to overcome fears, prejudices, resentments towards others and competition between individuals and groups.

Women will then be able to stand in solidarity with one another. Solidarity is different from support. To be in solidarity with someone is not just to support or like or be inspired by a cause but it is to have compassion and take responsibility for others because you believe in the dignity of others. Solidarity asks one to see everyone as equal, interdependent and to help solve differences through discourse (Pillay,2003:158).

When women can see and acknowledge differences and certain perspectives can be challenged and changed, a foundation is built to experience political solidarity.

Solidarity can become a reality when there is common interests, shared beliefs, and goals. Solidarity enables sisterhood to be realized. Solidarity is a "sustained commitment." Diversity, disagreement, and difference are necessary for positive growth (Hooks, 1986:138) and are acknowledges in the sisterhood. It is not necessary for differences to disappear. Differences can be present when acknowledged in order to feel solidarity for the same oppression. Every person or group does not need to fight equally to end oppression. Knowledge, experience, and cultural ideas can be shared between women as united interest binds them. Women are united by appreciating diversity and by the struggle to end oppression rooted in sexism while being united in political solidarity (Hooks, 1986:138). The religion-gender nexus provides the opportunity to look back into history for examples of positive change and looking to the future to see how these can contribute to change.

Religion can provide the foundation for, what Moyo (2004:73) calls: "the supernatural empowering that exalts them from their natural powerlessness to reach positions of divine authority". This enables individuals and communities to protest against dehumanising factors, institutions, and power relations. With this spirit that guides them, the seemingly unchangeable community can become more just and inclusive spaces.

When women see each other and connect out of shared experience, this shared experience can bind a group and foster a safe place without regarding history or dividing factors. Feminist spiritualities seems to bind and provide language that is otherwise lost. Fostering a safe space of sisterhood that joins in the chorus of the liberation of the Christian gospel.

6.8 The focus on women and girls: specific and narrow?

The United Nations' main understanding and implementation of gender equality is on women and girls. On the one hand it is good to define the targets very specifically as this enables the targets to be measured as well as to see where possible gaps are. This makes a goal more achievable. On the other hand, by only seeing gender equality as the equality of women and girls other marginalised gender groups can fall through the cracks.

A recommendation from this study is to broaden the focus of gender equality to include the gender spectrum. Feminist spiritualities challenges binary thinking and can help to give language necessary to define the targets.

6.9 Transformation: looking back, being present, moving forward

The goal of feminist theology is to see the transformation of people into a new community. This can happen when structures change, and symbol systems are created new.

> "Feminist liberation theology hopes so to change unjust
> structures and distorted symbol systems that a new community
> in church and society becomes possible, a liberating
> community of all women and men characterized by mutuality
> with each other and harmony with the earth"

(Johnson, 1992:31)

Transformation is an important theme in feminist theology as feminist theology transforms. Johnson (1992:9) notes that feminist theology also advocates for the reform of different patriarchal structures in the civil life as well as in different church structures and the intellectual systems that support these systems. Feminist theology is not a theology for women alone. Feminist theology is concerned with justice and trust and seeks to transform the whole community. Feminist theology also embraces diversity as it is founded upon diversity. The diversity in feminist theology rests on cultural, interracial, and ecumenical diversity. This diversity also results in speaking about God in many ways (Johnson, 1992:9-11).

> "…all those women and men who share in the transformation of
> the world through compassionate, delighting, and suffering
> love. In solidarity with this memory and empowered by the
> same Spirit, the little flock is configured into a sacrament of the
> world's salvation, empowered to shape communities of
> freedom and solidarity"

(Johnson, 1992:214)

La Cunga (1993:213-222) explains how feminist theology is seen in its most challenging form in ethics. Moral norms can be seen in a new way in relation to their social conditions and the effects that they have and not as absolute truths.

Christian churches play a vital role in South African society. In South Africa, the church can be an agent of change and transformation as was seen during the struggle against apartheid. Miranda Pillay is a female theologian in the Christian tradition and writing from her experience as a woman in South Africa. Pillay reflects on the idea of human rights and her experience of excitement and anxiety at the end of the apartheid era. Her excitement was about opportunities and structural change and her anxiousness revolved around the people that are in positions of power. Pillay does research on transformative and liberating principles in the early Christian tradition from a feminist theological perspective (Pillay, 2003:142). The research of Pillay points out that the struggles for liberation have often taken priority over the struggle against gender oppression. Throughout time in many parts of the world women have challenged society and the church to move away from sexist thought, behaviors, and structures (Pillay, 2003:143).

Building on the definition by South African feminist theologian Denise Ackerman, sexism is seen as the ordering of life through gender power relations. This can result in violence and the violation of bodies and restrict the capacity to fully be human. Traditional gender roles linked with power relations in churches have negative results such as the subordination of women (Pillay, 2003:144). Oppression on the grounds of one's sex and privileges on these grounds can be seen where clergy cannot serve when they are called to serve. Women who want to make sense of a life of faith and who want to see transformation need to reflect critically and systematically on structures that are in place and on practices within the church and society. It is these systems, structures and practices that upholds patriarchal symbols and hierarchical relationships. Feminist liberation theology is born out of this conviction (Pillay,2003:148). Feminist spiritualities that underlines the importance of community can be a voice in this regard as churches are always grounded in communities. People gather freely in these communities. Collective responsibility

can be fostered in these communities as it is grounded in Trinitarian theology of reciprocity and mutuality (Pillay,2003:157).

Feminist spiritualities as a force of transformation is built on the crucial understanding that spirituality is personal but not individualistic. Spirituality is in relationship with God and everything it touches. When living feminist spiritualities it touches others, our communities, politics, our society, and the world (Carr,1982:96,97).

Feminist spirituality as a force of transformation is a life that is characterised by the love that Jesus shows. This finding is strengthened by stories from our history where women followed Jesus. The Jesus movement provided an alternative to the culture that was in place in that time and an alternative to dominant patriarchal structures. In this movement of Jesus women gained a public voice and could challenge the dominant patriarchal ethos by practicing discipleship of equals (Pillay,2003:150,151). As is seen in chapter one of this study women have been creatively authorizing themselves throughout history. The same can be said of women in ministry today even when women are excluded from ministry, they use their unique capability of ministering (Pillay,2003:151). The quote from Chopp (1991:98) highlights this:

> "This gift of love is the greatest of all if, today, feminists are to read and renew the church as a community of emancipatory transformation"

6.10 The Trinity as model for community

The question, as asked by many, is why do women stay in Christianity or in Christian denominations that do not allow full participation? Chopp (1991:18) illustrates this well:

> "Women "stay" in Christianity not because it is a burdensome tradition, a home one can never leave no matter how far one travels, but because feminist theology reconstructs Christianity into discourses of emancipatory transformation, discourses that, through a multiplicity of strategies, allow each woman to speak herself, her desires, her time and space, her hopes, her God"

Grounded in community, rooted in deep relationality, being able to have an individual identity and still be part of the sisterhood is some of the features that are present in the lives of those with feminist spiritualities. The Trinity is the most important example of community. The Trinity emphasises that distinguishing between the persons do not impair their unity. There is a paradox or positive tension present in the unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity (Harvey, 1998:49). Grounded in Trinitarian theology, feminist spiritualities can enable those, especially in Christian communities, to transform the targets of SDG 5 into realities. By using the Trinity and referring to the Trinity as an illustration of gender equality, Pillay notes that this is not a common use of the Trinity, but she states that it is an effective illustration of mutuality and reciprocity. These elements are crucial if a relationship is to enhance life and build up instead of oppressing (Pillay, 2003:146).

Koopman notes that a relational Trinitarian understanding of anthropology and the notion of Ubuntu can pave the way for the creation of a human rights culture (Koopman, 2003:194). Relationality and interdependence in God, if this is understood, can pave the way to understand that all human beings are also relational and interdependent creatures. There is a link that can be made between God and humanity. This link can be made because we are created in God's image (Koopman, 2003:197). Human beings, as being essentially interdependent creatures, stands in opposition to a modernistic understanding of human beings as autonomous rational individuals (Koopman, 2003:197). Dependence reflects a certain vulnerability. Human beings are dependent upon one another, therefore human beings are always vulnerable. This is also true in the Trinity where we see interdependence and vulnerability (Koopman, 2003:199). Interdependence is when we come to the realization that we need one another as dependent beings. In Africa, the notion of Ubuntu is widely known and practices. Life and humanity in terms of Ubuntu has clear links to the Trinitarian understanding of human-being as being interdependent and caring. Ubuntu does not mean that I should give up my sense of individuality for the sake of the community (Koopman, 2003:199). *Perichoresis* shows this cooperation and solidarity that is spontaneously present in the Trinity (Koopman, 2003:200). South Africa has noble principles and laws that are built to foster community, human dignity, and freedom.

In a blog post titled "I am progressive because of not in spite of my feminist spirituality" Carol Christ (2020:1) explains how injustice and violence should not be accepted because we can imagine a different reality. In imagining a different reality, this reality can be realised. In a country where most people are religious and the majority of people are Christian, the theology of the Trinity can help religious communities to translate the SDG targets into reality.

6.11 Words into action. Theory into practice. Academia translating to reality

The religion-gender nexus in conversation with sustainable development often stays at the discussion phase and implementation stays behind. This study aimed to provide an instrument that can assist in bridging the gap between the discussion and formulation of targets and the effective implementation thereof.

"As a style of response, spiritualty is individually patterned yet culturally shaped" (Carr,1982:97). This statement by Carr is crucial for the implementation of the SDG 5 targets. Feminist spiritualities have the ability to bridge gaps, be realised in different countries, communities, and cultures. As a holistic approach to the implementation of SDG 5 we are deeply related to God, to everything and therefore spirituality enables us to bring change, to adapt and grow in our whole life (Carr, 1982:97). It is a balance between struggle and grace, struggle to integrate new perceptions and grace as we are able to grow (Carr,1982:97). We have an important task as theologians. Ackermann rightly notes that salvation and transformation are the tasks of theology. Ackermann notes that all people and the cosmos need to flourish. Transformation here means freedom and mercy is experienced and lived practically (Marais, 2014:707). Christian communities have the opportunities to bring change on grassroot level. Salvation can be realised anew. The salvation of people is an ongoing transformation process where the person shows more and more of the image of Christ. This process is informed in the past, in the present and will be finished in the future. In the New Testament salvation is also explained in these three times (Lossky, 1974:103-10). These three times can help feminist spiritualties to listen to the whispers of history, to seek voices of change in the present and to foster a chorus of transformation for the future. The effect that spirituality has cannot be understated. Kourie (2006:35) adds to this discussion when se states: "*Orthopraxis*

and *orthokardia* – "right-heartedness" – are both essential". These are essential because they gain depth in meaning in different contexts. To understand the full potential of spirituality and see the transformation realised both individually and communally will result in more united communities.

The transformation of the whole world, with all the different relationships present between humans and nature, where justice is realised as a result of an integrated life that understand the transformation that Christ brings cannot be unseen (Schneiders, 2003:168). (De Gruchy, 1994: 133) illustrates the relationship between doctrine and action, building on the understanding of Moltmann:

> "We may say that the 'church's' unity is *unity in freedom*. The
> church's holiness is its *holiness in poverty*. The church's
> apostolicity bears the *sign of the cross*, and its catholicity is
> linked with its *partisan support for the oppressed*.' All of which
> brings us to recognise that the nature of the church cannot be
> discerned apart from its task in the world"

Feminist spiritualities is the voices that call for action. Voices that are no longer whispers, voices that are getting louder until the resounding chorus of freedom is heard.

> "If women cannot enjoy life in fullness, those around them
> cannot either"

> (Moyo, 2004:77)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DAW The Division for the Advancement of Women

DRC Dutch Reformed Church

EBP Evidence Based Policymaking

GAD Gender and Development

GBV Gender based violence

GBVF Gender based violence and femicide

GIWPS Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security

INSTRAW International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

MDG Millennium Development Goal

ODA Official Development Assistance

OSAGI Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

UNIFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

UN United Nations

WAD Women and Development

WID Women in Development

WP Wicked Problems

SUMMARY

Feminist spiritualities can practically be identified by certain characteristics such as the focus on the unique experiences of women. The focus on bodies and the earth, a holistic worldview and appreciation for community and relationality are some of the characteristics seen in the life and work of those with feminist spiritualities. This study maps the characteristics of feminist spiritualities over the terrain of gender equality as the United Nations states in the sustainable development goal 5. The United Nations focuses on a grassroot approach to achieve the targets of the sustainable development goals. This approach to achieve the goals by 2030 follows a methodology from the local contexts by using local actors in the consultation process as well as implementation of the targets. These local actors include religious and faith-based organisations. In South Africa, a highly religious country, these local actors have the potential to contribute meaningfully to achieving the targets. Religious communities can have both positive and negative impacts, especially when it comes to gender. This study hopes to contribute a framework for identifying organisations and institutions that can meaningfully work towards reaching the targets. By using the characteristics of feminist spiritualities as guideposts in the works of several theological scholars to visualise the contours of transformation this study shows that feminist spiritualities is already present and resulting in transformation of individual and communal lives. In a religious African context, the role of religious communities is imperative to facilitate positive change. By mainstreaming feminist spiritualties and in the process challenging the hegemony of knowledge a new landscape is uncovered. Women have authorised themselves in different ways throughout time, feminist spiritualities is a way of authorization. Feminist spiritualities are an instrument to be used to achieve gender equality in terms of sustainable development goal 5.

Key terms:

Feminist spiritualities; spirituality; sustainable development; United Nations; sustainable development goal 5; gender equality

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