Religion and Spirituality: The Politics of Emphasis

by

Esther Toews

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

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Of

Master of Arts

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For Leah, Elena, and Anika – three aspiring feminists, and for Darryl –
a radical Reformer in his own right.

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Preface

Greg Anderson wrote: "Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found not in finishing an activity but in doing it."[1] This may be true for many aspects of life, for a Master's thesis, however, not so much. I'm very glad to have arrived at the end of this process, yet the journey it took to get here still deserves some attention.

In the beginning, there was a phone call to my closest friend in Germany during which the conversation somehow turned towards faith and religion. When I asked her about her religious affiliation she replied that she was not religious, but spiritual. This statement fascinated me, especially since my friend seemed to assume that its meaning was obvious. I felt that I had a vague understanding of what she was trying to convey with her statement but was also intrigued by its underlying assumption that religion and spirituality might constitute mutually exclusive concepts.

At the time of this phone call I was still in the process of formulating my thesis proposal. I had just decided to compare the groups of the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists. This idea relied on a sense that both groups were somehow engaging in very similar socio-political activities in spite of the 450 years that separated them. I also had a hunch that both groups could somehow further my investigation of the religion-spirituality-issue. My friend's statement had planted the seed of interest in the relationship between religion and spirituality which would play a major role in the development of my thesis.

This thesis deals to a great extent with the distinction between cognitive ways of knowing and experiential ways of knowing. Through a careful and weary distillation process I ascertained these two types of epistemological methods as the foundational

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[1] http://thinkexist.com/quotations/journey/, accessed July 22nd, 2008.

difference between religious institutionalization and spirituality. The differences in the social and political aspects associated with religion and spirituality in the popular understanding derive from this essential disparity. Associating religious institutionalization with an emphasis on cognitive ways of knowing and viewing spirituality as relying on experiential ways of knowing can explain why and how spirituality can be a useful political tool in challenging the authority of a religious institution.

Since I began to grapple with the ideas of cognitive and experiential knowledge in reference to religion and spirituality I have found much wider applications for these concepts in daily life, e.g. in my thesis writing process. My thesis began with experiencing a sense, a hunch, a feeling, and an intuition regarding the importance of investigating the spirituality-religion-relationship. The actual process of writing was more or less an exercise in 'cognifying' hunch, sense, feeling and intuition into actual comprehension for myself by means of extensive research, or, in other words, by acquiring cognitive knowledge transmitted through the medium of academic texts. The purpose of writing the thesis was to convey my own experiences with the literature in a more communicable form that was more accessible to others than the actual experiences. My thesis can therefore be understood, to some extent, as presenting a medium or external source that relays cognitive knowledge about my own personal experience to whoever will care to read it. Now, at the end of this process, I feel that I understand my friend's statement of being spiritual but not religious, probably to a greater extent than she does herself.

I have tried to come up with an analogy for the thesis writing process. It appears to me that gathering the necessary information, tracing all relevant connections, and safeguarding all argumentation against attack as much as possible is not unlike trying to traverse an incredibly tangled and thorny bush while trying to come out clean and intact on the other side. I would like to acknowledge the indispensable support of my advisor, Prof. Kenneth Mackendrick, in my process of passing through the bush. He continuously urged me to disentangle its branches further and pointed out some of its major thorns. Our discussions were always fruitful and his excellent leadership style that kept my work in check while allowing for independence on my part is very much appreciated.

I would also like to thank Prof. Johannes Wolfart for countless ways in which our many years of working together improved my research and writing skills and influenced my ideas and perceptions in many areas including history and its significance for any subject matter. His guidance and support was invaluable and shaped certain aspects of this thesis, in particular, the sections regarding the radical Reformers. Other people who helped me achieve this goal are Verna Pfrimmer, who edited several sections of this thesis and was always available to receive frustrated and discouraged phone calls, my husband Darryl Toews, for whom my academic activities often translated into single fatherhood, and my German friend Sonja Sauer, whose casual remark regarding her religious affiliation turned out to be a major contribution to this project.

Thesis Introduction

Over the last twenty years some sociologists have studied a phenomenon they call a 'spiritual revolution'.[1] According to their findings, this revolution encompasses a large percentage of the general North American population[2] from various religious backgrounds who depict 'spirituality' as an entity separate from 'religion' and give emphasis to the former over the latter.[3] Sociologists treat this phenomenon as a new, groundbreaking development that promotes people's subjectivity, that responds to the increased variety of options in the 'spiritual marketplace', and that signifies a general social mood of aversion to and distrust of formal organizations.[4]

Very few religious studies scholars have dealt specifically with the spiritual revolution, although, according to Anna S. King, use of the term 'spirituality' rather than 'religion' has become increasingly common in the academic literature of the past 15 or so years.[5] A more detailed investigation of this phenomenon from a religionist's perspective is therefore in order because this development opens questions regarding the perceived differences between religion and spirituality, the role either concept plays in society, and why this particular phenomenon called a 'spiritual revolution' is in progress at this particular time in history.

In order to investigate these issues, three members of the group of the spiritual

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[1] Paul Heelas attributes Colin Campbell and Thomas Luckman with proposing that we are currently living through a spiritual revolution. See Paul Heelas et al, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 2. I will continue to use this phrase in reference to the perceived development of the increasing popularity of 'spirituality' over 'religion' and a possible separation of spirituality from religion.

[2] 15 %, according to Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 94.

[3] Heelas, et al. *The Spiritual Revolution*, 1; Brian J. Zinnbauer, et al. "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzying the Fuzzy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (1997): 549.

[4] Fuller, Robert C., *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York: University Press, 2001), 183.

[5] Anna S. King, "Spirituality: Transformation and Metamorphosis," *Religion* 26 (1996): 343.

Ecofeminists were chosen. These writers could generally be seen as participants in the spiritual revolution because they are proponents of revised versions of established religious traditions or adhere to new religious movements associated with the spiritual revolution. Since sociologists view the spiritual revolution as an expression of general anti-institutional sentiments in the North American population it is to be expected that its key feature, the preference given to spirituality over religion, is socially and politically significant. The examination of the views of the spiritual Ecofeminists Sallie McFague, Carol P. Christ, and Starhawk therefore focuses on the socio-political roles and functions they attribute to religion and spirituality. Spiritual Ecofeminists use spirituality as a means to challenge the established institutions, which they view as based on religion.

Ecofeminists are a group of socio-political activists who claim to be concerned about the welfare of all living beings and nature. They view the current socio-political system as flawed because it sanctions the oppression of women, any type of minority group, and nature. The distinctive feature of spiritual Ecofeminists is their view that religious values and social values are closely connected. McFague, Christ, and Starhawk see particular Christian values, such as patriarchy and anthropocentrism, as institutionalized in modern Western organizations. The anti-institutional sentiments they present target the underlying ideology that determines the institutions' structure and value system, not the idea of institutions itself.

McFague, Christ, and Starhawk perceive the assumptions of the modern Western worldview that determines the structure and values of the socio-political system as based on the Christian worldview. The Christian tradition is therefore ultimately responsible for the social injustices inherent in the system. According to the spiritual Ecofeminists, in

order to achieve social change that eliminates all social injustices, society's underlying religious ideology has to be transformed in order to support any social changes attempted. I propose that the spiritual Ecofeminists seek to instigate an ideological revolution because they attempt to supplant the dominant North American religious worldview (the Christian worldview), which they see as the underlying foundation of our modern Western value system, with an alternative religious worldview intended to function as a basis for re-structuring society.

Another claim this thesis puts forth is that this type of revolution is not a unique occurrence but is a component of a continuous cycle moving from institutionalization to over-institutionalization and consequent rebellion against the established institutions. This view closely resembles the views of Mary Douglas, who proposes a cyclical relation between ritualism and anti-ritualism throughout history that affects popular sentiments towards institutions.[6] This thesis expands on some of Douglas' ideas by also taking the effect of secularization into account that is seen as altering the relationship of different types of institutions throughout the modern period.

In order to support the idea of a recurring pattern regarding the rise and fall of institutions it is not enough to examine only the views of the spiritual Ecofeminists. A comparable, historically distinct group that is seen as occupying the same position within the cycle has to be determined in order to support this theory – the radical Reformers of early modern Germany.

The radical Reformers were active in Germany in the early 16th century. They attacked the religious ideology promoted by the Roman Catholic Church that claimed

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[6] See Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970). Douglas also suggests some parallels between the anti-ritualism of the New Left and the early modern Reformers, ibid, 19.

exclusive authority to determine what was ultimately true and false. This position privileged its officials over the general members in the Church and emphasized 'empty rituals' over spiritual experiences. The social injustice the radical Reformers perceived in the religious ideology of the Church was caused by its assumption of a qualitative difference between the clergy and the laity. This distinction resulted in social, political, and economic inequality. The radical Reformers sought to implement religious ideologies that promoted the value of all believers and consequently the same social status for all members of the same church.

In order to support my first claim that the spiritual Ecofeminists as well as the radical Reformers seek to instigate an ideological revolution, I examine the writings of the spiritual Ecofeminists mentioned above and the three radical Reformers Conrad Grebel, Caspar Schwenckfeld, and Thomas Müntzer. The fact that the former group consists of three women while the latter is made up exclusively of men does not factor into the discussion and comparison of the two groups. The members of both groups attack whoever is seen as socially privileged in their respective case. For the radical Reformers the target is the clergy, the spiritual Ecofeminists oppose the dominant value system promoting patriarchy and anthropocentrism. The fact that women oppose patriarchy may be significant, however, the values the radical Reformers oppose are not gender specific. It could undoubtedly be argued that the status of women during the late Middle Ages was even less privileged compared to the status of men. However, this thesis is concerned with the strategies an underprivileged group would use to attack the authority of the privileged group. Both the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists fulfill this criterion regardless of their gender. The degree of social

disadvantage is irrelevant.

The chosen early 16th century writers Grebel, Schwenckfeld, and Muentzer typify the diversity within radical thinkers during the Reformation regarding the emphasis on spirituality versus outer religion and political activism. Their educational and professional background also presents diversity. Muentzer was a trained theologian and employed as a priest. Schwenckfeld, a nobleman, appointed himself to the position of lay preacher without ever undergoing any formal education in theology. Grebel pursued a humanistic education and was predisposed for a career as magistrate, which he abandoned when he joined Zwingli's reform movement.

The works of Starhawk, a Neopagan Wiccan Ecofeminist with a Jewish background, Carol P. Christ, a former theology student who is now director of the Ariadne Institute for Study of Myth and Ritual and a founding member of Goddess and feminist theology movements, and Sallie McFague, a feminist theologian, will be presented as examples for different versions of spiritual Ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is a global movement. The selected proponents for this group should not be understood as representatives of the entire movement, but as examples of Western writers with a common socio-political agenda, who utilize spirituality in particular as a political tool.

These particular authors are examples of the pagan and the Roman Catholic traditions in North America. The Wiccan and Goddess traditions, earth based spiritualities, emphasize the autonomous qualities of spirituality. The Roman Catholic tradition, a Western patriarchal world religion, promotes integration into the larger church structure. These two traditions are therefore on opposite ends of the spectrum as far as (anti-)institutionalism is concerned.

The three proponents of each group were selected in order to display a variety of views within both movements regarding the spirituality-outer religion-relation and the resulting ethical implications. Grebel and McFague present the more conservative views within the movements in terms of their reliance on spirituality. Grebel's strict Biblicism and McFague's focus on developing new models of God in opposition to the established models deemphasizes the role of spiritual experiences over against reliance on external sources of knowledge.

Christ and Schwenckfeld present the middle ground where strong emphasis is placed on spirituality. However, the validity of spiritual experiences is generally measured against external sources. Müntzer and Starhawk are only slightly more radical in their emphasis on spirituality. However, the ethical implications they deduce from their spiritual experiences vary drastically from the other writers. While Grebel, McFague, Schwenckfeld, and Christ respond to the perceived social injustice predominantly through their writing activity, public debates, political organization within the established institutional framework, or by passive resistance – e.g. martyrdom – Müntzer and Starhawk engage in more radical and at times militant forms of non-institutionalized action. These two writers therefore present the more radical end of the spectrum in each movement.

This thesis concerns itself with the relationship between the inner and the outer dimensions of religion, not towards whom or what one directs her/his spiritual practices. This thesis is not intended to be a historical comparison of different religious traditions. Rather, it presents an ideological and methodological analysis and comparison that seeks to extract the common fundamental assumptions underlying the spiritual Ecofeminists'

and radical Reformers' religious ideologies, which determine the writers' choices regarding the strategies they employ in their endeavour to change society.

The differentiation between the terms *spirituality* and *religion* is an important aspect of this thesis. The fact that the different authors examined here follow different religious traditions might result in different understandings regarding these concepts. In the traditional Christian understanding, spirituality is synonymous with interiority and focuses on experiencing the divine. In the current popular view, associated with the traditions preferred by the spiritual Ecofeminists, spirituality is associated with experience, relationship, reflection, devotion, transcendence of self, and transformation. [7] In contemporary parlance the term *religion* is usually associated with ideas of institutionalization, structure, hierarchy, and organization. Other aspects closely associated with religion are external phenomena such as authoritative religious texts, authoritative doctrines established by the leadership, sermons/teachings, and rituals.

In the view of some sociologists, who promote the 'spiritual revolution' theory, religion and spirituality present mutually exclusive ways of practicing one's faith. In the traditional Christian understanding spiritual experiences can occur in connection to the external religious phenomena, e.g. by reading and contemplating Scripture, by listening to sermons, and by participating in rituals. Spiritual experiences and religious practices refer to different aspects of a Christian's life, but both are integrated into the same tradition to a greater or lesser extent depending on the theological stream one follows.

The radical Reformers as well as the spiritual Ecofeminists use spirituality as a means to connect to a deity or other form of ultimate reality. Establishing a viable

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[7] For the traditional Christian view see Owen C. Thomas, "Interiority and Christian Spirituality," *Journal of Religion* 80 (2000): 41-60. For the contemporary popular view see Anna S. King, "Spirituality," 343-351.

definition of spirituality that can be applied to all six writers investigated here demanded the creation of an abstract idea that is not expressed as such by any of the writers but describes the underlying common view regarding the nature and function of spirituality of all of them, according to my interpretation of their texts. For the purposes of this thesis I will therefore use the term *spirituality* as referring to an individual's idea of their own nature as including or consisting of stuff (spirit) that is identical with the stuff (spirit) that permeates or constitutes ultimate reality. A spiritual experience consists of accessing the stuff inside oneself, which establishes a connection between the individual and ultimate reality through which this reality can be perceived.

The writers examined in this thesis use spiritual experiences in order to gain knowledge of what they consider to be ultimately real. The most important aspect of spirituality for this thesis is that the knowledge ascertained through a spiritual connection to ultimate reality constitutes experiential knowledge that largely depends on extra-sensory perception and emotional responses. Since the six writers appear to view spirituality as an exclusively inner experience, it is contrasted to external phenomena of religion.

I use the phrase *external religious phenomena* to refer to the structure of a religious tradition and any medium that delivers information about the ultimately real. The most important media for the purposes of this thesis are Scripture, sermons/teachings, rituals and symbols/models. In contrast to spiritual experiences, I view external religious phenomena as relaying information about the ultimately real on a cognitive level. Whether an individual favours religion or spirituality therefore has certain implications regarding the value they attribute to cognitive versus experiential

knowledge.

I am not in favour of viewing spiritual and religious activities as mutually exclusive ways of practicing one's faith but as different and complementing aspects contained in all religious traditions. I therefore view religion as including spirituality as a central aspect and will use the term *religion* accordingly, e.g. the phrase *religious ideology* includes a particular view of the concept and role of spirituality. When referring to the aspects commonly associated with religion, according to the popular view, I will use the phrase *external religious aspects/phenomena* or *outer religion*, in contrast to spirituality, which I might also refer to as *inner religion*, unless the specific phrases used by the writers themselves are employed. The media that relay cognitive knowledge are also collectively referred to as *external sources*.

The texts of the selected writers are examined regarding their view of spirituality and its relation to outer religion and the strategies they employ to legitimate their own authority and de-legitimate the authority of the established institution/worldview. These findings are then compared. In spite of the differences of their particular views strong overarching similarities also exist. These parallels permit the development of a general idea of spirituality and its relation to outer religion that applies to all six selected writers and can therefore serve to further define the concept of spirituality, especially its political aspects.

In order to support my second claim that the activities of both the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists present part of a general popular reaction against over-institutionalization the socio-political surroundings of both groups need to be examined and compared. First, I present an overview of the socio-political status quo

the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists were exposed to and perceived as unjust. Other contemporary intellectual influences are also presented partly to contextualize both movements and partly to display similarities in the general anti-institutional sentiments present at both times. The similarities found in the intellectual, and religious developments of the radical Reformers' and spiritual Ecofeminists' surroundings allow for the formulation of more general statements regarding factors that contribute to the development of an ideological revolution. The findings of this thesis regarding revolution theory might therefore also be applicable to other social revolutions and illuminate the role of religion/spirituality in such movements.

The description of the late medieval socio-political status quo relies on the work of historians, whereas the presentation of the social injustices perceived by the spiritual Ecofeminists relies predominantly on the views of Feminist theorists. This source selection might give the impression of choosing objective, third-party analysis on the one hand and subjective, agenda-ridden confessionals on the other. The problem in this case lies in the availability of comparable sources. The radical Reformers of early 16th century Europe did not generally engage in critical theorizing, neither about their contemporary authoritative religious ideology, nor about their own views and activities. Historians have done it for them and have come up with a variety of interpretations regarding the causes of the Reformation and the different personalities' motivations and agendas.[8] Due to the overt religious aspect of the Reformation, historians have also generally included religious factors (sometimes by specifically arguing against their influence) in their

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[8] For an overview of different historical interpretations regarding the Reformation see Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß und groß Geschrei, Die reformatorischen Bewegungen in Deutschland 1517-1529* (München: C. H. Beck, 1987), 11-13, 15-24, 26-27; Peter Blickle, *Die Reformation im Reich* (Stuttgart: Ulmer, 1982), 9-17.

analysis.

Ecofeminists, on the other hand, have engaged in the theoretical aspects of their ideology critique against patriarchy in general and Christianity in particular. Any 'historical' analyses of the contemporary surroundings of the Ecofeminist movement are usually undertaken by sociologists or political scientists who generally display minimal interest in religious factors. Their interpretations are helpful for my descriptions of the intellectual influences on spiritual Ecofeminists, in terms of the background they provide. However, their general viewpoint ignores a potential connection between a society's social condition and its underlying worldview. The sociologists' and political scientists' perspectives therefore render their accounts of the developments of the 1960s in the United States insufficient as sources for the way radical Feminists and Ecofeminists viewed the socio-political status quo they were confronted with. The radical Feminist and Ecofeminist literature provides the necessary information with the underlying assumption of a strong connection between religion and society. For the sake of the comparison of the two groups it is important that the literature used to present the socio-political surroundings of both groups is consistent in its underlying assumption of a strong connection between religion and society. The chosen literature for both groups fulfills this requirement. Perhaps, in the future, more extensive third-party source material about the socio-political upheaval of mid 20th century United States that includes religion as a factor will be available when these events are recognized as involving religious aspects in a similar way that the Reformation has come to be seen as including socio-political aspects.

When one investigates the role of religion in society today it is impossible to

avoid engaging the secularization thesis. Claiming a role for religion in social movements automatically attributes religion with a social significance secularization theorists deny in our present culture. This conflict arises from the exclusive focus secularization theorists place on the influence of religious *institutions* on society, although they claim to investigate the social significance of religion. The possible effects of spirituality, on the other hand, are neglected as they constitute *non-institutionalized* forms of religious activities.

This equation of religion with religious institution is problematic because neither religious institutions, nor spiritual practices appear in isolation in society. This thesis will show that even groups that focus on spirituality value external religious phenomena and that when external aspects of religion and its institutionalization are emphasized, it leads precisely to the crisis situations that instigate ideological revolutions. This thesis therefore presents a possible challenge to the secularization thesis and seeks to urge secularization theorists to take the factor of spirituality into consideration as an aspect of religion.

The first chapter of this thesis reviews and underscores the concepts and theories relevant to this study. The claims of the secularization thesis are explored, including the spiritual revolution claim. The concepts of spirituality, religion, and authority are defined, and the definition of revolution, according to the political scientist Jack A. Goldstone, is explained as it applies to the spiritual Ecofeminists and radical Reformers.

The second chapter presents the relevant data regarding the radical Reformer's socio-political surroundings, intellectual and religious/ideological developments, and

general anti-institutional sentiments. The third chapter examines the selected radical Reformers' writings regarding their views of spirituality, its relation to outer religion and the strategies they employ to de-legitimate the established religious authority and establish their own in its stead. Chapter four and five present the same descriptions and examinations for the spiritual Ecofeminists as chapter two and three provide for the radical Reformers. The concluding chapter reviews how the findings confirm the claims put forth by this thesis and presents some additional ideas based on these results.

Certain conditions and circumstances are presented in particular to validate the claim that both movements can justifiably be referred to as 'ideological revolutions'. Nevertheless, this thesis does not claim to present an inclusive picture of all factors that contributed to the respective crisis situations that initiated the movements or all influences and circumstances that propelled them forward. Important aspects that have been largely disregarded in this examination are economic factors,[9] coinciding new developments of media and mass communication,[10] and confrontations with alternative worldviews through the direct or indirect encounter of new cultures.[11] This thesis focuses

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[9] Goertz gives an overview of economic circumstances present in the late medieval period that contributed to the development of a crisis situation in Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 32-40. Robert V. Daniels describes some political developments between 1890 and 1940 and their effect on economic policies in Robert V. Daniels, *The Fourth Revolutio, Transformations in American Society from the Sixties to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38-41.

[10] For information regarding the influence of the development of the printing press for the Reformation see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Daniels suggests a relation between certain advances of mass media and the developments of the 1960s (Daniels, *Fourth Revolution*, 52). However, no sources have been found that examine a relation in detail.

[11] Since the early 15th century Europe's trade relations expanded to destinations around the world including the discovery of many previously unknown territories and cultures, thereby exposing Europeans to different worldviews. See Boies Penrose, *Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 308-310, 325-326. The increase in immigration to the United States from Asian countries after the passing of the Immigration Act of 1965 increased the exposure of this predominantly Western Christian society to new cultural influences. See "The Immigration Flood," *Society* 34 (1997): 6-7.

particularly on the conditions that are seen as directly affecting intellectual development, the formation of ideology critique, and political strategies based on religion. The excluded aspects are viewed as having only secondary significance for this project.

Although the influence of these developments is disregarded in the descriptions of the intellectual developments of the six writers, the inclusion of humanism, which originated in Italy, and poststructuralism, which originated in France, still presents foreign intellectual influences.

Chapter 1: The Framework

Introduction

This chapter presents several concepts and theories that help to explain the current development of an increased popularity of spirituality over religion and to integrate this phenomenon into a larger historical picture. The spiritual Ecofeminists were chosen as an example of a group that is involved in this development today, whereas the radical Reformers present a historical parallel that reveals that this current phenomenon can be understood as part of a recurring pattern.

The spiritual Ecofeminists are a group of socio-political activists that emerged in the late 20th century CE. They seek to supplant the modern Western value system they perceive as based on Christianity with an Ecofeminist worldview supported by a variety of possible religious ideologies. Spiritual Ecofeminists view the Christianity based ideologies of patriarchy and anthropocentrism as incorporated into the structure of all modern Western institutions. The group opposes the hierarchical thinking promoted by both concepts and seeks to introduce an alternative worldview based on the idea of the interconnection and interdependence of all living beings. This new ideology is viewed as promoting radical egalitarianism.

The radical Reformers opposed the religious worldview of the Holy Roman Church of the pre-modern period. This institution promoted the socially privileged status of the clergy over the laity by attributing to them the religious privilege of exclusive access to the divine. The radical Reformers sought to introduce the idea of the 'priesthood of all believers' instead, where all members of the same religious group were

inherently qualified to fulfill the role of priest.[1] This view was intended to attribute equal religious status to all believers, which would translate into equal social status as well.

Both groups therefore aim at changing the established religious ideology that promotes social inequality. This aspect makes both groups appropriate case studies for the investigation of the role of institutionalized religion and spirituality in ideological revolutions. In the case of the radical Reformers the problematic religious ideology was promoted by the Church, which, in late medieval Germany, presented a universal institution that affected all aspects of life. The spiritual Ecofeminists attack the Christian worldview as the basis of patriarchy and anthropocentrism. These ideologies as understood by the spiritual Ecofeminists are not exclusively religious because they see their influence as pervading all institutions, not just the churches. Nevertheless, the partial religious origin of patriarchy and anthropocentrism and their universal application in modern Western society make them similar to the all pervading religious ideology of the universal Church in 16th Century Germany, if not exactly in nature, at least in scope.

Some of the discrepancies between the cases of the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists can be explained by secularization. This phenomenon accounts for differences in the socio-political surroundings of both groups that are a result of the 450-year time span that separates them. The secularization thesis addresses the different relation between institutions in the medieval period versus their relation in the 20th century, which is an important factor to consider in the comparison of both groups. While in the late medieval period the Church held great political power and the religious

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[1] See Jill Rait, "European Reformations of Christian Spirituality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality,* ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 124. The phrase 'priesthood of all believers' is an expression that signifies the rejection of a professional clergy. See Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 73.

worldview therefore immediately affected social structure and values, religious and secular institutions are seen as segregated in the 20th century. The secularization thesis is presented, on the one hand, to explain this development and, on the other hand, to be tested on the specific case of the spiritual Ecofeminists. The first section in this chapter will therefore explain the secularization thesis in more detail in order to show how the influence of institutionalized religion on society has changed throughout the modern period. For this the views of secularization theorists Bryan Wilson and Steve Bruce are presented. The discussion of the secularization thesis also points out its deficiencies that become apparent when the concept is applied to the spiritual Ecofeminists.

The first section also explains the views of Paul Heelas, who examines the role of religious institutions versus spiritual groups within the private sphere. Heelas' investigation of the causes for the increasing popularity of spirituality versus institutionalized religion points to a crisis situation currently affecting religious institutions. The presence of a crisis situation is an important factor for the development of revolutions, as will be discussed in section four of this chapter. Heelas' account therefore serves to show that the spiritual Ecofeminists can be understood as participants in an ideological revolution when they promote spirituality over institutionalized religion.

In their aim of supplanting the dominant institutionalized religious worldview of their time, both groups claim greater authority for the worldview they seek to implement. This greater authority is justified on the grounds of non-institutionalized religious experiences – spirituality. Section two of this chapter discusses the differences between the concepts of religion and spirituality and how these differences can make spirituality a useful political tool against an established religious authority. The account of the

historical development of the religion-spirituality-relation is based on various scholarly theories. The basic assumptions surrounding the contemporary view of the concepts of religion and spirituality are largely taken from the area of sociology of religion. The description of both concepts that is intended to relay the views of the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists, presents the underlying ideas regarding religion and spirituality common to all six writers investigated here, according to my interpretation of their texts. This section shows how the particular understanding of religion and spirituality of all six writers relates to other traditional and contemporary views of these concepts and how spirituality presents a solution to the deficiencies perceived in religious institutions.

Section three explains the concept of authority in greater detail. Since authority is a concept that necessarily deals with power relations, its effects are always political. Religious authorities exist, but the 'religious' refers to the type of argumentation employed to justify the authority rather than to a different nature of the authority compared to political authority. I therefore present two political theorists' views of authority. I assume that the theories presented by Joseph Raz and R. B. Friedman are more applicable to the context of the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists than others because in accordance with the religious writers presented in this thesis, they share an objectivist view of legitimate authority.[2] This section presents Raz's ideas of the necessary requirements for claiming legitimate authority that generally coincide with the assumptions of the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists, according to my

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[2] Joseph Raz, ed., "Authority and Justification," in *Authority* (New York: University Press, 1990), 115. For the opposing view that an authority's right to rule does not entail the subject's obligation to obey and that any authority is legitimate, see Robert Ladenson, "In Defense of a Hobbesian Conception of Law," in *Authority,* ed Joseph Raz (New York: University Press, 1990), 37-38.

interpretation of their texts. Friedman offers a general description of a particular type of authority that seems to apply to the established authorities the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists oppose, according to the six writers' portrayal of these authorities. Friedman's views are therefore helpful to understand how both groups viewed the established authority they sought to subvert. This third section shows the writers' underlying assumptions regarding the concept of legitimate authority. These ideas affected the strategies they chose in order to promote their particular religious ideology and to discredit opposing views.

Paul Heelas claims that the increasing popularity of spirituality over religion could be viewed as the precursor for an immanent 'spiritual revolution'. However, his claim refers exclusively to the quantity of membership of traditional Christian congregations versus adherents to spiritual groups. Heelas refrains from considering any actual political activity in this context. Section four examines to what extent the activities of the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists fit into the category of revolution in contemporary social movement theory in order to make the connection of this phenomenon to the political.

Altogether this chapter presents the underlying theories and concepts of this thesis as a framework for the data discussed in the following four chapters.

Secularization – The Separation of the Realms

Bryan Wilson is a proponent of the secularization thesis. According to his view, religion has become less and less significant as a social force throughout the modern period. Steve Bruce affirms this perceived change of the role of religion from the pre-

modern period to today when he states:

> Even those pre-Reformation Europeans who troubled the inside of a church only on 'high days and holy days' lived in a world whose rhythms and seasons were blessed by the Church, knew that the Church controlled entry to heaven, and had frequent recourse to the magic of the saints (and to older and darker arts). The common people of our day care nothing for blasphemy, allow most of their rites of passage to go unsanctified, and in so far as a small number of them resort to magic . . . those practices take them further away from, not nearer to, the formal religion of the churches.[3]

Wilson does not necessarily claim a decline of religious activity throughout the modern period, but a retreat of religion from the public sphere to the private sphere which accounts for the decline in its social significance. Bruce describes how, due to fragmentation, the monolithic and universal church of pre-modern Europe gradually lost its unique status of holding the authority over the moral matters of all aspects of life. On a religious level, fragmentation into various belief systems began with the early modern sects and culminated in their establishment as denominations. The radical Reformers examined in this thesis constitute part of this stage in the development of secularization. On a social level, the Church lost its influence on certain aspects of life because its former influence on economic activities and its monopoly in health care services and education eroded through division into smaller, more specialized units outside the control of the Church.[4]

Other factors that contributed to secularization were societalization and rationalization. The former refers to the shift in reference point for group identity from the small scale community to large anonymous cities and nation-states. The latter describes a shift in perspective from viewing all aspects of society and all aspects of life as integrated towards abstraction. Rationalization also entails a shift from viewing ethical

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[3] Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, 4.
[4] Ibid., 39-43.

principles as determined according to the personal choices of the leaders towards objectivity. The influence of rationalization in terms of increasing abstraction and objectivity is seen by Bruce as the cause for the emergence of the scientific worldview. This new approach to studying the environment led to an understanding of natural processes as cause and effect relations rather than divine interventions.[5] Bruce states that religion's decline as a public force is also resembled in the dominant social formations it takes on in different time periods: "If the *church* was the dominant form of religion in the pre-Reformation world, the *sect* its embodiment in the early modern period, and the *denomination* its classic form in the twentieth century, the emblem of religion for the twenty-first century is the *cult*."[6]

The organizational structure of the Catholic Church has been marked by its centralized bureaucracy and hierarchy since the Middle Ages.[7] Berndt Hamm points to the control the pope and the cardinals asserted over all activities and doctrines in the Church because of their authority to determine truth and heresy.[8] Bruce states that the Church's hierarchical structure was often viewed as legitimating the state's hierarchical structure and therefore aligned itself more closely with the wealthier groups of the population than with the poor. As long as dissidents accepted the authority of the highest officials, they could be incorporated into the Church as distinct monastic orders.

Dissidents who questioned the highest Church authority and sought to advance their own interpretations of Scripture were rejected by the Church as heretics and

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[5] Ibid., 43-44, 47-50.

[6] Ibid., 4.

[7] See ibid., 69-70.

[8] Berndt Hamm, "Geistbegabte gegen Geistlose: Typen des pneumatologischen Antiklerikalismus – zur Vielfalt der Luther-Rezeption in der frühen Reformationsbewegung," in *Anticlericalism in late medieval and early modern Europe,* eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 383-384.

consequently formed their own sectarian movements apart from the Church.[9] Mary

Douglas explains how these sects were often particularly concerned with the welfare of

the disadvantaged social groups and presented revolts against any established hierarchical

systems.[10] Their protest against the Church therefore inadvertently included rebellion

against the worldly rulers and both institutions responded to the sectarians with vigorous

persecution.

Bruce describes how the opposition between the Church and the sects in the early

modern period gradually turned into mutual acceptance over the next few centuries. This

occurred, on the one hand, because members of the sects gave up some of the radicalism

of their position and became more organized. On the other hand, the Church, under the

influence of Protestantism, split into a number of different groups with somewhat distinct

religious ideologies but accepting each other as viable religious denominations.[11] One

result of the mutual tolerance between the various denominations was that the state had to

become neutral. Individual religious liberty could only be upheld in a state that did not

endorse one religious view over another.[12] With the development of the denominations,

the influence of religious institutions as well as dissident groups over public affairs was

greatly diminished.

Bruce explains that, in contrast to the medieval Church, characteristics of the

denominations include mutual tolerance and separation from the state. Nevertheless, the

denominations resemble the Church to a greater or lesser degree in terms of their

hierarchical structure, their bureaucratic organization, and their association with the

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[9] Bruce, *Religion in the modern World*, 71-72.

[10] Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols; explorations in cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 4.

[11] Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, 73-81.

[12] Ibid., 76-77.

economically more advantaged parts of the population.[13] This high degree of institutionalization of the denominations can again lead to anti-institutional sentiments. Douglas asserts a continuous cycle between denominationalism and sectarianism: "A movement which begins as a sect expressing the religious needs of the poor gradually moves up the social scale. It becomes respectable ... With respectability comes ritualism. With loss of good fortune comes anti-ritualism and the new sect."[14] According to Bruce, respectability is one of the key features that the organizational forms of church and denomination share. Sects and cults, on the other hand, present deviant forms of religious groups. However, one aspect that distinguishes sects from cults is that the former claims a "unique grasp of salvational knowledge" while the latter does not.[15]

The radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists belong to deviant forms of religious groups, otherwise they would not be able to present an alternative religious ideology to the established one. The proponents of both groups also display an intolerant stance against all other ideologies that exclude spirituality or experience as a valid way of knowing or ascertain unacceptable truths through spirituality/personal experiences. This shows that both the radical Reformers as well as the spiritual Ecofeminists consider themselves as possessing a unique grasp of salvational knowledge. They therefore both belong to Bruce's category of 'sect', although individually the spiritual Ecofeminists predominantly belong to cults.

In the twenty-first century, cults are the form of religious organization that could be seen as rebelling against the institutionalized forms of Christianity. According to Wilson,

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[13] Ibid., 75.

[14] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 4-5.

[15] Bruce, *Religion in Modern World*, 82-84.

cults present the most eclectic and individualistic forms of religious groups and encompass such groups as New Age movements, some variants of the Christian or oriental religious traditions, and 'human potential' movements.[16] Paul Heelas asserts that this type of religious group emerged because of the 'subjective turn of modern culture', which presents a shift in cultural values. He explains:

> It is a turn away from life lived in terms of external or 'objective' roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences . . . The subjective turn is thus a turn away from 'life-as' (life lived as a dutiful wife, father, husband, strong leader, self-made man etc.) to 'subjective-life' (life lived in deep connection with the unique experiences of my self-in-relation).[17]

In his study, Heelas investigates the popularity of religious institutions versus groups that emphasize non-institutionalized spirituality. He examines the role of religious institutions within the private sphere. For Heelas, the turn away from organized religion towards subjective spirituality occurs because this type of religiosity/spirituality caters to the perceived needs of the 'subjective wellbeing culture', a prominent phenomenon of our time.[18] Whereas Wilson and Bruce see religion in the past as exerting considerable influence over social values and structure, Heelas seems to assert that particular forms of religion evolve in response to changes in cultural values. Rather than asserting cultural influence, the religious movements Heelas examines that largely coincide with Wilson's category of cults present a cultural reaction and therefore do not exert any social influence.

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[16] Bryan Wilson, "The Secularization Thesis; Criticisms and Rebuttals," in *Secularization and Social Integration,* eds. Rudi Laermans, Bryan Wilson & Jaak Billiet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), 58.

[17] Paul Heelas et al, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is giving way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 2-3.

[18] Ibid., 5; for an elaboration on the term 'subjective well-being culture' see ibid., 84-86.

Heelas explains that cults emphasize the value of the self over institutions that are seen as the embodiments of values alien to many individuals.[19] Traditional Christian congregations, on the other hand, emphasize the value of the institution over the self.[20] His findings that types of religious groups emphasizing the value of the self are on the rise can therefore be interpreted as an indicator that our culture displays increasing anti-institutional tendencies. The presence of these anti-institutional sentiments is important, as they point to the development of a potential crisis situation that might lead to an ideological revolution. The emergence of the cult-phenomenon in the late 20th century can therefore be interpreted as the point in the cycle of rise and decline of institutions where a new, non-institutionalized development challenges the idea of institutionalization and subsequently causes the institution's decline or reform.

The turn away from more socially integrated religious traditions such as Christianity can be interpreted as a further decline of the influence of religious institutions, not only on a social level, but also within the private sphere. For Wilson, the cults epitomize the decline of the social significance of religion as

> highly privatized [religious groups] that reduce religion to the significance of pushpin, poetry, or popcorns. They have no real consequence for other social institutions, for political power structures, for technological constraints and controls. They add nothing to any prospective reintegration of society, and contribute nothing towards the culture by which a society might live.[21]

The bottom line of the secularization thesis is that in the 20th century the social influence of religious institutions is greatly diminished compared to the pre-Reformation

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[19] Ibid., 120-123.

[20] Ibid., 3-4.

[21] Bryan Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 96.

period. But how about the non-institutionalized forms Heelas investigates? According to Wilson they present the epitome of religious privatization with the least amount of social influence compared to other forms of religious organizations. Heelas' investigation does not contest that. However, if the turn to religious groups that focus on spirituality is the result of anti-institutional sentiments, then this development is not only of a private (religious) but also of a public (socio-political) nature.

The rejection of an institution is always inadvertently a political statement because of the power structures inherent in any institutional organization. Insisting on one's independence from an all encompassing power structure/institution is synonymous with declaring one's autonomy. Insisting on self-governance removes an individual from the jurisdiction of the authority that heads the power structure/institution and possibly results in two competing entities claiming authority over the same subject – the institution and the self. Considering this relation, the fact that the cults emphasize non-institutionalized spirituality over institutionalized religion is politically significant and the socio-political aspects of these two concepts need to be discussed further.

Spirituality and its Institution - Religion in the Western World

The distinction between religion and spirituality[22] is synonymous with the differentiation of the inner and outer aspects of religion. The urge to separate the spiritual from the religious is rooted in a philosophical tradition that reaches back to antiquity.

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[22] This thesis limits its examination of 'spirituality' to the forms that occur in some connection to a religious tradition, particularly Christianity. In this tradition the concept of spirituality is more or less synonymous with interiority. Other possible uses of spirituality such as referring to a feeling of harmony or well-being, as experienced through music, art, or nature (aesthetically, not religiously), or directing its focus towards a non-religious goal, such as common humanity are disregarded. Anna S. King discusses all these varieties of spirituality in "Spirituality: Transformation and Metamorphosis," *Religion* 26 (1996): 343-351.

Most scholars see the inner/outer distinction that provides the foundation for the spirituality/religion distinction as a uniquely Western construct, but disagree on its precise origin. Charles Taylor traces the origin of the inner/outer distinction back to Augustine who derived this idea through his reading of Plotinus.[23] Owen C. Thomas adds the Stoics to the lineage.[24] Fergus Kerr sees the origins in the Orphic and Gnostic traditions.[25] According to Thomas, the inner/outer distinction was later adopted and elaborated on by Descartes and Locke who gave primacy to the inner over the outer and established the modern idea of radical subjectivism.[26]

In terms of religion, the inner/outer distinction turned into the differentiation of spirituality and religion. Alasdair MacIntyre asserts that the difference between spirituality and religion found its way mainly into Protestant rather than Catholic thought. The latter, in accordance with the Aristotelian tradition, did not acknowledge a difference between one's soul and one's body.[27] Some scholars argue that it was the development of Protestantism that laid the foundations for the development of radical subjectivism in modern philosophy. According to Wade Clarke Roof, in the second half of the 20th century, this underlying Protestant idea of acknowledging a difference between spirituality and religion was finally expanded by the American baby boomer generation to incorporate Eastern and New Age spiritualities because they were confronted with an increasingly pluralistic 'spiritual marketplace'.[28]

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[23] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 128-129.

[24] Owen C. Thomas, "Interiority and Christian Spirituality," *The Journal of Religion* 80.1 (2000): 44.

[25] Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Blackwell,1986), 172-173.

[26] Thomas, "Interiority", 46.

[27] Alastair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 172.

[28] See Robert C. Fuller, "Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion,"

In contemporary parlance, the term 'religion' is usually associated with ideas of institutionalization, structure, hierarchy, organization, and rituals.[29] A particular religion's universal claims to truth and authority (religious ideology) and their distinctive theology and history represent the traditional aspects of a religion.[30] According to Paul Heelas, religion urges its participants to consider themselves as part of an order, that is transmitted from the past but also flows into the future, and that is 'higher' and 'greater' than the individual. It is the authority of the overarching order that directs one's actions and beliefs and obeying this authority and conforming to the values promoted by the order bestows meaning upon life.[31]

In a religious tradition authority is held by one or a few individuals. In organized religions most members are asked to believe the religious ideology promoted by the leader(s), and to follow the rules established according to the religious experiences of the few. In traditional views of Christianity, in particular, the general membership's knowledge of the divine is mediated through texts that the leaders alone have the authority to interpret, doctrines that the leaders establish, and rituals that enforce the hierarchical structure through the roles it attributes to the leaders and the laity.[32] Any knowledge of the divine is generally acquired or transmitted on a cognitive level through external sources. The external aspects of religious texts, doctrines, and rituals are emphasized in this religious tradition because they legitimate the hierarchical structure of the Church.

Journal of Religion 81.1 (2001): 184.

[29] King, "Spirituality", 345.

[30] See ibid., 349.

[31] Heelas, *Spiritual Revolution*, 3, 5.

[32] See Hamm, "Geistbegabte," 383-384; Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß und groß Geschrei* (München: C. H. Beck, 1987), 77.

The social structure established within an organized religion therefore strongly emphasizes the relationship between the general members of that tradition and the religious leaders. Spirituality, on the other hand, grants significance and authority to personal religious experiences and focuses on the relationship between the individual and a supernatural entity. In the Christian tradition spirituality is often defined as a set of practices that help an adherent "to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christian discipleship by becoming more fully incorporated into the body of Christ."[33] David B. Perrin asserts that in the mystical branches of the Western theistic traditions, which emphasize the individual's spiritual connection to the divine, "the experience of oneness or intimacy with some absolute divine reality is at the heart of what has come to be commonly identified as mysticism."[34] Heelas determines the "holistic relationship to the spirit-of-life"[35] as the central aspect of New Age spirituality.

The central aspect of any type of spirituality is therefore the direct relationship of the devotee to a supernatural entity. According to my interpretation, for the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists, this relationship of the individual with what is considered to be ultimately real occurs on an experiential/spiritual level and has several implications. The idea of knowing what is ultimately real through personal experience is viewed by all writers investigated in this thesis as automatically granting authority to determine what is right or wrong in accordance with the perceived true reality. According to the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists, this knowledge leads to personal

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[33] J. Matthew Ashley, "The Turn to Spirituality? The Relationship between Theology and Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: The study of Christian Spirituality,* eds. Elizabeth A. Dreyer & Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 161.
[34] David B. Perrin, "Mysticism," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality,* ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 443.
[35] Heelas, *Spiritual Revolution,* 31.

transformation because one feels compelled to act in accordance with the values viewed as promoted by the ultimately real. All six writers therefore view an ethically appropriate lifestyle as the outward sign of an individual's spiritual connection to the divine.

This personal transformation, viewed as an essential part of discovering one's spirituality, can also turn into a desire for social transformation if one feels obligated to also promote these values in the larger society. This is the case for all six writers examined here. Whether one attempts to align oneself with ultimate reality only on a personal level or aims at changing society at large, the possible assumption that one's efforts correspond with the purpose of ultimate reality would attribute significance to the actions of the devotee. The perceived knowledge of what is right and wrong serves as the justification for all transformations attempted, personal as well as social.

The recognition of one's spiritual nature that is part of ultimate reality attributes inherent value to the individual and all other individuals/beings who are viewed as possessing a spiritual aspect. This is an important feature of spirituality that presents the basis of its inherent egalitarianism, according to the underlying assumptions of the spiritual Ecofeminists and the radical Reformers. Since the ultimately real is viewed as the ultimately valuable at the same time, any thing or being that is seen as containing an aspect of ultimate reality (a spiritual nature) is therefore inherently valuable. This idea prevents the emergence of any hierarchical structures that are justified on the grounds of the qualitative difference between members of the same religious group. The common spiritual aspect contained in all members of a group of spiritual beings makes them qualitatively equal.

Spirituality therefore has three main aspects: it attributes meaning to life, it grants

inherent value, and it presents a method to acquire ultimate knowledge. The ways in which the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists employ spirituality in order to justify their authority, their religious ideologies, the social structures they seek to establish, and their ethical principles are all based on this understanding of a triple function of this concept.

Although spirituality presents an alternative way of knowing from the traditional mainstream view of Christian epistemology, the writers presented in this thesis do not intend to abolish the use of external sources of knowledge, such as Scripture, sermons, and rituals. The examinations of the six writers' views in chapters three and five provide evidence that external sources still play an important role in their epistemologies. However, they incorporate the internal/experiential knowledge attained through these media rather than restricting their function to only relaying the cognitive knowledge traditional Christian theologians emphasize. While the latter promote mediated instruction from individuals trained to handle the external phenomena of religion correctly, the former allow all individuals to access knowledge directly through personal experience/spirituality. Unlike cognitive knowledge, experiential knowledge does not require the individual's submission to the authority of a trained leadership, which promotes equality on a political level.

On a personal or social level the aspect of spirituality as granting meaning can play a role in situations of over-institutionalization. According to Heelas' investigation, a turn away from religious institutions and towards spirituality presents the popular remedy for a lack of meaning found in the institution.[36] When religion is predominantly

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[36] Ibid., 120-123, 128.

understood as tradition that focuses on dogmas that regulate the common good and presents a hierarchy that privileges certain parts of the population, spirituality, with its emphasis on individuality and the dignity of all, becomes its rival. In a situation where two opposing powers seek to claim authority the issue of legitimacy becomes paramount. Whether authority claimed on the basis of spirituality is viewed as legitimate or whether authority claimed on the basis of tradition is successful depends on which method of accessing knowledge is deemed the superior one – spiritual experiences or dogmatism.

The following section explains the relevant conditions for claiming legitimate authority and thereby illuminates the specific purpose of the strategies the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists employ, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Authority – Knowledge is Power

The question of what constitutes a legitimate authority lies at the heart of the ideological battle between the radical Reformers/spiritual Ecofeminists and their opponents. The main purpose of the proponents of all groups for engaging in writing at all was to justify their claim to authority and to de-legitimize the claims of others. The contest for superiority (and resulting authority) of one particular epistemology finds expression in the power struggle between the adherents to religion/tradition and the promoters of spirituality.

Joseph Raz distinguishes between practical and theoretical authority. In contrast to practical authority, which directs our actions, theoretical authorities guide our beliefs. The authority of the medieval Church and the prevalence of the patriarchal and

anthropocentric mindset in the modern Western value system contained practical and theoretical aspects. This thesis, however, focuses on theoretical authority, since the radical Reformers' and Ecofeminists' ideology critique and attempted revolution corresponds to this aspect rather than the practical one.

According to Raz and R.B. Friedman, a legitimate authority has a right to rule and its subjects have an obligation to obey. Raz distinguishes between de facto authorities and legitimate authorities. He gives the de facto authority a reflexive character when he asserts that any authority that is successful in establishing and maintaining its rule is an authority because of its success. Both de facto and legitimate authorities claim a right to rule, however, only the legitimate authority's claim is justified, which entails the subjects' duty to obey.[37] This entails that 'legitimation' in Raz's definition refers to a moral attribute of the authority.

Raz's ideal of legitimate authority fulfills three criteria, according to his theses of dependence, justification, and preemption. The first two of these theses are the most applicable to the context of the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists. The dependence thesis requires that the authority's directives should cause a subject to act in her/his best interest.[38] According to the justification thesis, the authority is qualified to issue directives with this intended result because it has superior knowledge regarding the subjects' best interest over against the subjects themselves.[39] The superior knowledge of the authority is the justification for its legitimacy. The dependence thesis perscribes the authority's moral obligation. A de facto authority's rule is illegitimate because its

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[37] Joseph Raz, "Authority and Justification", 117.
[38] See ibid.,125-127.
[39] Ibid., 129.

directives are unethical due to its lack of superior knowledge or its choice against fulfilling its moral obligations.

The radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists continuously employ these qualifications for legitimate authority by claiming superior knowledge for themselves and insisting on the ethical superiority of their ideologies. They also discredit their opponents by pointing out the deficiencies in their epistemologies and the injustice inherent in their ideologies. The proponents of both groups relegate the status of the established authorities they oppose to illegitimate de facto authorities, along the lines of Raz's description of the concept, by questioning the justification of their position and/or their ethics.

Raz's theory on legitimate authority includes the limitations of the authority in conjunction with his justification thesis. Since the justification thesis relies on the superior knowledge of the authority, its jurisdiction is limited to the area to which its superior knowledge applies.[40] The directives of a legitimate authority are only binding within its jurisdiction. Beyond that, its directives are void and need not be obeyed. This view of the limitation of an authority to its particular jurisdiction is an important factor of political anticlericalism discussed in chapter two.

Another reason against complying with an authority's directives could be that a directive might be clearly wrong in relation to the dependence thesis.[41] Both cases where subjects are under no obligation to obey the authority's directives do not necessarily challenge the general legitimacy of the authority but the legitimacy of the particular directives. A reason for rejecting an authority altogether would be the presence of an

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[40] Ibid., 125, 136-137; Joseph Raz, ed., "Introduction," in *Authority* (New York: University Press, 1990), 13.

[41] Raz, "Authority," 136.

opposing authority with a better claim of justification.[42] Both the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists presented oppositions to the established religious authority and/or a particular religious ideology. The proponents of both groups claimed better justification for their authority over others by claiming superior knowledge and ethical superiority over against the established authorities/ideologies.

Friedman asserts that generally, authorities require their subjects to surrender their private judgment to the authority.[43] An authority that is recognized as such by its subjects is not in need of justifying its directives because its subjects have surrendered either judgment or choice through their agreement to compliance. However, Friedman also discusses a particular type of authority that operates under different circumstances and is relevant to the context of the medieval Church and the modern Western worldview. Friedman states that the absence of justification might not be due to the fact that the subject refrains from demanding it, but due to the fact that it does not occur to the subject that he/she could be entitled to it.

> The grip that the established authority structure has over a person's mind may be so complete that it does not occur to him that that structure could be judged in the light of any standards external to it, for example, natural rights. The authority relationship will then be characterized not by the deliberate abstention from acting on one's own judgment, but by the absence of the recognition that one has the capacity to judge. From this perspective, then, the point is not that "private judgment" or "individual judgment" is surrendered or suppressed, but that it has not appeared because the experience in which it can gain a foothold has not appeared, namely, the recognition of alternatives and the experience of tension and conflict between established practices and independent moral standards.[44]

Friedman's characterization here refers to an authority that is deeply embedded in the tradition of a culture to the point where its institution and/or the belief system it

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42 Ibid., 133.

43 Ibid., 72.

44 Ibid., 73.

represents are an essential component of the culture's worldview. An authority that is established in a tradition in this way does not need to justify its position. It is simply part of the way things are. Considering the strong and largely unquestioned position of the Church in the Middle Ages and of patriarchy and anthropocentrism up to the 20th century, the institution(s) and belief systems challenged by the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists fit into this category of traditionally based authority, according to my interpretation.

In Friedman's description of traditional authority subjects have no expectations for the authority. For that reason its claim to authority goes unchallenged. Raz's view that authorities have to fulfill specific obligations to justify their position, on the other hand, enables an effective attack on established authorities. Parties who seek to claim authority instead of the established authority can de-legitimize the latter by asserting that the necessary requirements of being in power legitimately are not met.

Particular intellectual influences can be seen as accounting for a change in the spiritual Ecofeminists' and radical Reformers' perspectives regarding the authority of the Church and/or patriarchy and anthropocentrism, as will be discussed in chapters two and four. Both groups were confronted with traditional authorities whose justification was beyond question, but their perception was altered to understand authority as legitimate only, if certain qualifying attributes were met. This gave the proponents of both groups the opportunity to discredit the established authorities and to claim authority in their stead.

Given the scope of the ideological shift necessary to switch from an idea of authority as inherently legitimate to an idea of authority as a challengeable construct it

seems appropriate to refer to this development as an ideological revolution. The aim of the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists to supplant one dominant religious ideology with another also befits this designation. The following section explains briefly how the ideological revolutions aimed at by the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists fit into contemporary social movement theory.

Revolution – Social Movement Theory

One of the main claims this thesis puts forth is that both the radical Reformation and spiritual Ecofeminism represent revolutionary movements. However, they do not fit into any of the categories of revolutions established by political scientists: great revolutions, political revolutions, social revolutions, or elite revolutions.[45] Jack A. Goldstone defines revolutionary movements as incorporating a certain

> set of elements at their core: (*a*) efforts to change the political regime that draw on a competing vision (or visions) of a just order, (*b*) a notable degree of informal or formal mass mobilization, and (*c*) efforts to force change through noninstitutionalized actions such as mass demonstrations, protests, strikes, or violence.
> These elements can be combined to provide a broader and more contemporary definition of revolution: an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and noninstitutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities.[46]

The main problem of directly applying this definition to the radical Reformers and to the spiritual Ecofeminists lies in the general political scientists' definition of 'political regime', 'political institution', and 'political authority' as referring exclusively to the state. In order to incorporate the ideological revolutions attempted by the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists the terms including references to the political have

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[45] Jack A. Goldstone, "Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001), 143.

[46] Ibid., 142.

to be expanded to include the power structures inherent in any institutional organization.

The radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists suit this expanded definition of revolutionary movements because they seek to implement more egalitarian social orders instead of the established system. These new orders are based on social value systems that contrast the value system promoted by the institution(s). The radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists also seek to change the justification for political authority within an institution by changing the modes that determine qualification for this position. Their attempt to establish informal mass mobilization through their writing activity (some of them also through overt political activism) presents another characteristic of a revolutionary movement. This last aspect represents the non-institutionalized action common to all six selected revolutionaries. One of the main objectives of the texts of the writers examined here is to inform others about the deficiencies in the established system. The radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists therefore undermine the existing authorities through their writing activity and promote an alternative system in their stead.

The ideology of revolutionary groups necessarily conflicts with the ideology of the established authority in terms of institutional structure and values. Otherwise, no revolution would be necessary. These contradictory views render revolutionaries outsiders in reference to the institution(s) they oppose. Bruce asserts that both sects and cults present deviant forms of religious groups in their respective time periods. Their social position therefore coincides with the political position revolutionaries would hold.

Whether a revolution is designated as such largely depends on its success. The question of success can be open to interpretation, e.g. the radical Reformers never succeeded in reforming the Roman Catholic Church in the intended way but the

movements they started were over time recognized as valid Christian denominations. The fact that they did not succeed in reference to their aims does not make the fact that they had revolutionary ideas less significant. The exposure to ideas that deviate from the general authoritative worldview of a society can illuminate deficiencies in the dominant worldview that might affect social developments, even if the actual revolution intended fails. The only difference between a successful revolution and a failed one depends on whether or not a movement is able to generate sufficient mass mobilization to gain the control they seek. However, the attempt alone makes its porponents revolutionaries.

Since this thesis is concerned with the circumstances that spark ideological revolutions, with the assumptions under which ideological revolutionaries operate, and with the strategies they employ to succeed, the question of ultimate success of the revolution is irrelevant. The question is whether, as suggested by Douglas, there is a pattern involving the development of institutions and eventual (attempted) ideological revolutions. The comparison of the radical Reformers with the spiritual Ecofeminists suggests that connection.

Conclusion

This thesis agrees with the general claim put forth by the secularization thesis that by the late 20th century religion in its institutionalized form has lost a great deal of the social influence it exercised in the pre-modern period. In the early 16th century, where the religious and worldly institutions were inseparably intertwined, it is clear that the radical Reformers' religious sectarianism also affected the worldly authorities and therefore exercised general cultural influence. In the case of the spiritual Ecofeminists,

secularization has affected this immediate relationship of the institutions.

In contrast to the secularization thesis, however, this thesis is more cautious about extending the claim regarding a decrease of social influence of religious institutions to religion in general as well. Religious and public institutions are not as integrated now as they once were. Nevertheless, in the understanding of the spiritual Ecofeminists, religious values still become institutionalized publicly via the general social values they affect. According to this view, secularization only removed the influence of religion on society by one step. It did not eliminate it.

The views of the spiritual Ecofeminists present a challenge to the secularization thesis because the underlying assumption of a close religion-society-connection is the basis for their activities and the method they choose to implement their revolution. The views of the spiritual Ecofeminists therefore grossly conflict with any expectations one might have regarding the general population's view of the role of religion in a modern society, according to the secularization thesis. Examining the ideas of the spiritual Ecofeminists more closely can therefore help to reveal gaps in the construction or coverage of the secularization thesis due to its limitation to the cultural influence of religious *institutions*.

One of the main differences between the viewpoints of secularization theorists and spiritual Ecofeminists is that the latter place great emphasis on spirituality, which the former disregard entirely. However, both groups treat the concepts of religion and spirituality in a similar way as opposite entities, in accordance with the contemporary public view. This particular idea of the concepts of religion and spirituality leads to the impression that they constitute competing organizational forms. Heelas' investigation

regarding the popularity of religious organizations versus spiritual groups also operates under this assumption. He consequently arrives at the conclusion that the increasing popularity of spirituality foretells the demise of religion as a stage in a linear development.

Understanding spirituality as an aspect of religion that can appear in institutionalized and non-institutionalized form, on the other hand, reveals both inner and outer religion as partners in a dialectical relationship where emphasis oscillates from one to the other, depending on the circumstances. Viewing the current development of increasing popularity of spirituality as part of a recurring cycle that includes the rise and fall of institutions alters our perception of this phenomenon and presents a challenge to the linear conceptions of the secularization theorists and other sociologists of religion. The comparison of the spiritual Ecofeminists, who are involved in the current phenomenon, with the radical Reformers, who are seen as occupying a similar position in the same cycle, provides evidence for a cyclical development. The examination of the spiritual Ecofeminists' views also reveals that their religious ideologies contain certain aspects that could form the basis for future institutionalization and the continuation of the cycle, as will be discussed in chapter six.

Viewing spirituality as an aspect of religion also entails that whether one emphasizes spirituality or its institutionalization, one always remains in the realm of religion. The radical Reformers' and spiritual Ecofeminists' attempts to subvert the opposing religious ideologies were therefore attacks on over-institutionalization, not on religion. Otherwise, they would have promoted secularization, not spirituality. The fact that the current development of an increasing popularity of spirituality presents a reaction

against over-institutionalization makes the findings of this thesis also applicable to other situations where individuals or groups display anti-institutional tendencies.

The following chapters present the socio-political surroundings the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists were exposed to, the crises the established institutions/ideologies experienced, the intellectual influences that altered the radical Reformers' and spiritual Ecofeminists' perception of authority, and the strategies they employed to gain the political authority necessary to change the system they opposed. The similarities of both cases supports the view of a continuous cycle including the construction, establishment, and destruction of institutions regardless of the diverse circumstances surrounding the relationships of various types of institutions at different points in history.

Chapter 2: Socio-political Background of the Pre-Reformation Period

Introduction

The radical Reformers Conrad Grebel, Caspar Schwenckfeld, and Thomas Muentzer of the early 16th century aimed at transforming the Christendom of Germany. In this territory the Church's claim of religious authority translated into political power and the clergy's privileged social status. This religious privilege, based on the claim of exclusive access to the divine, promoted the idea of a qualitative distinction between clergy and laity. The former abused their privileged position by oppressing the latter, according to the popular view.[1] The radical Reformers sought to eliminate the social injustices they perceived in the socially privileged status of the clergy by eliminating the religious privilege of this estate. They challenged the authority of the Church officials by promoting a religious ideology that granted equal value and equal access to knowledge to all individuals in contrast to the exclusive access claimed by the clergy.

The German population's strong criticism of the Church found its expression in the medieval anticlericalism. This unfavourable attitude of individuals or groups against some of the pope's and clergy's activities was part of the socio-political and religious life throughout the Middle Ages, not only the late medieval period. Other factors that contributed to the development of the radical Reformers' alternative theologies were humanism, mysticism, and some of Luther's ideas, which already included humanistic and mystical aspects. The medieval anticlericalism pointed out the social injustice of the clergy-laity-relationship. Humanism delivered a method by which the critique against the Church, which was viewed as a corrupt institution, could be substantiated. Both

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[1] See John van Engen, "The Late Medieval Anticlericalism: the Case of the New Devout," in *Anticlericalism in late medieval and early modern Europe,* eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 19.

humanism and mysticism presented alternative epistemologies that challenged the teaching authority of the Church. Combined with Luther's challenge of the Church's religious authority, aspects of humanism and mysticism could be forged into a religious ideology that promoted radical egalitarianism among all believers.

The following sections will describe the status of the Church in the late medieval era and the four factors of influence on the radical Reformers mentioned above. The first part describes the relationships between the Church and the secular authorities and the clergy and the laity in medieval Germany. Section two discusses the points of the anticlerical critique expressed by the laity. The following three parts present the aspects of humanism, mysticism, and Luther's ideas respectively, that are seen as most influential for the radical Reformers.

The information provided in this chapter displays the context in which the radical Reformers' anti-institutional sentiments emerged. The description of the socio-political surroundings of the radical Reformers provides evidence for an institutional crisis situation present in the late medieval period that signifies the stage of institutional decline in the cycle of rise and fall of institutions. The intellectual influences discussed here display underlying assumptions that differ from the established religious ideology regarding access to knowledge, regarding qualifications for holding a position of authority, and regarding the accountability of an authority to external standards. These alternative ways of understanding the concept of authority can also be found in the religious worldviews the radical Reformers developed and the strategies they used to dismantle the religious ideology of the Church, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Church – Stronghold of Medieval Europe

In the middle ages, the Church of the Holy Roman Empire[2] was a powerful institution on a practical, as well as a theoretical level. Hans-Jürgen Goertz sees the greatest achievement of the Church in its role of an overarching institution that subsumed all of Europe – a territory inhabited by many rival ethnic groups - under a universal moral code and thereby provided coherence and a sense of order.[3] To outsiders, the Church and the worldly rulers of the European territories presented a coherent entity. So much so, that the conquest or discovery of any territory under the authority of a worldly ruler automatically expanded the influence of Catholicism and therefore translated into a victory for the Church.[4] The extent of the homogeny of the political and religious identity of all European Catholics can also be discerned when Goertz describes that through baptism one was initiated into the Church and into the nation at the same time.[5]

In actuality, the relation between the Church and the different worldly rulers in power in Europe was very complicated and varied considerably from territory to territory. One general assumption, however, that seemed to be widely accepted was that the Church held authority over the religious realm. R. N. Swanson asserts that the coherence of the Church relied on "broadly shared definitions of the faith [and the acceptance of] the organizational headship of the papacy [but that the understanding and practice of religion actually] differed considerably from region to region, and even within regions, between different bodies, perhaps right down to the atomized spirituality of the individual

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[2] In the following sections nuances between different theological strands within medieval Catholicism and the Church's internal power struggles during the middle ages are largely ignored, because they are of no effect to the point of this examination. For a more detailed description on the situation of the medieval Church see R. N. Swanson, "The Pre-Reformation Church," in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000).

[3] Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß und groß Geschrei* (München: C. H. Beck, 1987), 43.

[4] See Swanson, "Pre-Reformation Church," 10.

[5] Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 43.

Christian."[6] Nevertheless, in the medieval world, where salvation was of utmost concern for all individuals, the Church as mediator of divine grace was an institution of vital significance.

Goertz states that the Church justified its religious authority through the papacy that was understood as ordained by God.[7] Swanson describes how the pope was seen as presenting

> the direct link between the terrestrial Church Militant and the God it worshipped. Christ's identification of St Peter as the rock on which the church would be built and the grant to him of the Power of the Keys, the authority to bind and loose on earth and in heaven . . . remained the papacy's fundamental title-deed. Acceptance of this scriptural foundation for papal power made it virtually unchallengeable . . .[8]

David Bagchi asserts that, according to the Church's doctrines, the pope had access to a 'treasury of merits' accumulated by Christ and the saints. The pope's Power of the Keys, was delegated to every member of the clergy, who, through their ordination, gained access to the treasury of the Church.[9] Goertz states that the clergy administered the divine grace contained in the treasury of merits to the laity in form of the transubstantiation during the ritual of the mass. The clergy thereby mediated between God and the laity. This role made them indispensable for the laity who, according to Church doctrine, had no other means of accessing divine grace. All Church officials therefore held a religiously privileged position that also elevated their political status

[6] Swanson, "Pre-Reformation Church," 9.
[7] Goertz, Pfaffenhaß, 74.
[8] Swanson, "Pre-Reformation Church," 10.
[9] David Bagchi, "Luther's Catholic Opponents," in The Reformation World, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000), 104-105 and Marc Lienhard, "Luther and the Beginnings of the Reformation," in Christian Spirituality, ed. Jill Rait, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 278.

within the Church and their general social status over the laity.[10]

The pope's and the cardinals' privileged positions within the Church hierarchy justified their authority in the interpretation of Scripture.[11] This factor combined with the pope's Power of the Keys attributed him with ultimate authority. The pope's interpretations of Scripture were not seen as truth because he possessed superior qualifications compared to others who might interpret Scripture, but because his position was understood as granting the power to create truth. The pope's interpretations and doctrines could therefore not be judged by any external standards. Martin Luther's views presented the first widely published objection to the pope's claim to ultimate authority, as will be discussed in section five of this chapter.

In the Middle Ages, the doctrines established by the high Church officials were adopted and taught as religious truths by all clerics. The worldview and the value system and moral principles promoted by these doctrines shaped all aspects of private and public life. The Church also attempted to claim authority over the worldly realm by stating that the legitimacy of the worldly rulers depended on the pope's sanction.[12] This claim met continuous resistance by the worldly rulers to the point where some of them claimed authority over the Church.[13] Goertz asserts that in late medieval Germany the problems accompanying the Church's claim over worldly authority were compounded by the fact that Germany was split into a multitude of small territories under the strong rule of respective princes. The German Emperor possessed little political power. The Church

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[10] Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 77.

[11] Berndt Hamm, "Geistbegabte gegen Geistlose: Typen des pneumatologischen Antiklerikalismus – zur Vielfalt der Luther-Rezeption in der frühen Reformationsbewegung," in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 383-384.

[12] See e.g. Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 45; Swanson, "Pre-Reformation Church," 10-11.

[13] The papacy had lost some of its power in the later middle ages because the French king Phillip IV had questioned the immunity of the pope by unleashing a military attack against him. See Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 45.

was therefore the institution that provided the only real universal structure and authority at the time.[14]

In the German territories, the Church already held considerable political power. Goertz describes how although, in theory, the Church's authority was confined to the religious realm, the fact that monasteries and higher Church officials often owned land granted them particular civil rights.[15] Peter Blickle states that the Church's jurisdiction over all moral offences often overlapped with the local prince's legal affairs and brought the laity under the Church's jurisdiction. Members of the clergy, however, were subject only to the ecclesiastical law, not the civil law.[16] This confusing situation regarding the legislative powers and jurisdiction of the Church and the worldly rulers continuously caused conflicts between these two authorities and resulted in perpetual power struggles between the Church and the local princes.

For the general population, the power of both the Church and worldly rulers were present in every day life. However, because of the strong communal presence of the Church, this institution affected the lives of the peasants more directly and consistently. Goertz states that in the Middle Ages, peasants' and free citizens' viewed their social community as identical with the Church community of the parish to which they belonged.[17] Trevor Johnston describes how the Church was deeply embedded in the lives of the peasants to the point where it adapted to local cultural practices by including them into its liturgical calendar and by providing the venue for the celebration of popular

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[14] Ibid., 40-44.
[15] Ibid., 44.
[16] Peter Blickle, *Die Reformation im Reich* (Stuttgart: Ulmer, 1982), 31.
[17] Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 44.

festivities and rituals.[18]

The socio-political system in the German territories was a feudal order. The Church structure resembled this hierarchical set-up, where one's place in the hierarchy was determined by one's heritage.[19] Goertz states that the younger sons of the nobility often joined the clergy and were the ones appointed to the higher positions in the hierarchy that the clerics from common descend could not obtain. Since the bishops, parishes, and monasteries often owned large stretches of land, they exercised the rights of land ownership in the same way the worldly aristocracy did. Goertz and Blickle assert that the noble descendants in the Church tended to also adopt the lavish lifestyle that their position could provide, which at times made them indistinguishable from their worldly counterparts.[20] Clergymen from common descend generally became chaplains, vicars, or monks. The clergy was responsible for the laity's spiritual welfare and held them morally accountable through education as well as by enforcing penalties for moral transgressions.[21]

One source of income for the higher clergy was the accumulation of benefices. Blickle describes that it was a common occurrence that a parish priest would hold several benefices. This meant that he had to divide his attention between several congregations and left the more immediate matters of spiritual care of the laity in the hands of the lower clergy. The lower clergy was not ordained. They were also less educated than the priests, if educated at all.[22]

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[18] Trevor Johnston, "The Reformation and Popular Culture," in *The Reformation World,* ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000), 547.

[19] Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 44.

[20] Ibid., 44-45; Blickle, *Reformation im Reich*, 30.

[21] Blicke, *Reformation im Reich*, 31.

[22] Ibid., 27-28.

The hierarchical structure of both Church and state relegated the peasantry to the bottom of the socio-political order in both the worldly and the religious realms. Whereas the worldly rulers contested the Church's claim over worldly authority, the peasants often defied the clergy's socially privileged position. The following section describes the anticlerical sentiments and criticism voiced against the estate of the clergy by the worldly rulers and the common laity.

Anticlericalism – The Stronghold under Siege

The Church's attempt to claim authority over the worldly realm and the clergy's socially privileged status and seemingly corrupt lifestyle was continuously critiqued throughout the Middle Ages. Heiko A. Oberman generally defines the late medieval anticlericalism as follows:

> Anticlericalism is a collective term, gaining currency in the nineteenth century as a one-sided negative designation. Properly understood, it describes attitudes and forms of behaviour which in late medieval and early modern Europe engendered literary, political or physical action against what were perceived as unjust privileges constituting the legal, political, economic, sexual, sacred or social power of the clergy. Significantly different according to place, time and social background, anticlericalism could focus on papal, episcopal, sacerdotal, monastic, ministerial or intellectual power-structures.[23]

The two types of anticlericalism relevant for this investigation are political anticlericalism that questioned the Church's claim of authority over the worldly realm and popular anticlericalism that criticized the clergy's privileged social status and seemingly immoral lifestyle.[24] The former largely represented the interests of the secular

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[23] Heiko A. Oberman, "Anticlericalism as an Agent of Change," in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1994), x.

[24] There seems to be some disagreement in scholarly circles on whether the clergy's lifestyle was a factor in the development of anticlericalism. See Kaspar Elm, "Antiklerikalismus im Deutschen Mittelalter," in

rulers, the latter mostly the interests of the peasants.[25]

Political anticlericalism was the result of the continuous tug-of-war for power between the princes and the Church. On the one hand, the princes sought to gain control over the local churches by seizing the right to appoint local church officials. On the other hand, the Church's jurisdiction in ecclesiastical and moral matters impinged on the authority of the princes. Another point of contention for the princes was the incorporated structure of the Church, which allowed the drawing out of funds from the German territories to Rome.[26]

Swanson describes political anticlericalism as

> part of a general struggle against any jurisdictional autonomy perceived to undermine local sovereignty and was not specifically anti-papal, or exclusively between sovereigns and popes: local ecclesiastical jurisdictional privileges and the use of spiritual weapons to enforce them were a frequent source of conflict, notably in some of the German cities.[27]

While political anticlericalism developed as the German princes and the free cities sought to defend their sovereignty against the Church, the general population, especially the peasants, saw the clergy as neglecting their duty to the laity. Popular anticlericalism

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Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 5. For the opposing view that popular anticlericalism largely centered around issues of lifestyle see Frantisek Graus, "The Church and its Critics," in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 70. The differentiation of political, popular, and theological anticlericalism (discussed in section five) is my own categorization that serves the purpose to distinguish between the various points and levels of criticism different groups emphasized, in accordance with their particular interests.

[25] This is not to say that these two types of anticlericalism were distinct strands that could not overlap. This categorization serves the purpose of limiting the presentation of anticlericalism in this thesis to the particular points that apply to the radical Reformers. It is not a complete presentation of anticlericalism in general. E.g. one type of anticlericalism excluded in this presentation is clerical anticlericalism. For more information on this topic see Susan C. Karant-Nunn, "Clerical Anticlericalism in the Early German Reformation," in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 521-534.

[26] Swanson, "Pre-Reformation Church," 13. Swanson argues that the secular authorities' complaint about Church taxes was directed less against the burden it presented to the laity, but against the fact that the secular authorities did not receive a portion of the funds.

[27] Ibid., 14.

seemed to be mostly concerned with the apparent corrupt state of the clergy. According

to Frantisek Graus, the laity accused all Church officials from the pope down to the

monks and vicars of outrageous immoral behaviour.

> At the same time new reports appeared, such as tales concerning priest's concubines and lusty priests chasing honorable wives . . . Everyone in the church was criticized, beginning with the pope, about whom the people were ready to believe the worst . . . The prelates are worse than the Jews and the pagans, their way of life is wicked, the oppression of their subjects monstrous. The lower clergy are uneducated, slovenly and live with concubines. The priests are greedy and avaricious and care more for their own bellies than for the souls entrusted to them.[28]

According to popular perception, clerics' activities did not hold up when measured

against the ethics promoted by Scripture or Church doctrines.[29] Undereducated and/or

over-burdened clergymen were seen as neglecting the spiritual welfare of their

congregation.[30] John van Engen describes popular anticlericalism as the laity's general

attitude towards the clergy that resulted from the mutual contempt of proponents of either

estate against the worldly aspirations of the members of the other.[31] The popular

anticlerical stance was a deeply seated emotion caused by the clergy's privileged

position:

> By the high middle ages Europeans took for granted smouldering resentments directed against monks, friars, bishops, priests, and clerics who claimed this-worldly privileges by way of an other-worldly office . . . some mistrust, some natural rivalry, was built into the very structure of things.[32]

It is significant to note that neither political nor popular anticlericalism challenged

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[28] Graus, "Church and its Critics," 69.
[29] Ibid., 73.
[30] Blickle, *Reformation im Reich*, 26-28.
[31] See van Engen, "Late Medieval Anticlericalism", 19.
[32] Ibid., 19.

the authority of the Church over the religious realm.[33] Some Church internal medieval developments such as Conciliarism and the Great Schism challenged the legitimacy of the pope's authority already in the later 14th and first half of the 15th century.[34] Late medieval political and popular anticlericalism, however, mostly challenged the Church's attempts to claim authority beyond its proper jurisdiction and critiqued the clergy's socially privileged position and its failure in meeting its moral obligations. [35]

Another type of anticlericalism that only developed as a more widespread form during the time of the Reformation was theological anticlericalism.[36] Its first widely published promoter was Martin Luther. Theological anticlericalism first challenged the religious ideology of the Church including the teaching authority of the pope and the privileged position of the clergy. The radical Reformers developed their own versions of theological anticlericalism and in conjunction with aspects from humanism and/or mysticism used it to develop their own programs of reform.

Humanism – A New Way of Thinking

Renaissance humanism was an influential intellectual development for some magisterial as well as for some radical Reformers. Goertz describes how humanism emerged in the cities in northern Italy where the arts and sciences developed under less influence of the Church than elsewhere. From there humanism spread all over Europe.

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[33] See Graus, "Church and its Critics," 70.

[34] Ibid., 12.

[35] See Elm, "Antiklerikalismus im deutschen Mittlealter," 3-18.

[36] Throughout the middle ages some individuals, who were seen as heretics, might voice opinions that would qualify as theological anticlericalism, however, those views did not result in mass movements of the scope of the Reformation. Elisabeth Eisenstein advanced the theory that the popularity of Luther's ideas compared to the ones of earlier medieval heretics was largely due to the development of the printing press. See Elisabeth L. Eisenstein, *The printing revolution in early modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Humanistic ideals where mostly pursued by the intellectuals of the higher classes, including theologians and educated wealthier citizens in the cities. This resulted in a heterogenous movement that could take religious, secular, artistic, scientific, or social forms.[37] Although humanism was generally an elitist movement it enjoyed great popularity with people of all social classes because of the humanists' unconventional method of voicing their critique of scholasticism and the Church in print and in German, rather than exclusively addressing clerics in Latin.[38]

William J. Bouwsma describes Renaissance humanism as a movement that aimed at reforming the scholastic educational curriculum in an attempt to recreate a glorified classical past. Through the influence of humanism the educational emphasis shifted from dialectical discourse employing logic to rhetorical discourse, the method of persuasion by appealing to one's emotions. Humanists replaced the previous focus on nature with a focus on the human being. They accomplished this shift by abandoning the scholastic search for objective truth ascertained through the sciences, metaphysics, and dogmatic theology. Instead humanists displayed an increased interest in the social, ethical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of the individual. Humanists dismissed the scholastic occupation with nature as irrelevant to human experience, which was the basis of the humanists' epistemology.[39]

The scholastics' elitism and intellectualism was also criticized and humanism promoted itself instead as a practically oriented movement that addressed the needs of the laity and shifted from the scholastic emphasis on the human intellect to a focus on the

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[37] Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 59-60.

[38] Richard Rex, "Humanism," in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000), 65-66.

[39] William J. Bouwsma, "The Spirituality of Renaissance Humanism," in *Christian Spirituality*, ed. Jill Rait, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 236.

human body.[40] The humanistic emphasis on practicality led to the development of an ethic that promoted the active expressions of a person's moral ideals.[41]

By the time of the Reformation humanism had developed into a highly influential intellectual movement. Richard Rex asserts that

> perhaps the most useful contribution which humanism made to the Reformation was extrinsic, in the credibility which it could lend to the new ideas. Rhetorical concepts and philological arguments enabled Protestant theologians . . . to present their findings with something of the sense of unarguable finality associated in the twentieth century with the appeal to science.[42]

Humanism's textual approach of philological criticism, its love for rhetoric, its socially inclusive attitude, its insistence in the importance of personal experience as the means of ascertaining knowledge, and its aim for practicality in all its endeavours had various effects on Christian theology and liturgy. Humanism provided scholars with a new understanding of classical texts and a new methodology by which to study them. No text was above the critical approach the humanists employed, including the Bible. This shift in perception instigated discoveries, which at times inadvertently resulted in a challenge to the authority of the Church.[43] Rex also points out that in contrast to scholastics, humanists generally favoured a holistic approach to texts rather than appropriating textual fragments to particular arguments.[44]

Another major novel aspect humanism brought to the study of Scripture was an appreciation of the Bible's rhetorical quality. Rhetorical methods had an impact on the

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[40] See Ibid., 236-238, and Rex, "Humanism", 52.

[41] Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 61-62.

[42] Rex, "Humanism", 63-65.

[43] Rex describes how the humanists' scrutiny regarding the authentication of ancient texts led to the discovery of forged documents, some of which granted civic legal rights to the Church (Rex, "Humanism," p. 53-54). He also describes Erasmus' enterprise of translating the gospel of John. Erasmus' translation differed from the traditional translation by the Church, which undermined the credibility of the entire institution (p. 61).

[44] Rex, "Humanism," 62.

interpretation of Scripture and the theology of the sacrament. Where scholastic theologians insisted on strict literalism, rhetoric enabled taking account of figures of speech. Rex explains how "once rhetoric could be invoked to account for figures of speech . . ., it could be applied equally easily to statements like 'This is my body'. Zwingli invoked the rhetorical figure of *catachresis* (abuse) to explain that 'is' was being 'abused' to mean 'signifies'."[45] Humanist rhetoric could therefore support different versions of Eucharist doctrines that developed during the Reformation.

Humanists also promoted the usage of rhetoric in sermons as they did in all other forms of public speeches.[46] Rex asserts that humanism triggered the development of a new preaching style that was understood as communicating the message of the gospel more effectively.[47] Their emphasis on social inclusivity also caused humanists to promote "a vernacular piety and a vernacular scripture-reading culture." [48]

Andre Seguenny describes how in contrast to the medieval view that humans were objects entirely dependent on God, humanists saw humans as subjects, which entailed the idea that all people were responsible for their own actions.[49] This attitude towards all humans combined with the humanist focus on practicality led to an emphasis on the dignity of the laity and to a preference of the Christian's active service to others over a life of monastic contemplation.[50] Humanism therefore promoted general social responsibility as well by declaring good social conduct a means to do God's will.

The humanist focus on the human being changed the medieval Christian emphasis

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[45] Ibid, 63.
[46] Bouwsma, "Renaissance Humanism," 244-246.
[47] Rex, "Humanism," 59.
[48] Ibid., 66.
[49] Andre Seguenny, *The Christology of Caspar Schwenckfeld* (Lewiston:Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), 22-23.
[50] Bouwsma, "Renaissance Humanism," 238.

on God to an emphasis on Christ. In humanist Christianity, Christ was held up as the ideal example of a perfect human being – an ideal that all humans should strive to imitate.[51] Seguenny asserts that

> in this philosophy, the idea of Christ loses its religious functions in favour of ontological ones and, in so far as the ontological category is concerned (which involves a well-defined ethics), leads to a specific religiosity (if we take it to be the realization of ethical demands). Christ, without losing any of his divine characteristics . . . remains above all a perfect human being. It is because of this that he is *God* . . . Consequently, although no longer an intermediary between God and the human person, Christ is still a sort of *natura media* in the sense that he unites the finite self and the infinite.[52]

The humanist view of Christ and the human being seems to suggest that all humans had the potential to become Christ-like, which in turn suggests that theoretically, all humans were capable of direct access to the divine. In traditional Church doctrine direct access of a lay person to the divine was de-emphasized in favour of a focus on the proper institutional channels one should traverse in order to obtain divine grace. By suggesting that the immediate connection between God and a devotee was possible, the humanists laid the ground work for the radical Reformers' emphasis on spirituality as a method to obtain divine grace and knowledge of God's will without the mediation of a priest.

Rex asserts that the rationalistic aspects of humanism led some of its proponents to harsher and more open criticism of the Church than their predecessors.

> The scholastics had been well aware that not everything taught by or in the name of the church enjoyed the same authority, but they did not always feel it appropriate to bring this truth before a general audience. Christian humanists, in their zeal to reform and raise standards, happily transgressed traditional taboos by poking fun at the more obvious or ludicrous extravagances of the cult of the saints.[53]

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[51] Seguenny, *Christology*, p. 25.

[52] Ibid., 26.

[53] Rex, "Humanism," 65.

Although humanism contained many aspects that could be used as ammunition in an attack against the Church it was not an essentially anticlerical movement. The humanists' emphasis on the social and religious value of the laity of all classes presented potentially egalitarian ideas. However, this did not translate into a program for social or religious revolution. Humanism also fundamentally disagreed with Protestant theology by assuming the freedom of the human will and it sanctioned the feudal order.[54] Rex states that "humanism began and ended as technique"[55] and as such it could be employed by traditional theologians, magisterial, and radical Reformers alike to further their particular causes.

Humanism predominantly constituted an attack on the scholastic education system in terms of its underlying assumptions and focus. Where scholasticism saw the purpose of education as transmitting particular facts and knowledge, humanism promoted the idea that education ought to teach skills that could be applied to any subject matter. Humanism therefore diminished the authority of the teacher as the mediator of knowledge and attributed students with the power to ascertain knowledge on their own. Humanism can therefore be understood as an anti-institutional movement that questioned the underlying ideology of the established education system.

Humanism did not directly attack the authority of the Church. However, the Church sanctioned and controlled education and its idea of teaching authority relied on the assumption of a hierarchical relationship between teacher and student/clergy and laity. Humanism opened the door to the challenge of the Church's teaching authority that is found in the ideas of Luther and the radical Reformers by presenting an alternative, less

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[54] Ibid., 66-69.
[55] Ibid., 69.

hierarchical model of the student-teacher-relationship. Certain viewpoints found in the mystical tradition provided an additional source of ideas for how to apply the humanistic anti-institutionalism to the Church.

Mysticism – Free Spirits for All

The humanist emphasis on experience over abstract intellectualism already had a long standing tradition within Christianity in the form of mysticism. Medieval Christian mysticism as a particular form of spirituality was highly influential on Luther's development of his theology. It also impacted some of the radical Reformers. Similar to humanism, mysticism also contained aspects that could be used to support religious egalitarianism.

According to David B. Perrin, between the 9th and the 13th century, traditional Christian mysticism was very rigorously structured and focused on three particular stages a devotee had to go through in order to enter union with God, which was the ultimate goal to achieve.[56] According to Bernard McGinn, medieval mysticism was also generally practiced in the confines of the monasteries and centered on contemplation to attain a higher level of consciousness in which the divine might be perceived. In the early 13th century, a development began within medieval mysticism that McGinn describes as a "process of democratization and secularization"[57], which continuously grew until 1600 CE.

According to Berndt Hamm, Church doctrine had always allowed for the

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[56] David B. Perrin, "Mysticism,' in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality,* ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 446.
[57] Bernard McGinn, "The Changing Shape of Late Medieval Mysticism," *Church History* 65 (1996): 198.

theoretical possibility that a lay person could possess the Holy Spirit.[58] McGinn asserts that through the process of democratization, that took place after 1200 CE, this theoretical possibility turned into a conviction that all Christians had the capacity for the immediate experience of the divine. The fact that medieval mysticism took a turn towards an inclusion of lay piety could also be seen as expressed by its move into the vernacular languages.[59]

Another important development came about when the earlier requirement of "teaching ex officio (that is, by ecclesiastical approbation)" gradually turned towards an emphasis on teaching "ex beneficio (that is, from grace)."[60] McGinn describes the problematic surrounding the mystics' view of teaching authority as originating in the fact that many medieval mystics after 1200 CE were women. Since women were excluded from obtaining offices within the Church hierarchy an alternative had to be found to legitimize their already well established teaching activity.[61] Perrin also describes the phenomenon that female as well as male mystics claimed teaching authority on the basis of inspiration outside the institutionally sanctioned justification for this position.[62] This development regarding the understanding of teaching authority can be interpreted as a challenge to Church doctrine that generally only acknowledged teaching *ex officio*.

According to McGinn, in the context of medieval mysticism, 'secularization' refers to the development that seclusion from the world was not seen as a necessary prerequisite for mystical experiences any longer. Instead, the view that the divine could

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[58] Hamm, "Geistbegabte," 383.
[59] See McGinn, "Late Medieval Mysticism," 205.
[60] Ibid., 209.
[61] Ibid., 208-209.
[62] See Perrin, "Mysticism," 446.

be encountered in every day life gained greater popularity.[63] Perrin describes a group of lay women known as the beguines, whose spiritual experiences were based on the active involvement in worldly affais, rather than monastic contemplation.[64] McGinn states that when monastic contemplation ceased to be viewed as the only means by which one could attain a mystical experience, the later Middle Ages experienced a virtual explosion of visionary experiences claimed by the laity.[65] The idea that the divine could be perceived outside any type of physical structure connected to the Church and without the concurrent contemplation of Scripture opened the door to the emancipation of spiritual experiences from its connection to external sources and rituals.

Perrin states that, "up until modern times . . . mysticism was viewed as a largely deconstructive element in mainstream religions. Mystics frequently brought forth challenging new perspectives to view the world, self, God, institutional religion, and society in general."[66] The views, developed in forms of late medieval mysticism, that access to the divine could occur without the sanction of the Church, that spiritual experiences constituted sufficient justification for one's teaching authority, and the idea of possible emancipation of mystical experiences from the contemplation of Scripture and ritual presented such a challenge to orthodox mystical ideas.

The most influential mystic for Luther, Thomas Müntzer and Caspar Schwenckfeld was Johannes Tauler. Richard Kieckhefer describes Tauler's views as orthodox and traditional with an emphasis on contemplation. Tauler also recognized the possibility of spontaneous experiences of the divine for lay people. However, he

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[63] McGinn, "Late Medieval Mysticism," 198-199.
[64] Perrin, "Mysticism," 446.
[65] See McGinn, "Late Medieval Mysticism," 213,215.
[66] Perrin, "Mysticism," 447.

generally reserved the highest spiritual state for the ascetic who had reached this state through contemplative prayer.[67] One central aspect of Tauler's views that became an important theme for some of the radical Reformers was the view of a four stage path to achieve the highest spiritual state. First, one had to purge one's soul of all creatureliness and worldly concerns to prepare it for the entering of God's Spirit. Then, one had to experience suffering (the darkness in the ground or depth of one's soul) in imitation of Christ's suffering. In the third stage, the devotee was elevated to the highest state of union with God. The fourth stage consisted of a radical inner transformation of a person, as a consequence of the experience of God's grace. Tauler viewed the entire process as God's work within the person, even the believer's preparation of his/her soul.[68] All of these themes are orthodox mystical ideas. Luther and some radical Reformers were therefore exposed through Tauler to a more traditional type of mysticism but seemed to have also adopted aspects of the newer, vernacular forms of this spiritual tradition.

The underlying assumptions of mysticism in general have several implications. The idea of a direct connection between the devotee and the deity circumvents the otherwise necessary intermediary function of the priest. In traditional mysticism, this direct access to the divine was still reserved for members of the clergy who practiced their spirituality by contemplating Scripture in the confines of the monasteries, according to strict rules. The new mysticism allowed for the inclusion of lay people and acknowledged mundane activities as possible sources for spiritual experiences. Allowing for the possibility that lay people could experience a spiritual connection to the divine opened up the possibility of direct access to grace without the mediation of a priest. This

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[67] Richard Kieckhefer, "John Tauler," in *An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe,* ed. Paul Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 269-270.
[68] Ibid., 260-261, 263-264, 266, 269.

view affected the clergy's claim of religious authority that was based on their function as distributors of divine grace to the laity.

The new developments within medieval mysticism were not likely intended as anticlerical movements and did not attempt to subvert Church structure and authority. Nevertheless, they inadvertently challenged Church doctrine regarding the justification for teaching authority. When doctrines that were formerly accepted as truths become questionable, it is necessary to find guidelines with greater authority to regulate life. This quest operates under the assumption that there is a truth that supersedes the truth proclaimed by the Church. Martin Luther and other Reformers after him based their theologies on the principle that the Church and its officials were accountable to higher standards than their own established doctrines.

Martin Luther – New Relations within Old Structures

The magisterial Reformer Martin Luther was another influential figure of the early 16th century. Luther took up the criticism of the clergy presented in the medieval anticlericalism and employed aspects of humanism and mysticism to effect fundamental changes in the Christian theology of his time. Luther's new views on the relationship between God and all believers translated into a more egalitarian view of the relationship between the laity and the clergy. Although the radical Reformers differed from Luther in their views on the God-believer-relationship, they attacked the religious authority, including the teaching authority of the Church, along the same lines. The presentation of Luther's ideas is important because they presented the first widely publicized challenge to the authority of some aspects of the medieval Church and a strong influence on the

radical Reformers. The major changes Luther's ideas presented were his view of Scripture, the function of the clergy, and the relationship between the laity and the divine.

Luther understood Scripture as the apostolic witness to Christ. As a first hand account of Christ's life and teachings, it possessed a higher authority than the pope and the magisterium whose interpretations of Scripture were formerly seen as authoritative.[69] The novel aspect of Luther's view regarding divine grace was the idea of grace as a gift from God rather than a physical entity dispensed by the clergy.[70] For the Church, the treasury of merits represented an infinite amount of grace by which the believer could be made worthy to enter into God's presence after death. It seems that for the Church direct contact between God and the laity was not only impossible but unnecessary during one's lifetime. Peter Blickle describes how, in contrast to this view, Luther made the direct influence of God on the believers a central feature of his theology. This affected the status of the clergy versus the laity that was formerly seen as qualitatively different.[71]

In contrast to the Church's view that the laity depended on the intermediary function of the clergy to receive divine grace, Luther postulated that all believers could receive divine grace directly through the sacraments of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and penance. However, this did not render the priestly caste obsolete. According to Luther, the Holy Spirit worked only in conjunction with the believer's faith and the exterior word spoken by the priest.[72] Luther's idea also did not entail immediate instruction of all believers through the Holy Spirit. For the most part, Luther did not expect the lay believers to study Scripture extensively on their own, but to be instructed by trained

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[69] Lienhard, "Beginnings," 276. See also Bagchi, "Opponents," 105; and Blickle, *Reformation im Reich*, 40.

[70] Bagchi, "Opponents," 105.

[71] See Blickle, *Reformation im Reich*, 37-39, 41.

[72] Lienhard, "Beginnings," 275.

clerics.[73] The Holy Spirit that Luther attributed to all believers authorized the laity to judge the correctness of the received instruction and to read the Bible. However, no one was authorized to interpret Scripture unless they were trained to read the texts in their original languages.[74] Luther spoke of the 'priesthood of all believers'. Nevertheless, for Luther only certain aspects of the priesthood could be fulfilled by the laity, such as leading a morally good life, praying for others, and instructing non-believers.[75]

Through his idea of equal access to the divine, Luther erased the qualitative religious distinction between the clergy and the laity. Although the clergy retained its position as teachers of the congregation and appropriate training was necessary to attain this status, the fact that Luther attributed the laity with the capacity to judge the priest's interpretation of Scripture made the clerics accountable to the laity. The laity's capacity to judge sermons relied on their access to the Holy Spirit and the superior authority of Scripture as the external standard to which all Church doctrines and practices had to conform. These two principles also constitute recurring themes within the writings of the radical Reformers.

Conclusion - The Late Medieval Surroundings of the Radical Reformers

The previous five sections have presented a variety of developments during the later Middle Ages that affected changes on a social, political, and religious level. New movements, as well as established traditions promoted a shift from emphasizing the qualitative differences between people of different estates to establishing a more egalitarian view that stressed the equal value of laity and clergy and their activities.

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[73] Ibid., 279-280 and Hamm, "Geistbegabte," 397.

[74] Hamm, "Geistbegabte," 391, 397.

[75] See Lienhard, "Beginnings," 277 and Hamm, "Geistbegabte," 390-391.

The anticlerical grievances about the clergy's political and social influence point to the fact that the clergy's authority over the religious sphere was still recognized, but harsh criticism ensued when the Church overstepped its boundaries or the clerics' behaviour did not befit their station. In correspondence to Joseph Raz's theory of authority, the political anticlerical attacks sought to limit clerical authority to its proper jurisdiction while popular anticlericalism demanded the clergy to fulfill its moral obligation. However, no one challenged the justification for the clergy's privileged religious status until the time of the Reformation.

The idea of the clergy's privileged access to the divine was a derivative of the pope's position as God's representative on Earth. This justification for the pope's and clergy's authority could only be claimed but not proven. The fact that this claim was not questioned by the laity for several centuries suggests that the Church's authority fits Friedman's description of a traditional authority. The Church's own established dogmas justified its position of authority and supported the hierarchical structure of Church and state.

With the emergence of humanism and certain developments within mysticism particular aspects of the Church's authority were challenged. Humanism questioned the legitimacy of the scholastic education system by declaring its underlying assumptions and focus as elitist, as too abstract, and too impractical and therefore as essentially meaningless. Humanism undermined the authority of scholasticism by declaring that this type of education did not fulfill its purpose because its content had no value, which constitutes an attack along the lines of Raz's dependence thesis. Humanism therefore presented anti-institutional sentiments directed against the educational institutions, which

received their mandate from the Church.

New developments in mysticism opened the door to questions regarding the legitimacy of the authoritative religious worldview that promoted the qualitative distinction of clergy and laity on the grounds that the former had access to divine knowledge while the latter did not. Acknowledging that lay people, in fact, had valid spiritual experiences presented the possibility of access to divine grace without the mediation of a priest. The idea that the Church's established channels to divine grace could be entirely circumvented made the entire institution theoretically obsolete. The view of a possible spiritual connection between God and the believer also constituted a contradiction to the general position of the Church that such a relationship was not a common occurrence. Since the Church understood its doctrines as inherently unquestionable, any possibility of their insufficiency automatically questioned this principle and undermined the justification for the Church's authority. Mysticism therefore challenged the Church's worldview along the lines of Raz's justification thesis. Since the Church's doctrines did not account for the perceived phenomenon of lay people's spiritual experiences, the Church's claim of superior knowledge became questionable.

Humanism and the new mysticism provided the fertile soil for the seeds of Luther's theological anticlericalism. Luther's theology questioned the clergy's exclusive access to divine grace and unlimited theoretical authority over the religious realm. By granting the laity the right to read Scripture and to judge whether an interpretation was correct, he made the clergy accountable to the laity. By granting the laity direct access to divine grace he made the members of both estates qualitatively equal.

Although Luther's theology promoted a much more egalitarian religious worldview and introduced measures to hold the clergy more accountable, he more or less left the political power structure within the Church intact. The radical Reformers, on the other hand, were not content with the laity exercising only evaluative powers. The following chapter will show how Conrad Grebel, Caspar Schwenckfeld, and Thomas Müntzer attempted to claim authority for their religious worldviews including the power to establish their own moral and ethical guidelines.

Chapter 3: The Radical Reformers

Introduction

The examination of the radical Reformers Conrad Grebel, Caspar Schwenckfeld, and Thomas Müntzer presents these writers as individuals who picked up on various intellectual currents present in their time. These influences affected the underlying assumptions of their religious ideologies. The worldviews promoted by the radical Reformers were intended to restructure the Church and society as a response to the many deficiencies perceived in their contemporary social and religious system. Although the three writers' particular theologies and ecclesiologies vary considerably, they all incorporate what I call spirituality in a way that makes this concept a crucial factor for legitimate authority. This factor distinguishes them from the theologians of the old Church and the magisterial Reformers.

The following three sections will examine the views of the three radical Reformers Conrad Grebel, Caspar Schwenckfeld, and Thomas Müntzer, respectively. Aside from displaying general anti-institutional sentiments that point to humanistic, mysticistic, and anticlerical influences this examination focuses in particular on the writers' ideas regarding inner and outer religion, how these two concepts relate, and how the radical Reformers' emphasis on spirituality is utilized to discredit the established authorities and the current socio-religious structure.

The terminology used by the radical Reformers requires some explanation. None of the writers examined here actually use the terms 'religion' or 'spirituality'. They commonly use the term 'outer Word' when referring to the external aspects of religion, and 'inner Word' or 'Spirit' as a reference to the inner aspects. George H. Williams

explains that in late medieval theological discourse the outer word could "range in meaning all the way from the written words of the Bible in vernacular translation, through the audible and tangible word of salvation in the sermons and the ordinances of the established churches or of the radical conventicles, to the incarnate Word, which was, of course, the historic Christ."[1] The inner word, on the other hand, could refer to "the inner abyss of self (Abgrund), superficially identifiable with conscience, then the coherent principle of Scripture ("that which drives Christ into one"), to the eternal Word as eternally begotten Son consubstantial with the Godhead of the Father."[2]

The outer Word was therefore always received through some medium, text or person. It therefore corresponds to my definition of aspects of outer religion such as Scripture, teachings/sermons, and rituals. The origin of the inner Word is God and is used in direct communication with the believer. The inner Word may be seen as contained in the external aspects of Scripture, sermons, and rituals but is always understood as an unmediated connection to God whereby the believer gains understanding of the text, teaching or ritual he/she is processing at the moment. Outer and inner Word are therefore closely connected but present different forms of accessing knowledge about the divine. The former is purely cognitive while the latter is experiential. Nevertheless, they mostly appear in conjunction. For the radical Reformers discussed here, the inner word granted knowledge about right and wrong and always initiated a transformation within the person. This concept is therefore synonymous with the idea of spirituality. In the following sections the terms 'inner word' and 'Spirit' are therefore used interchangeably to refer to a believer's direct connection to the divine.

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[1] George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), 1247-1248.
[2] Ibid., 1248.

The best way to investigate the radical Reformers' ideas regarding the perceived relation of the inner and outer aspects of religion is to examine their views of Scripture, the Spirit and the sacraments. While the writers' view of the Scripture-Spirit-relation indicates that the spiritual connection was seen as the primary aspect that legitimated a person's teaching authority, the examination of the radical Reformers' ideas regarding the sacraments shows how their assumptions regarding the spirituality-outer religion-relation found practical application in Church life. The doctrines surrounding the Eucharist/Lord's supper and baptism were the most contested. Incidentally it was also these two sacraments in which the authority of the Church and the justification of its hierarchical structure were most overtly symbolized.

As explained in chapter two, during the Eucharist, the priest dispensed divine grace to the participating lay person. These ritualistic roles attributed to the laity and the clergy made this sacrament a symbol of the priest's authority as well as a symbol of his function as mediator between God and the laity. The role of the priest that was re-enforced by the sacrament of the Eucharist justified the hierarchical structure of the religious realm. Baptism initiated all individuals into the religious realm and thereby brought them into the jurisdiction of the Church. Disregarding Church doctrine and practice in reference to these sacraments automatically presented a challenge to the authority of the Church on a religious as well as a political level. The radical Reformers' anti-institutional sentiments therefore found expression in their doctrines regarding these two sacraments.

The radical Reformers' emphasis on spirituality also caused them to utilize this concept as the foundation of their theological anticlericalism. The following sections

show how they claim superior knowledge over against the old clergy and the magisterial Reformers by elevating personal experience over dogmatism and traditionalism. Altogether, the purpose of this chapter is to present the views of the selected radical Reformers regarding inner and outer religion, the relation of these concepts, and how their religious worldview influenced the choice of strategies they used to subvert the established religious authority. This data supports the idea that the radical Reformers sought to instigate an ideological revolution with the aim to re-structure the religious institution.

Conrad Grebel – The Spirit Resides in the Word

Conrad Grebel was born into a wealthy patrician family about 1498 in Zurich. His family owned some land and was influential in the city's political, economic, and military affairs. Grebel's father served as a magistrate and a representative of Zurich at all the meetings of the Swiss Confederacy. George Huntston Williams states that Grebel was sent to study in Basel, Vienna, and Paris. There he received a solid humanist education. In June 1520, Grebel returned to Zurich, where he came in contact with Huldrych Zwingli and other humanists. However, the Reformation was not yet his foremost concern. As Williams explains, "unlike Erasmus, Grebel's Swiss humanistic friends and Grebel himself were chiefly interested in historical, geographical, and philological study, and only incidentally in moral and religious matters."[3]

According to Williams, Grebel experienced an 'inner change' or 'conversion' in the spring of 1522,[4] after which he joined Zwingli's reform effort up until the fall of

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[3] Ibid., 183-184.

[4] Ibid., 184; for more evidence on the change of Grebel's inner state see J. Denny Weaver, "Conrad

1523. Grebel's break with Zwingli occurred during the Second Zurich Disputation, where it became clear that Zwingli was not prepared to initiate reform without the city council's consent.[5] Grebel's disagreement with Zwingli was based on the magisterial Reformer's political stance rather than his theology. Grebel's theology remained Zwinglian in many ways. The radical aspect of this particular Reformer lay in his ecclesiology.

The reconstruction of Grebel's major ideas is problematic. Harold S. Bender states that there are only 16 letters that constitute the available primary sources written during his religiously and socio-politically active time from 1522-1526. Only the two letters addressed to Thomas Müntzer in 1524 contain more extensive information regarding his ideas. [6] Aside from these sources, it is therefore necessary to rely more heavily on secondary literature.

Another problem arises from the fact that due to the revisionists' historiographical focus on overarching movements rather than personal biographies and ideologies many recent sources tend to treat Anabaptists as a group. This is especially problematic for early Anabaptism (pre-Schleitheim Anabaptism), where no common principles had been formulated, which could prevent the inclusion of very different ideas under the label 'Anabaptist'. I will therefore only include references to general statements about Anabaptists, if the points being made concur with but add to statements made about Grebel in particular.

The distinctive feature of Grebel's theology was his strict Biblicism. Grebel attributed two functions to Scripture. On the one hand, Scripture revealed the will of

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Grebel's Developing Sense of Deity," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 54 (1978): 208.
[5] Williams, *RadicalReformation*, 184-188.
[6] Harold Bender discusses the scarcity of Grebel's primary sources and the literature used in lieu of primary material to construct Grebel's ideas in Harold Bender, *Conrad Grebel 1498-1526: Founder of the Swiss Brethren* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1950), 163-170.

God.[7] On the other hand, it presented a historical record of the apostolic community.[8] In Grebel's writings, the primary purpose of the outer word seemed to consist in relaying information and in educating the reader.[9] Since, in Grebel's eyes, the apostolic community practiced their faith in perfect harmony with God's will, the re-creation of such a community became his foremost concern.[10]

Grebel continuously distinguished between practices that had been established according to Scripture and the ones that were human inventions. He consistently associated the latter with the old Church and the magisterial Reformers.[11] Grebel's own idea of a Christian congregation, on the other hand, was based on Scripture alone.

According to Grebel, only true believers should be part of the Christian community. Within the Christian congregation, Grebel's idea of the practice of the Lord's Supper suggested an egalitarian view of the relationship between believers. No one administered the bread and all participated in drinking from the cup.[12] Grebel also continuously stressed the 'brotherly' relationship between all believers, which suggests the equal status of all members of the congregation. Grebel still saw the necessity for a

[7] Weaver, "Sense of Deity," 212-213.

[8] Christoph Wiebe, "Konrad Grebels Ausführungen über Glaube und Taufe," in *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* (1989): 46. Grebel indicates that biblical argumentation according to both functions of scripture are equally valid to support a statement by condemning singing in church, because it "arose without divine teaching and apostolic precedent and practice." Conrad Grebel *Programmatic Letters of 1524,* lines 61-62; see also line 109.

[9] Grebel confirms this view when he argues against Müntzer's use of stone tablets by writing "ess machte ouch ein argwon alss ob ie etwas usserlichs an der statt der götzen darab der ungelert leren künde / stan und uffgricht werden müste / so allein dass usserlich wort gebrucht soll werden/ nach aller gschrift bispil und gebott." [it created a suspicion whether something external could ever teach anything to the unlearned in stead of the idols, and should therefore stand for it and be established, so only the external word should be used, after the example and instruction of Scripture. (My translation)] Ibid., lines 160-163. See also lines 175-177.

[10] The major debate among historians regarding the early Anabaptist movement has been about whether Grebel already established the separatist church later associated with Anabaptists and Mennonites For further information on this issue see Johnathan Gill, "Clergy, Magistracy and Reformation: Conrad Grebel and the Zwinglian Reformation in Zurich," in *No Gods Except Me,* ed. Charles Zika (Parkville: University of Melbourne, 1991), 114-115.

[11] Grebel *Programmatic Letters,* lines 16-26; 43-48; 128-130; 166-168.

[12] Ibid., lines 79-105.

leader. However, this position could be filled by any believer. The leader of the congregation was also not qualitatively distinct from its members and seemed equally subject to their critique as they were to his.[13] In this respect Grebel's view of church solved the problem of the inequality of the old clergy-laity-relationship.

According to Grebel, only believers should be part of the congregation. These true Christians should always act in accordance with the will of God laid out in Scripture. The Bible presented the only source of instruction regarding true Christian conduct. Any rule, institution, or ideology based on human invention was illegitimate and should automatically be considered forbidden.[14] Grebel accused the Church fathers of having established an institution founded on fabricated principles and perpetuated by meaningless ceremonies.

> Wie nach dem unssere altforderen von dem waren got / und erkantnuss Iesu Christi und dess rechtschafnen gloubens in in / und von dem waren einigen gmeinen götlichen wort / von den götlichen brüchen Christenlicher liebe und wäsen abgefallen sind / on gott gsatz und Evangelio in menschlichen unnützen unchristlichen brüchen und Ceremonien gelebt und darinn selikeit zeerlangen vermeint habend / und aber wit gefelt worden ist[15]

> [As our acestors fell away from the true God and the revelation of Christ and the righteous faith in him and from the true unified common divine word, from the divine customs of Christian love and being, and lived without God's law and gospel in human, useless, and unchristian customs and ceremonies and assumed to achieve salvation by that, but this was far from correct. (My translation)]

Here Grebel attacked the legitimacy of the entire Church by stating that it not only had no valid scriptural foundation, it was in fact a contradiction to the apostolic form of a Christian community.

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[13] Grebel did not state this outright, but suggested that it was necessary for all believers to study Scripture themselves, so they would know when the preacher erred. See ibid., lines 28-34; 299-304.

[14] Ibid., lines 51-54; 69-70.

[15] Ibid., lines 13-19.

Grebel's idea regarding the function of the Holy Spirit is more difficult to assess. Historians generally label Grebel as a strict Biblicist and therefore largely disregard a possible role of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Grebel made no outright comments regarding his view of spirituality. Nevertheless, examining Grebel's idea of what constituted a true believer seems to attribute a considerable role to the Holy Spirit. It is this aspect through which Grebel includes the concept of experiential knowledge in his epistemology.

The importance Grebel places on the inner word becomes clear in his view on baptism. For Grebel, the primary purpose of the inner word was to initiate a transformation in the individual, which was commonly the result of gaining true knowledge about right and wrong.[16] Grebel's argument against infant baptism rested on the conviction that only a person who would know right from wrong should be baptized.[17] Christopher Wiebe confirms that the intellectual competence to make moral choices played an important role for Grebel in his theology of baptism and was most likely a result of Zwingli's influence on the radical Reformer.[18]

As noted above, knowledge of right and wrong actions required the working of the Holy Spirit within a person. When Grebel expected the believer to have this knowledge before he/she received baptism, he assumed that a spiritual connection between the individual and God was already established before he/she participated in the ritual.

Grebel presents his idea of the Word-Spirit-relation in his description of baptism. He states that,

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[16] Ibid., lines 197-201.
[17] Ibid., lines 207-211.
[18] Wiebe, "Glaube und Taufe", 49, 51.

Den touff beschribt unss die gschrift / dass er bedütte durch den glouben und das blut Christi (dem getoufften das gmüt enderendem und dem gloubenden vor und nach) die sünd abgewaschen sin / dass er bedütte dass man abgstorben sie und sole der sünd / und wandlen in nüwe dess läbens und geist / und dass man gwüss selig werd so man durch den inneren touff den glouben / nach der bedütnuss läbe.[19]

[Scripture describes baptism to us, that it means that through faith and Christ's blood (the baptized one experiences a change of the inner disposition and before and after the believer's) sin is washed off, that it means that one is and should be dead to sin and walk in new life and spirit and that one will definitely be saved, if one through baptism lived faith according to the meaning. (My translation)]

The work of the Holy Spirit was therefore encapsulated within the function of Scripture. First, Scripture educated the non-believer about Christ and the ritual of baptism, then God, through the Holy Spirit, worked within the person and granted the knowledge of right and wrong (which the individual had a choice to reject[20]). This inner transformation resulted in the practical application of the new found knowledge and thereby manifested in right action as prescribed by Scripture. This supports the traditional view that Scripture presented the 'alpha et omega' of Grebel's theology. However, becoming a true believer still required the Spirit. Without the Spirit, true knowledge as a prerequisite for baptism as well as the legitimacy of his teaching authority were unattainable.

In Grebel's view, all people should have access to Scripture. Preferably everyone should read it themselves.[21] This suggests that, in theory, everyone was capable of receiving God's Spirit. Although Scripture is necessary to prepare a person to receive the Spirit and to verify that one had the Spirit, one's legitimate teaching authority depends primarily on one's actual connection to the divine Spirit that grants knowledge.

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[19] Grebel *Programmatic Letters*, lines 196-201.

[20] Ibid., lines 177-178. There is no clear indication whether Grebel attributed this choice to the individual's free will. For more information on the idea that Grebel denied free will. See Weaver, "Sense of Deity," 209-210. Weaver's position seems to contrast Wiebe's view that for Grebel a developed intellect was necessary to become a true believer.

[21] Ibid., lines 303-304.

According to Grebel's views, Scripture relays the cognitive knowledge that a spiritual connection to God is possible. The actual spiritual experience provides experiential knowledge of ultimate reality. Grebel understands access to ultimate knowledge of right and wrong granted by the Holy Spirit as presenting superior justification of teaching authority over against exclusive reliance on cognitive knowledge relayed through external sources.

Since the congruence of one's actions and teachings with Scripture presented the outward sign of a spiritual connection to the divine, the strongest argument one could use to challenge the authority of others was that their teachings did not conform to Scripture. It is clear that the clergy and the magisterial Reformers read the Bible, and therefore fulfilled Grebel's prerequisite for receiving God's Spirit. However, according to Grebel's view, their actions did not provide proof of the knowledge of right and wrong. Otherwise their teachings would have conformed exclusively to Scriptural teachings.[22] This challenge of the old clergy's and magisterial Reformers' authority questioned the legitimacy of their privileged status within the Church structure. In contrast to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Grebel's own view of a congregation of believers displays a much more egalitarian structure based on the assumption of the equal value of all believers due to equal access to divine knowledge.

Caspar Schwenckfeld – Spirit as the True Nature of All

Caspar Schwenckfeld was born late in 1489 into a noble family that owned the

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[22] Ibid., lines 13-28; 45-48; 128-130; 201-209; 219-226; 300-303. Whether Grebel understood the clergy and magisterial Reformers as not having the Spirit or as having the Spirit but choosing to act incorrectly in spite of it is unclear. However, Grebel's wording seems to suggest personal responsibility on the part of the clergy and magisterial Reformers for the false actions and teachings they promoted, which would suggest the latter option.

estate of Ossig in Lower Silesia. He was the eldest son. However, rather than tending the family's properties, he chose to attend different universities over the course of 5-6 years. He probably acquired a general education in the basic arts that was neither embedded in scholasticism nor flavoured with the spreading influence of humanism. R. Emmet McLaughlin states that neither influence is discernable in his later writings.[23] In 1511, Schwenckfeld entered into the service of Karl von Münsterberg-Oels as a courtier and continued in this career under several princes for the next decade. Schwenckfeld joined the Lutheran reformation in 1519 while he was employed at the court of Friedrich II of Liegnitz, the most powerful prince of Silesia. Through Schwenckfeld's efforts, Friedrich was converted to the Lutheran cause. Due to his political connections at court and his political influence in the village of Ossig, he became an influential Protestant lay Reformer during his last two years at court and after his return to his own estate in 1521.[24] In late 1525/early 1526, Schwenckfeld departed from Luther's idea of the Eucharist by stressing the spiritual aspect of the ritual and was consequently labeled a 'Schwärmer' by the Wittenberg Reformer. Schwenckfeld thereafter continued his activities as a radical Reformer.[25]

The major scholarly question regarding the figure of Schwenckfeld has been concerning his position within the Reformation movement. Scholars attempting to situate Schwenckfeld in his historical surroundings usually examine the connection of his ideas to Lutheran or Zwinglian theology as well as Erasmian humanism.[26] The result is an

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[23] R. Emmet McLaughlin, *Caspar Schwenckfeld: Reluctant Radical* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 5.

[24] Ibid., 3-24.

[25] Ibid., 68-69; Goertz, *Pfaffenhaß*, 214.

[26] See McLaughlin, *Reluctant Radical*; Andre Seguenny, *The Christology of Caspar Schwenckfeld* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987); George Huntston Williams, *Radical Reformation*; H. Wayne Pipkin, "Spiritual Reformer versus City Reformer: The Baptismal Debate between Schwenckfeld and

assessment of Schwenckfeld as highly influenced by the ideas of the young Luther and Erasmus, although some say he misunderstood their actual aims.[27] Schwenckfeld's possible association with Catholicism is sometimes mentioned but unfortunately not examined in detail, even though his texts display harsher critique of Protestant theology that promoted faith without works and emphasized Scripture than admonition against old Church rituals that lacked spiritual content. Schwenckfeld also seems to display Catholic characteristics in his Christology.

Schwenckfeld left an extraordinary amount of primary literature that has been compiled into the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* – 19 large volumes. For the purpose of this examination, I concentrate on Schwenckfeld's writings between 1526, after his break with Luther, and 1538. During this time, Schwenckfeld's own thought was developing, but was not fully formulated to the point where he and his followers constituted a separate and identifiable movement.[28] This period of Schwenckfeld's life was therefore chosen as most comparable to the periods during which Müntzer and Grebel developed their views before their untimely deaths prevented more complete formulation of their ideas and/or the establishment of their own movements.

The main characteristic of Schwenckfeld's theology was his radically dualistic idea regarding the spiritual and the temporal realm. According to Russell H. Hvolbeck, Schwenckfeld's "basic Neoplatonic cosmology divided reality into a material substance and a spiritual essence. The former was in time and corruptible, the latter outside of time

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Zwingli," in *Anabaptism Revisited*, ed. Walter Klassen (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1992).

[27] Seguenny, *Christology*, 73-76; McLaughlin, *Reluctant Radical*, 106-107.

[28] McLaughlin, *Reluctant Radical*, 198-201. McLaughlin states that Schwenckfeld and his followers developed their Christology during 1537 and the first half of 1538. However, this view, which became the distinguishing feature of the later Schwenckfelder movement, was only first published in the fall of 1538. McLaughlin, *Reluctant Radical*, 211.

and eternal. To Schwenckfeld, the Holy Spirit was the center of the religious experience."[29] Schwenckfeld often referred to the 'divine mystery' as the inner aspect of the sacraments and Scripture that the external rituals and text pointed towards.[30] This divine mystery represented the divine truth and could only be accessed on a spiritual level by a true believer through Christ.[31] Schwenckfeld's dualistic worldview segregated the spiritual and temporal aspects of the sacraments, of Scripture, and of the person. However, since both aspects were present in the same ritual, text, and living being, they remained closely linked.

Schwenckfeld insisted that in order to participate properly in the sacraments, one had to experience a connection to the Holy Spirit prior to the external ritual. The sacraments were essentially spiritual in nature and the outer aspect of the ritual was only meaningful in conjunction with the corresponding inner attitude.[32] Schwenckfeld even went as far as stating that the external aspect of the ritual was not necessary, and the believer could practice the Lord's Supper inwardly without the need for an external aspect altogether.[33] This attitude of focusing on the inner aspects of all rituals generally made any attempt to change the outward aspects of the liturgy or any ceremony unnecessary. It also resulted in Schwenckfeld's idea that the true church resided in the hearts of all true believers and was invisible.[34] Schwenckfeld therefore had little concern for ecclesiastical issues, in contrast to the other radical Reformers.

The same dualistic view was also present in Schwenckfeld's idea of the Word-

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[29] Russell H. Hvolbeck, "Being and Knowing: Spiritual Epistemology and Anthropology from Schwenckfeld to Böhme," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22.1 (1991): 99.
[30] Caspar Schwenckfeld *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* 2.455; 5.126, 782.
[31] Ibid. 4.137-138; 5.787, 792.
[32] Ibid. 3.820; 4.119-122, 132.
[33] Ibid. 4.119, 132-133.
[34] Ibid. 2.522-523, 531-532.

Spirit-dichotomy. According to Schwenckfeld, the Holy Spirit was the primary agent that turned the person into a true believer and relayed knowledge about Christ and God.[35] Schwenckfeld therefore promoted divine revelation as the only epistemological method and way to salvation.[36] Scripture testified of God's glory. However, on its own, it could not lead to knowledge about the divine.[37] For Schwenckfeld, relying on Scripture alone led to the emphasis on Christ's humanity over his divinity, which defeated the purpose of Christ's sacrifice and his role as distributor of the Holy Spirit and divine knowledge.[38] Schwenckfeld saw the effects of the corrupt Church in the fact that Scripture had been elevated above its role as sign of the divine mystery and the inner working of the Spirit had been negated.[39] Schwenckfeld accused anyone who would rely only on Scripture as a source of true knowledge of attempting to attain faith through human means. True faith, on the other hand, was a gift from God and could not be attained through any human activity – moral or intellectual.[40]

In spite of the primacy of the Holy Spirit, Scripture still played an important role for Schwenckfeld. Schwenkfeld's entire theology was the result of his study of Scripture. To convince others that his views were right, he consistently quoted from Scripture to prove the legitimacy of his claims. He also asked that those against him should provide proof of their views through Scripture.[41] According to Schwenckfeld, the Bible itself could not create true believers or convey true knowledge. Nevertheless, it still functioned as the external criterion according to which the validity of one's truth claims could be

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[35] Ibid. 4.120, 124.
[36] Ibid. 2.505, 689-690.
[37] Ibid. 2.505; 4.146; 5.126.
[38] Ibid. 5.783-786, 792.
[39] Ibid. 2.454-455.
[40] Ibid. 4.121-122. See also Hvolbeck, "Being and Knowing," 98.
[41] Schwenckfeld Corpus 2.333, 462.

discerned. Schwenckfeld sometimes claimed direct divine inspiration as the source of his knowledge. However, this claim was always accompanied by a reference to Scripture.[42]

For Schwenckfeld, Scripture represented the external word. Nevertheless, he understood Christ as still speaking through the Biblical texts.[43] This included the letters of Paul and the apostles, who were understood as inspired by Christ, which gave them authority.[44] The example of the apostolic congregation was also important to Schwenckfeld because it represented his ideal vision of a church where all believers were in direct contact with Christ through divine inspiration and practiced the sacraments according to Christ's institution.[45]

Another important function of Scripture was education. For Schwenckfeld, Scripture was the main resource used to instruct non-believers about their own worthlessness in contrast to the divine glory and the true spiritual journey. Scripture also taught the believer the proper experience of the inner and outer sacrament.[46] Since practicing the sacraments properly required understanding on the part of the participants, education was an important issue for Schwenckfeld.[47] Without the information relayed through the Bible, true faith would be unattainable and not practicable.

For Schwenckfeld, the Spirit was primary and independent of Scripture. However, this fact would not be known without Scripture. Divine revelation and initiation of faith in a person could happen without any exposure to Scripture. However, Schwenckfeld's

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[42] Ibid. 3.813, 816.

[43] Ibid. 2.485-488; 5.823.

[44] Ibid., 5.782, 785, 794; 4.126-127. Here Schwenckfeld goes as far as ascribing the position of mediator between God and humanity to the apostles, a position he otherwise reserved for Christ.

[45] Ibid. 4.120-122, 125; 5.814, 820, 821.

[46] Ibid. 3.813-815.

[47] Because Schwenckfeld insisted on the participant's understanding of the sacraments, he had to support believer's baptism, ibid. 3.813-817, 820-821, 823. Another argument against infant baptism was that children were not able to experience penance – the first step on the path of becoming a true believer, ibid., 5.815.

insistence on the importance of preaching and education of non-believers suggests that he did not expect this to be the usual introduction of a person to the true faith. The roles of both Scripture and Spirit were therefore inseparably intertwined and Scripture played an essential part in a person's development to become a true believer.

E. J. Furcha suggests that for Schwenckfeld, becoming a believer entailed a four stage process: "regeneration, vivifactio, justification and participatio."[48] In order to access the divine truth pointed towards by Scripture, one had to receive God's Spirit. Before that was possible, one had to prepare one's soul and cleanse it through penance.[49] Once a person experienced his/her own worthlessness and the worthlessness of all temporal things, Christ would pour out the Holy Spirit to fill the person's soul and one would enter an eternal bond with Christ, whereby one's creatureliness was destroyed and the person became part of the spiritual realm.[50] Schwenckfeld expected that this inner change in the person found outward expression in the form of a better lifestyle.[51]

Only the true believer had knowledge of the divine mystery signified by Scripture and the sacraments. Therefore, whoever interpreted the Bible or administered or participated in the mass or baptism without having the Holy Spirit could not engage in any of these activities in a correct and meaningful way. Schwenckfeld often critiqued the clergy and laity of misusing the sacrament by performing the action without the proper inner attitude.[52] However, it is difficult to provide evidence for such a claim, when the observable actions of the sacraments are the same regardless of whether the actors have

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[48] E. J. Furcha, "Key Concepts in Caspar Schwenckfeld's Thought: Regeneration and the New Life," *Church History* 37.2 (1968): 164.
[49] Schwenckfeld *Corpus* 2.331; 4.137-138, 5.821.
[50] Ibid. 3.813, 820; 4.137-138; 5.783, 786.
[51] Ibid. 2.331.
[52] Ibid. 4.116, 124.

the spirit or not. An external criterion is necessary to signify the presence of a spiritual connection to God. Schwenckfeld argued that his opponents did not have the Spirit, because they refused to debate the spiritual aspect of the sacraments and concentrated on discussing the external ritual.[53] They also denied the laity education regarding the divine mystery, refused to demand a good lifestyle as a sign for a true believer and lacked the same, which was evidence for their own improper spiritual state.[54] Schwenckfeld saw the clergy's refusal to engage in penance as their greatest fault, because it prevented them from attaining the Spirit.[55] Clerics who did not have the spirit were not qualified to hold that position and no one should preach, if he/she was not certain about whether they had the spirit or not.[56]

Schwenckfeld's theology contained egalitarian aspects. He attributed the capacity of receiving the Holy Spirit to all people, which made them, in theory, qualitatively equal. However, believers could be at different stages in the process of divination, which assumed greater knowledge on the part of some over others. It seems that Schwenckfeld was generally opposed to the idea of a trained priesthood versus an untrained or lesser trained laity, because he insisted that education was necessary for all people to become true believers and to participate properly in rituals. This negated the clergy's qualitatively and intellectually privileged position. According to Schwenckfeld, all believers had the moral obligation to preach the true gospel, making Schwenckfeld a promoter of the 'priesthood of all believers'.

Schwenckfeld succeeded in creating a more egalitarian idea of church without

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[53] Ibid. 2.448.
[54] Ibid. 2.330-331, 448.
[55] Ibid. 3.823.
[56] Ibid. 4.125.

significantly changing the structure or rituals of the old Church. His religious ideology corresponded to the views of the Church in surprising ways. Both denied humans direct access to God. Where in the old Church the priest had to mediate between God and the laity, in Schwenckfeld's understanding Christ had to mediate between God and all people.[57] Christ therefore fulfilled a similar function as the priest in the old Church. It seems that Schwenckfeld discovered the possibility for universal human equality by establishing a hierarchical Holy Trinity.

Although Schwenckfeld retained a somewhat hierarchical structure in the religious realm and made no attempts to dismantle the Church hierarchy, he nevertheless eliminated the qualitative distinction between the clergy and the laity and introduced prerequisites the clergy had to fulfill in order to legitimately occupy this position. As Grebel, Schwenckfeld also insisted on a spiritual connection as the essential justification of legitimate teaching authority, which made spirituality the key concept in his religious ideology.

Thomas Müntzer – Prophet of a Purging Spirit

Thomas Müntzer was born some time before 1491, in the town of Stolberg at the foot of the Harz Mountains in Saxony. His father was a propertied citizen of the town and was able to afford an education for his son. Müntzer studied at the University of Leipzig, at Frankfurt and der Oder, and possibly another university, and received the Masters of Arts degree and the *Baccalaureus biblicus*, a theology degree.[58]

In 1514, Müntzer began his career as priest, teacher, and chaplain. When Luther

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[57] Ibid. 4.119, 129-130; 5.783, 786.
[58] Michael G. Baylor, *Revelation and Revolution* (London: Associated University Press, 1993), 14-15.

posted his 95 theses in 1517, Müntzer was in Wittenberg and had contact with Luther.

Michael G. Baylor, however, disregards this connection and states that Müntzer was

more directly influenced by the humanistic and mysticistic currents at Wittenberg than by

the magisterial Reformer.[59] Nevertheless, Müntzer's relationship with Luther was

amicable enough for Luther to recommend Müntzer for a term position as priest in

Zwickau in 1520.[60] The official break between Müntzer and Luther only occurred

towards the end of 1523, although Müntzer's *Prague Manifesto* of 1521 already

displayed theological and personal differences between the two Reformers. The main

points of debate between Luther and Müntzer were their understanding of secular

authority and the authority of Scripture versus the Holy Spirit.[61]

Examinations of Müntzer commonly concentrate on his socio-political ideas and

activism, especially in connection to the German Peasant's War and his apocalyptic

expectations. The scholarly debate centers on the questions whether Müntzer's

revolutionary tendencies were a necessary conclusion of his theology or a circumstantial

development[62] and whether he was more strongly influenced by mysticism or

humanism.[63] Both these questions are of limited importance to this thesis, which

concentrates on the radical Reformers' view of the Word-Spirit-relationship and the

egalitarian aspects of their programs. Unfortunately, because the scholarly debate's focus

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[59] Ibid., 15. For the somewhat opposing view that Müntzer's connection to Luther was important and the latter viewed Müntzer as an adherent to his own ideas for a while see Eric W. Gritsch, *Thomas Müntzer: A Tragedy of Errors* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 9-12.

[60] Gritsch, *Tragedy*, 17-18.

[61] Harry Loewen, *Luther and the Radicals* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1974), 53-54.

[62] For the former view see Abraham Friesen, *Thomas Muentzer, a destroyer of the Godless: The Making of a Sixteenth-Century Religious Revolutionary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For the latter see Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer: Mystiker. Apokalyptiker. Revolutionär.* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989).

[63] For an emphasis on humanism see Ulrich Bubenheimer, *Thomas Müntzer: Herkunft und Bildung* (Leiden:E.J. Brill, 1989), for an emphasis on mysticism see Goertz, *Mystiker*.

lies elsewhere, secondary material relating directly to these issues is scarce, and necessitates a stronger reliance on Müntzer's primary literature.[64] His theological writings present the best sources regarding the issues addressed in this thesis, rather than his letters or liturgical literature.

Müntzer's writing style is highly polemical and he largely focuses on the inadequacies of the old clergy and the magisterial Reformers. The emphasis of Müntzer's theology lies on the development one has to undergo in order to become a true believer. Müntzer's focus on these points caused him to largely disregard other issues such as the role of Scripture and the sacraments. At times, conclusions about Müntzer's view on these aspects therefore rely on the examination of his use of Scripture in his writings and implicit argumentation regarding his idea of the sacraments in addition to direct references to his texts.

The distinctive feature of Müntzer's theology was his idea of experienced faith apart from any church ceremony or Scripture. For Müntzer, becoming a believer was a four stage process. First, a person would have to be informed about the right way to God and God's law by a righteous preacher.[65] Then one had to seek faith with one's whole heart. This search would then lead one to the 'abyss of the soul' as the third stage. This stage was marked by suffering that resulted from the fact that the person could not find God in the abyss of his/her soul, which made one realize one's own godlessness and one's own inability to reconcile with God. This lack of ability to reconcile resulted in the

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[64] Any attempts made in this regard are at least 30 years old. See H. J. Goertz, "'Lebendiges Wort' und 'Totes Ding'. Zum Schriftverständnis Thomas Müntzers im Prager Manifest," *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 67 (1976): 153-178; A. Lohmann, *Zur Geistigen Entwicklung Thomas Müntzers*, (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1931).

[65] Günther Franz (hrsg.), *Thomas Müntzer: Schriften und Briefe; Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1968), 221, 327.

'fear of God'.[66] Another factor that contributed to the person's feeling of helplessness was the recognition that one was not capable of keeping God's law.[67] In stage four, God would enter the suffering soul and fill it with the Holy Spirit and the person would be saved and become part of the elect.[68] Anyone who had so experienced the workings of God in him/herself would turn away from worldly things and strive to do the will of God.[69] One's spiritual connection to God was therefore verified by a good lifestyle that included negation of the world.

In this development the stage of suffering was the most important component for Müntzer and the willingness to endure it separated the elect from the doomed. Suffering was necessary in order to cleanse the soul of all creatureliness and make the person Christ-like.[70] This cleansing process was essential, since the word God spoke into a person's soul could not be heard if one had not turned away from all creatureliness and worldly desires.[71] In this suffering, one realized one's own inability to achieve faith and the uselessness of human reasoning.[72] True knowledge could only come from God. Only the person who had suffered was given knowledge because God's Spirit had divinized him/her.[73] The true believer could then be a righteous preacher because their personal experience qualified them to speak about the way God and the Holy Spirit worked.[74]

Müntzer asserted that it was possible to attain true faith that was marked by

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[66] Ibid., 237-238, 293.
[67] Ibid., 327.
[68] Ibid., 306-307, 327.
[69] Ibid., 237, 521.
[70] Ibid., 218, 222, 223, 224, 397-398, 519-520, 527-528.
[71] Ibid., 252.
[72] Ibid., 235, 519, 397.
[73] Ibid., 224, 521.
[74] Ibid., 296-297.

suffering without the help of the external word.[75] However, he seems to have assumed that most people would have to be instructed about the right path. He therefore insisted on the importance of the role of the priests and preachers who had a responsibility to teach others about the way to salvation.[76] Müntzer's main critique against the old clergy and the magisterial Reformers was that they refused to walk the path of suffering themselves, which meant they were not qualified to teach about God since they had never personally experienced the Holy Spirit.[77] This was problematic because, as a result, they also refused to teach the laity about the right path and stressed the importance of Scripture instead.

For Müntzer, Scripture played an ambiguous role. On the one hand, it presented multiple historic examples that faith necessitated suffering, especially in the case of Christ and the apostles, and displayed how God had worked in people in the past.[78] Scripture testified to the fact that the Spirit worked within people and could consequently be used as a guide to true faith.[79] On the other hand, it seems that Müntzer understood it to be the purpose of Scripture to lead to damnation.[80] If one relied only on Scripture to access divine truth, without the workings of the Spirit, Scripture inevitably lead that person astray because the devil could speak through Scripture as well and only the inspired person could discern which interpretation was true and which false.[81] This again placed the priest or preacher in a crucial position as either promoting the cause of God or the devil.

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[75] Ibid., 277-278.
[76] Ibid., 268, 395.
[77] Ibid., 339.
[78] Ibid.,219, 220,235, 271, 527-528.
[79] Ibid., 297-298.
[80] Ibid., 220.
[81] Ibid., 218.

For Müntzer, divine inspiration was the only way to attain true knowledge; yet Scripture still played a significant role for him. Müntzer used Scripture to verify the truthfulness of his ideas.[82] He also insisted on his opponents doing the same.[83] However, he might have relied on Biblical argumentation solely for the benefit of his opponents rather than his own necessity for it.[84] In either case, knowledge was never accessible through Scripture, only through God.

Wu der same felt uff den guten acker, das ist in die hertzen, dye der forcht Gots vul sein, das ist dann das papir unde pergamen, do Got nicht mit tinten, sundern mit seinem lebendigen finger schreibt dye rechte heilige schrifft, dye dy eusserliche biblien recht bezceugt, Und es ist auch kein gewisser gezceugnisse, das die biblie warmacht, dan dye lebendige rede Gots, do der vater den szon anspricht im hertzen des menschen.[85]

[Where the seed falls onto the good field, that is into the hearts that are full of the fear of God, then that is the paper and the parchment, where God does not write with ink, but with his living finger the right holy scripture that is verified by the external Bible. And there is no more certain witness, that the Bible verifies, than the living speech of God, where the father addresses the son in the heart of the person. (My translation)]

Although Scripture was not necessary to attain faith, Müntzer still promoted knowledge of Scripture among the congregation.[86] He even established a new liturgy for the mass in German according to the apostolic example.[87] The laity's understanding of all rituals was important to Müntzer, so that the sacraments could be practiced properly. Müntzer saw the sacraments as instituted by Christ in order to practice the believers' faith.[88] In accordance with the old Church, he understood the Eucharist as containing Christ's body and blood. However, he stressed the internal aspect of the mass and stated

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[82] Ibid., 315.
[83] Ibid., 228, 394, 396.
[84] Ibid., 398.
[85] Ibid., 498.
[86] Ibid., 209-210, 277, 395.
[87] Ibid., 208, 210, 211, 214.
[88] Ibid., 524.

that participation without faith was worthless.[89] Müntzer questioned the practice of infant

baptism because it did not conform to the apostolic example, but did not dispose of it.[90]

Instead, he insisted on the godparent's understanding of the ritual, who would instruct the

older child about the meaning of baptism after the fact.[91]

Altogether, Müntzer had relatively little concern for the sacraments compared to

most other radical Reformers. Müntzer's idea of God's direct intervention in a person did

not seem to be connected to any sacrament, which leads to the conclusion that he did not

attribute them with salvific qualities. His insistence on the right inner attitude during the

Eucharist suggests that he only expected believers to participate properly in the ritual,

which again implies that God's intervention preceded the full participation in this

ceremony. However, Müntzer did not seem to object to non-believers' participation in the

Eucharist, just to its effect for them. Baptism, on the other hand, was practiced without

the understanding of the child. It therefore seems that understanding could legitimize

one's participation in this ritual after the fact. The limited information on Müntzer's view

of the sacraments poses more questions than it answers regarding Müntzer's ecclesiology.

Müntzer's insistence on the person's understanding of the sacrament and

knowledge of God's law, and the idea that one needed to be educated about the true path

to salvation suggests that Müntzer expected believers to be intellectually mature. He also

seems to have assumed an element of choice on behalf of the person whether they were

willing to endure the necessary suffering or not.[92] Müntzer therefore held everyone

responsible for their decision to embark on the path to salvation or to refuse the necessary

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[89] Ibid., 522.
[90] Ibid., 214; 526; 227, 228, 229.
[91] Ibid., 214.
[92] Ibid., 252.

suffering.[93] He condemned refusal, especially in the case of the clergy, who thereby failed their moral obligation.

Müntzer saw himself in the role of the true preacher and prophet, who had the Spirit and was called to preach the true way to God and fight against all who did not follow it.[94] His adversaries consisted of the old clergy and the magisterial Reformers, who abused their position of authority within the Church to preach against the workings of the Holy Spirit and against the necessity of suffering to attain it.[95] The teachings of Müntzer's opponents, as well as their lifestyle suggested to him that they did not have a spiritual connection to God. Müntzer viewed these 'scribes', who stressed the importance of Scripture, as necessarily leading their followers astray and keeping them in their place by refusing to instruct them properly. Müntzer had more egalitarian ideas regarding the clergy-laity-relationship because he attributed the capacity to receive the Holy Spirit to all people.

Conclusion – Exteriority and Interiority are Co-dependent

The lives and ideas of the three radical Reformers examined here display many similarities. They came from higher social classes and had access to university education. All three were first adherents of the magisterial Reformation before they developed their own more radical programs. Their ideas display humanistic and mystical influences and their theological anticlericalism present an ideological critique aimed at the authority of the Church and the clergy.

The humanistic, mysticistic, and anticlerical aspects of the radical Reformers'

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[93] Ibid., 295.

[94] Ibid., 269, 338, 366, 395, 398.

[95] Ibid., 297, 339.

views displays how their ideas conformed to broader intellectual, religious, and popular currents at the time. The direct humanistic influence can be seen in the radical Reformer's approach to Scripture as a historical record, their promotion of a good lifestyle as the expression of their moral ideals, their emphasis on religious education for members of all social classes, and, with the exception of Schwenckfeld, the focus on Christs' humanity rather than his divinity. The humanists' strife to re-establish a glorified classical past found resemblance in the radical Reformers' attempts to institute a church or congregation according to the apostolic ideal.

Newer mystic influences can be detected in the radical Reformer's views that, theoretically, all people have the capacity to receive the Holy Spirit, that a spiritual connection to God legitimized one's teaching authority, and, in the case of Müntzer, that divine inspiration could occur apart from the external word. Aspects of more traditional forms of mysticism were displayed in Schwenckfeld's and Müntzer's ideas of a four stage path to true faith that involved suffering as a central element. Suffering also played a role for Grebel. However, for him it was a test for the believer's faith, not a prerequisite to attain it. Whereas for Schwenckfeld and Müntzer the person had to become Christ-like in order to receive God's grace and become a true believer, Grebel saw suffering as a consequence of the believer's decision to be Christ-like. The radical Reformer's insistence on a world-negating lifestyle also displayed similarities to the ascetic ideal of traditional mysticism.

Significant aspects present in humanism as well as mysticism were the dignity of the laity and the emphasis on human experience as the superior method of accessing knowledge, which, in religious terms, became an emphasis on spirituality as the means to

access divine knowledge. Since everyone could, in theory, possess the Spirit, everyone could potentially attain legitimate teaching authority. As a genuine spiritual connection is more difficult to ascertain than the engagement with any external part of religion, the outer sign that symbolizes one's spiritual connection is one's lifestyle and teachings. They testify to a legitimate spiritual connection, if they conform to Scripture. Therefore, although spirituality is seen as the aspect that legitimates authority because it grants superior knowledge, the impossibility of verifying this access through any direct physical evidence creates the necessity to revert to external criteria as validation of the perceived presence of qualification.

Each writer examined here views his lifestyle and teachings as corresponding to Scripture, which validates their legitimate teaching authority. In contrast to that the old clergy and the magisterial Reformers lack the proper lifestyle and their teachings do not correspond to Scripture. This indicates that they do not have the Spirit and therefore no legitimate teaching authority. Whereas the theoretical possibility that all individuals are capable of receiving the Spirit makes everyone qualitatively equal, the fact that only few individuals actually have the Spirit still draws a line between those who teach legitimately and those who do not. The radical Reformers therefore introduced new modes of qualification for positions of authority by claiming that a spiritual connection to God legitimized one's teaching authority rather than the sanction of an institution.

The clergy-laity-relationship was an important issue for the popular and the theological anticlerical critique and displays the close connection between these two types of anticlericalism. The theological anticlericalism of the radical Reformers largely adopted the issues critiqued by popular anticlericalism – the social privilege of the clergy

and their immoral lifestyle. The radical Reformers abolished the socially privileged position of the clergy by eliminating their religious privilege. The lifestyle-issue became theologically significant with the claim that a spiritual connection to the divine necessarily resulted in morally good conduct. This aspect already addressed by the popular anticlerical critique came to constitute the external criterion that could verify the radical Reformers' authority and reveal the clergy's and the magisterial Reformers' illegitimacy. The theological anticlericalism of the radical Reformers therefore made this aspect of the popular anticlerical critique religiously meaningful. The fact that the theological anticlericalism of the radical Reformers largely addressed the concerns expressed by popular anticlericalism of the socially disadvantaged parts of the population accounts for its popularity among the peasantry.

The examination of the radical Reformers' ideas regarding the outer religion-spirituality-relationship shows that they viewed spirituality as the essence of a religious institution and its antithesis at the same time. The writers' close association between the inner and outer aspects of religion promotes the idea that, in their view, a religious tradition such as Christianity *is* institutionalized spirituality and should therefore have spirituality as its foundation. However, increasing organization, structuring, and categorization that is seen as symbolized by the Church's hierarchy and its rituals/sacraments are seen as gradually diverting the focus from the inner spiritual aspects to the outer religious aspects until religion is understood as an exclusively exterior phenomenon regardless of its spiritual origin and, ideally, spiritual core.

The radical Reformers did not intend to effect a radical separation of spirituality from its institutionalization. Historians largely agree that the late medieval anticlericalism

did not promote the abolition of the Church. The anticlerical critique of the radical Reformers centered around the lack of spiritual significance in Church rituals and a clergy that personified the shortfall of this institution. Their main objective was to re-infuse it with the spiritual essence it ought to have. The aim to re-create the Church according to the apostolic example was an attempt to return to a more original form of Church that was perceived to have a strong spiritual core. The radical Reformers were able to use spirituality to challenge the authority of the Church precisely because the Church's spiritual foundation was seen as deteriorated beyond recognition.

The anti-institutional sentiments of the radical Reformers mirror the intellectual and popular currents of their time. Their actual attempt to re-structure the religious and socio-political system by replacing the established religious ideology with an alternative religious ideology makes them revolutionaries. The following chapters will discuss how the North American spiritual Ecofeminists of the 20th century pursued a similar goal, employed similar strategies, and operated under similar assumptions when they challenged the modern Western worldview that promoted patriarchy and anthropocentrism.

Chapter 4: The Development of Spiritual Ecofeminism

Introduction

The North American Ecofeminists aim at transforming the modern Western value system which they perceive as patriarchal and anthropocentric. They view the problems of the modern Western value system to reside in its promotion of a qualitative distinction between humans and nature, which caused an environmental crisis, and between men and women, which resulted in men's privileged status in all aspects of society: government, institutions, laws, economics, customs, and interpersonal relationships. The Ecofeminist alternative to the modern Western value system developed out of the views of various forms of feminism and other social movements and also displays some other intellectual, religious, and even scientific influences.

The presentation of the socio-political surroundings of the spiritual Ecofeminists requires less detail than the same description regarding the radical Reformers because of their historical and cultural proximity to the present North American setting. On the other hand, the fact that, in contrast to the radical Reformers, spiritual Ecofeminism is a result of the development of an identifiable social movement necessitates the tracing of that lineage in order to gain a better understanding of spiritual Ecofeminism and the way in which cultural influences helped shape its current form. This chapter therefore explores the beginnings of the feminist movement and follows the ideological lineage within different forms of feminism that has led to the development of Ecofeminism. Influences from other social movements, intellectual currents, scientific developments and new religious movements are explained as far as they are understood as having contributed important aspects to the Ecofeminist perspective.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate spiritual Ecofeminism within its socio-political and cultural surroundings, to present the social injustice Ecofeminists perceive as inherent in the modern Western value system and to display the underlying assumptions of their ideologies which shape the strategies they employ to supplant the modern Western value system with an Ecofeminist ideology that is seen as promoting radical egalitarianism.

The Development of Feminism – The Shedding of Tradition

Since its inception over 200 years ago, the feminist movement has undergone several fundamental changes. Some of these developments display influences from other social movements, whereas others resulted from disagreements from within. Altogether, feminism, which started out as a monolithic movement has, in its diversity, attempted to become all things to all women.

To pinpoint the emergence of feminism is difficult. Imelda Whelehan describes the writer Mary Wollstonecraft and her book published in 1792, *Vindication of the Rights of Women,* as a forerunner and major influence on 'first wave' feminism.[1] Estelle Freedman describes first wave feminism, also called liberal feminism, as largely concerned with women's right to vote and women's right to own property.[2] In this first stage, the feminist movement was mostly concerned with gaining putative equality for

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[1] Imelda Whelehan, *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to 'Post-feminism'* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 3. The term 'waves' in connection to Feminism refers to distinct time periods marked by overt political activism. The current debate regarding feminist history centers around the issue whether the traditionally employed distinctions between first-, second-, and third- or post wave feminism(s) are valid categorizations, because they might suggest the absence of a feminist movement for the time period between the different waves of feminism(s). Shira Tarrant argues against the epochal distinctions in Shira Tarrant, *When sex became gender* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[2] Estelle Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballatine, 2002), 3-4.

women. The legitimacy of the social structure and its underlying ideology that promoted a qualitative difference between men and women was not questioned yet.

Around the middle of the 20th century feminism underwent a drastic change which gave the previously predominantly white, middle-class, liberal movement a radical turn and a more multicultural flavour. This development could be understood as a result of the influence of other social movements, in particular, the Civil Rights Movement and the Youth Revolt.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 60's aimed at improving the status of black Americans, mostly by arguing against segregation, by demanding freedom from desperate conditions, and by securing the right to vote.[3] Traditional values of the American culture were not challenged by this movement. On the contrary, according to Cass R. Sunstein, by pointing out the status quo's discrepancy with the constitutionally fixed rights of all Americans the Civil Rights Movement followed the traditional reformer's strategy of invoking "a widely shared and time-honoured (American) ideal and showed that the practice at issue violated that ideal."[4] Interestingly, although desegregation was foremost on the Civil Rights agenda, the intention was never to achieve cultural integration. The aim was legal and qualitative equality (or, in some cases, superiority) in spite of the cultural difference, which they sought to maintain.[5] This aspect of valuing difference also resonated in the youth revolt's attacks on racism.

The youth revolt, in particular, the student movement of the 1960s reacted against the war in Vietnam and general racism in the United States. According to Robert V.

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[3] Cass R. Sunstein, "What the Civil Rights Movement Was and Wasn't," in *Reassessing the Sixties,* ed. Stephen Macedo (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1997), 257.
[4] Ibid., 256.
[5] See ibid., 266-267.

Daniels, the government's foreign policy based on anti-communist sentiments, which were perceived as irrational, its engagement in a war where victory was unattainable without paying an unacceptable price, and the continuous challenge of racism it was unable to address sufficiently, led to a loss of generational confidence and de-legitimized the older generation in the eyes of the younger one.[6] The ideological discrepancy between the older and younger generation caused a sense of alienation for the latter, because political power resided with the former.

Ideological examinations led the youth to question everything from the legitimacy of traditional American moral values to the purpose of education.[7] The anti-authoritarian attitude of the youth revolt expanded into general opposition against any established power structures. However, the movement was more concerned with changing social attitudes and moral values than presenting an alternative social or political program.[8] Another result of the youth's sense of alienation caused by the notion that their values deviated from the established value system was an anti-nationalist attitude that viewed American society not as a coherent whole, but "a patchwork of rich and poor, old and young, men and women, blacks, whites, Hispanics, and Indians."[9]

Daniels states that the American Student Movement, in particular, targeted the universities, which became a symbol of political authority and perceived social oppressiveness.[10] Aside from attacking the universities' institutional authority, the students also questioned the traditional educational aims and standards. The former

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[6] Robert V. Daniels, *The Fourth Revolution: Transformations in American Society from the Sixties to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 98, 109, 111.

[7] Ibid., 107.

[8] Ibid., 100, 111.

[9] Frances Fitzgerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 11, quoted in Daniels, *Fourth Revolution*, 107.

[10] Daniels, *Fourth Revolution*, 113.

purpose of education as training for career competence, rigid curriculum requirements, and authoritarian teaching methods were seen as lacking opportunities for self-expression.[11] Walter Berns asserts that the Student Movement's demand for a shift in teaching methods and subject matter affected especially the humanities, which were considered to be the disciplines that conveyed culture and furthered the students' psychological and emotional development.[12] In conjunction with the Civil Rights Movement and later the Women's Movement, students demanded the creation of new departments, such as Women's Studies and Afro-American Studies.[13] This request signifies the recognition of particular subgroups of American society and therefore indicates respect for cultural diversity.

The Youth Movement that questioned traditional social values flared up against the value system promoted by modern bourgeois society, which they considered to be inherently racist, sexist, capitalist, and classicist.[14] Their perceived alienation referred to the traditional values held by the majority of society, notably the older generation, which the younger generation viewed as disconnected from their own experiences. Instead the Youth Movement promoted 'authentic values', sincerity, personal ethics and morality, and practicality.[15] The movement questioned the legitimacy of the American social value system but did not go as far as challenging its underlying assumptions. It also provided no alternative value system that could have replaced it.

Aspects of the Civil Rights Movement and the Youth Revolt that can also be

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[11] Ibid., 103-104, 114.

[12] Walter Berns, "The Assault on the Universities: Then and Now," in *Reassessing the Sixties,* ed. Stephen Macedo (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1997), 170-171.

[13] Ibid., 158, 168-169.

[14] Ibid., 181.

[15] Ibid., 169; Daniels, *Fourth Revolution*, 100, 102.

recognized in versions of second wave feminism are the inclusion of women of colour, an emphasis on (cultural) difference, the pursuit of ideological critique, the anti-nationalist attitude, and a shift in focus from the individual's social obligation to her opportunities for self-expression and her emotional development. Traditional Marxist, liberal, social, and radical feminism joined in the Youth Revolt's critique of racism, sexism, capitalism, and classism. Of these four strands radical feminism was the one that mostly engaged in ideological critique and identified patriarchy as the underlying ideology that had caused all social injustice(s).

Whelehan points at the distinction between first and second wave feminism in her assessment that

> The first wave succeeded in achieving a significant victory – that of enfranchising women within the political and legal system, and facilitating the possible future reform of the most inequitable aspects of social life. The second wave, however, became a response to the lean years after the achievement of putative equality; the result of a dawning recognition that the system itself seemed to have an inbuilt propensity for institutionalizing gender (as well as other) inequality. The second wave is therefore distinct in recognizing the possibility that there might not be a solution to women's continued oppression short of a revolution.[16]

Daniels pinpoints the beginning of the second wave with the launch of Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.[17] According to Daniels, the women's movement of the mid-60's was initially mostly concerned with general women's rights and spent the better part of that decade to establish itself as a viable socio-political force.[18] By the late 60's the movement had split into legalistic integrationists, who continued predominantly with advocating women's rights and changing institutional laws and policies, and liberationists, who declared the entire system flawed and sought to

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[16] Whelehan, *Modern Feminist Thought*, 4.
[17] Daniels, *Fourth Revolution*, 123.
[18] Ibid., 123-128.

provoke a more extensive social transformation by "repudiating the social pillars of marriage and capitalism."[19]

Liberal feminism advocated change on a legalistic level and traditional Marxist feminism sought change by incorporating women into the economic system.[20] These two strands of feminism aimed at offsetting the male advantage in the political/economic system with 'female-friendly' legislation and equal economic opportunities that were seen as the basis of the value system. Radical feminism, on the other hand, sought to dismantle the patriarchal ideology by means of a deconstructive investigation of its paradigms.

According to the radical Feminists, society viewed patriarchy as the "natural and divinely ordained" order, according to its Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian roots.[21] Marlene LeGates describes the justification for male domination as follows:

> For the ancient Greeks, women's inferiority was expressed through an understanding of biology that pictured women's bodies as similar but inferior to men's. According to the Greeks, men had the advantage of excess heat, which not only caused their genitals to descend but nourished their reasoning abilities. Reason was the foundation of public, that is intellectual and political, life. Women's colder and wetter humors, which kept their genitals inside the body and prevented blood from rising to their brains, explained their intellectual inferiority. Unlike the inferiority of slaves, who were seen to lack judgment because of their unfree status, or of male children, who lacked it because of their age, female inferiority was inherent.[22]

LeGates asserts that radical Feminists attributed the exclusion of women from public offices and any positions of authority to this ancient Greek view of a biological difference between men and women. The Judeo-Christian account of the creation of Eve

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[19] Ibid., 128.

[20] Karen J. Warren, "Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections," *Environmental Ethics* 9 (1987): 8-13

[21] Marlene LeGates, *In their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 19.

[22] Ibid., p. 19.

from Adam's rib and the subsequent seduction of Eve by the serpent were seen as supporting the patriarchal view of women's spiritual and moral inferiority. Women's inferior disposition required their placement under male authority. According to the radical Feminists, this resulted in the patriarchal structuring of society from antiquity to the late 18th century, where the father of every household reigned over his family in the same capacity as a king would rule over his subjects.[23] Attacking the institution of marriage, the smallest unit structured according to patriarchal hierarchy, therefore presented a challenge of the power structure inherent in the entire patriarchal system.

For the radical Feminists, the patriarchal structure of society was the rational conclusion drawn from the above mentioned Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian views. They heavily criticized both these assumptions and the epistemological method of rationality: the former because they presented false assumptions, the latter because it was obviously not a useful epistemological method, if it did not reveal the former as false. Radical Feminists closely associated rationality with patriarchy. Instead they promoted spirituality and intuition as a specifically feminist epistemology.

> A radical feminist epistemology self-consciously explores strategies . . . to correct the distortions of patriarchal ideology. It emphasizes a variety of sources of reliable knowledge (e.g. intuition, feelings, spiritual or mystical experiences) and the integration of women's felt mystical/intuitive/spiritual experiences into feminist theory and epistemology. Challenging the traditional "political versus spiritual" dichotomy, many radical feminists support a "politics of women's spirituality" which makes a spiritual ingredient necessary to any adequate feminist political theory.[24]

The emphasis on (spiritual) experience and intuition remained an important factor throughout the further development of Feminism and presents the foundation of the

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[23] Ibid. p. 21. For some examples of exceptions to this rule see p. 22-23.
[24] Warren, "Feminism and Ecology," 14.

spiritual Ecofeminists' challenge to the authority of patriarchy.

Daniels describes the first published feminist assault on patriarchal ideology as originating from Kate Millett's book, *Sexual Politics*, published in 1970.[25] As an overt lesbian, Millet attached the concerns of the sexual revolution to the gender revolution, adding the dimension of sexual orientation as another possible dividing line within the women's movement. Both feminism and the sexual revolution attacked marriage and the traditional view of the patriarchal family as the substructure of the authoritarian state.[26]

While the ideological critique of patriarchy initiated by radical feminism presented a milestone in the women's movement, harsh critique also ensued. Radical feminism was criticized for its negligence of issues regarding race, class, ethnicity, and nationality.[27] The mainstream feminist movement's perceived ignorance about multiple oppressions was critiqued by black feminists and women of colour, who thereby, according to Susan Archer Mann and Douglas J. Huffman, initiated third wave feminism.[28]

Archer Mann and Huffman argue that third wave feminism presented a critique of second wave feminism and that both movements were contemporary manifestations of different feminist ideologies. Second wave feminism split into two camps, one celebrating identity, the other resisting it, which led the former group to accuse the latter of "essentialism, white solipsism, and failure to adequately address the simultaneous and multiple oppressions they experienced."[29] Black and lesbian feminist groups had emerged, each focusing on their own particular demographic, and had remained distinct

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[25] Daniels, *Fourth Revolution*, 131.

[26] Ibid., 132.

[27] Warren, "Feminism and Ecology," 15.

[28] Susan Archer Mann and Douglas J. Huffman, "The Decentering of Second Wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave," *Science & Society* 69 (2005): 57-59.

[29] Ibid., 58.

strands within the feminist movement.[30] Third wave feminism sought ways to unify the different feminisms by introducing a pluralistic definition of 'woman' as the centre of feminist theory. With this definition, third wave feminism attempted to take all differences into account and sought to be acceptable to all parties

Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter explain that,

> If feminism is to liberate women, it must address virtually all forms of domination because women fill the ranks of every category of oppressed people. Indeed, the ontological status of woman and even of women has shifted for academic feminists in light of influential arguments showing that women, per se, do not exist. There exist upper-caste Indian little girls; older, heterosexual Latinas; and white, working-class lesbians. Each lives at a different node in the web of oppressions. Thus, to refer to a liberatory project as 'feminist' cannot mean that it is only for or about 'women', but that it is informed by or consistent with feminism. It seeks, in current feminist parlance, to unmake the web of oppressions and reweave the web of life.[31]

This definition of 'woman' already displays the postmodern influences feminism experienced after its proponents retreated from public political activism to pursue theoretical investigations in the universities in the late 1960's and early 70's. This is the period where the ideological critique of patriarchy was fully developed and an alternative ideology began to emerge.

Postmodernism – All is Questionable

Postmodernism and poststructuralism were influential intellectual movements that affected the development of the North American social movements during the 1970's and 80's. J. P. Diggins states that after the political activism of the Youth Revolt and radical Feminism had climaxed in 1968, these movements continued their intellectual

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[30] Whelehan, *Modern Feminist Thought*, 67-69.
[31] Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, eds., *Feminist epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 4.

development in the universities. Here radical Feminists were exposed to postmodernist and poststructuralist methodologies that provided them with the critical tools to deconstruct the underlying assumptions of the modern Western value system and to advance the construction of feminist theory.[32]

Some scholars, such as Patrick Murphy, view postmodernism as fulfilling a methodological need for feminism. Although radical Feminists had found their nemesis in patriarchy, it seems that the extent of the power this ideology exerted had not yet been realized due to the lack of methodological and theoretical tools available to mainstream (non-academic) feminists. Murphy asserts that postmodernism provided the tools for the analysis of the feminists' historical status quo by investigating the causes of the modern condition and the interrelation of its different aspects:

> Proponents of postmodernism . . . emphasize the ways in which postmodernist theory provides the mechanisms for a critique of the present, an evaluative description and critical interrogation of the current condition of many human beings in much of the world, Postmodernist theorizing focuses on what already exists in order to generate a comprehensive analysis in the form of a negative critique. Such analysis is intended to explain how we have arrived at this present state of indeterminacy, relativity, interpellation, and economic restriction. Ecofeminism as an ideological formation is also concerned with explaining such phenomena.[33]

Postmodernist and poststructuralist values display commonalities with feminist ideals. Phillip W. Sutton asserts that poststructuralism introduced the method of deconstruction for the analysis of systems in general and, with Foucault, power relations in particular.[34] Although not a social movement, poststructuralism displays certain equalizing qualities first by deconstructing and thereby de-legitimizing particular power

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[32] J. P. Diggins, "Power, freedom, and the failure of theory", *Harper's Magazine* 28.4 (1992): 16.

[33] Patrick Murphy, "Ecofeminism and Postmodernism: Agency, Transformation, and Future Possibilities," *NWSA Journal* 9 (1997): 42.

[34] Philip W. Sutton, *Nature, Environment and Society* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 156.

structures, and by equally employing this method to any and all systems and structures. This leads to a kind of qualitatively negative egalitarianism, where the equalizing factor is that nothing has inherent value.

Nevertheless, any version of egalitarianism leads to positive results for the formerly lower levels in the hierarchy. Sutton points out that the dismantling of power structures allows minority voices to be heard, thereby promoting diversity and plurality.[35] Valuing diversity necessarily translates into valuing difference. Sutton asserts that postmodernists argue against universalization, assimilation, and the integration of minority cultures into the majority. "Postmodern thought lays great store in the idea of irreducible difference ... If there is to be social unity and solidarity then it must be through a new 'unity of diversity' or perhaps, a unity through an acknowledgement of difference."[36] Nils Mortensen points out the ethical implications of deconstruction when he states that for its proponents "to think right, to feel right, to act right, to read right now means to reject the tyranny of the whole. Totalisation in any human occupation is potentially totalitarian."[37]

Postmodernists attacked the modern worldview by trying to discredit the perceived superiority of rationality, which was seen as its underlying assumption.

> Post-modernism is a term which covers the dissolution of faith in a rational engagement scientifically, philosophically and politically. It is the final dissolution of the big project of Western civilization to arrive at the good, the true and the just by means of rationality.[38]

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[35] Sutton, *Nature*, 157-158.

[36] Ibid., 158.

[37] Nils Mortensen, "Knowledge Problems in the Sociology of the 80s," *Acta Sociologica* 29 (1986): 328.

[38] Ibid., 325.

This postmodern critique of rationality corresponded closely to the views of the radical Feminists. By showing the limits of rationality as an epistemological method, postmodernists supported the radical Feminists' perspective that an alternative epistemological method was needed that could fulfil the role attributed to rationality in the modern worldview.

Postmodernism and poststructuralism contributed a great deal to the theoretical development of certain strands of Feminism. Yet, the same aspects this particular social movement found useful for its critique of the modern Western value system also made these methodologies inadequate as a theoretical basis for the further development of Feminism. The view of all ideologies as social constructs left no room for the idea of Truth. However, the feminist aim to exchange one ideology for another rested on the assumption that their promoted worldview was true in opposition to the modern Western worldview. Murphy states that "Postmodernism has rejected any confidence in universalizing myths and master narratives."[39] Nevertheless, especially with the development of spiritual Ecofeminism, a master narrative that promoted egalitarian values and ethics became necessary as an alternative to the modern world view.

Another point of contention was the issue of agency. While during the modern period agency was only assigned to the human subject (and there, according to Feminists, only to men), postmodernism and poststructuralism denied any human agency as well, leaving the world subject to uncontrollable chaos. Although this, again, displays the (negative) egalitarian tendency of poststructuralism and postmodernism, no social movement could possibly be content with this idea. Radical Feminists assigned agency to

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[39] Murphy, "Ecofeminism and Postmodernism," 46.

all humans, animals, and nature in general as well.[40] Postmodernism/poststructuralism could therefore provide the methodology for a critique of patriarchy, but not a foundation for an alternative. At this point, feminists turned to the developing science of ecology that corresponded with their traditional environmentalist values to find a basis for an (eco)feminist ideology.

Ecology and the Environmental Movement - Science or Religion?

Ecology is a relatively new branch of science based on the shift from mechanistic to vitalist thought in the late 19th century.[41] Anna Bramwell explains the emergence of ecology as a fusion of resource-scarcity economics with holistic biology that connected to establish the new science in the mid 1970s. Bramwell defines ecology as the science

> that considers energy flows within a closed system. The normative sense of the word has come to mean the belief that severe or drastic change within that system, or indeed any change which can damage any specie within it, or that disturbs the system, is seen as wrong. Thus, ecological ideas have come to be associated with the conservation of specific patterns of energy flows.[42]

Bramwell asserts that for the formation of ecology "two key shifts in mentality were needed, in the biological and in the physical sciences. Because these are the crucial roots of ecologism."[43] Bramwell views the anti-mechanistic, holistic worldview promoted by some biologists combined with the idea that the Earth is a closed system and that resources within this system are finite as the origin of ecology.[44] Ecology departed from the traditional sciences due to its focus on entire systems and the interrelation of its

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[40] See Murphy, "Ecofeminism and Postmodernism," 50-51.

[41] Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), xi.

[42] Ibid., 4.

[43] Ibid., 3.

[44] Ibid., 2.

components, rather than on the characteristics of the particular components seen in isolation.

Konstantinos J. Korfiatis distinguishes two contrasting paradigms within ecology: ecosystem ecology and population ecology. The latter does not include a consideration of energy flow and generally "encompasses the characteristics of the classic reductionist scientific paradigm ... a good explanation for this paradigm of ecology being omitted from any popularized version of ecology."[45] Popular ideas regarding ecology as employed by proponents of the environmental movement are therefore shaped by ecosystem ecology.

Environmentalism is a social movement concerned with human oppression of nature. Phillip W. Sutton argues that the current environmental movement has its origin in the second half of the 19th century and was well established before its popularity vastly increased in the 1960s.[46] The scientific worldview ecology presented was readily adopted by environmentalists as an explanation for the perceived environmental crisis and a program to avoid catastrophe.

> Ecology was the science which could interpret the fragments of evidence that told us something was wrong with the world – dead birds, oil in the sea, poisoned crops, the population explosion ... What it meant was – everything links up ... Here was a new morality, and a strategy for human survival rolled into one.[47]

Environmentalists came to idealize ecology and in turn demonized the traditional sciences. Korfiatis describes how environmentalists criticized modern science, because of

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[45] Konstantinos J. Korfiatis, "Environmental Education and the Science of Ecology: Exploration of an uneasy Relationship," *Environmental Education Research* 11 (2005): 238-239.

[46] Sutton, *Nature*, 35-40.

[47] Anne Chisholm, *Philosophers of the Earth: Conversations with Ecologists* (London: Dutton, 1972),xi, quoted in Bramwell, *Ecology*, 6.

the mechanistic worldview, which "sanctions [the] exploitation and manipulation of [nature] and its resources. Thus, an ideology of dominance and exploitation of nature is created . . ."[48] Other points of contestation concerned the ethical implications of the mechanistic worldview, the modern sciences' inherent reductionism and positivism, and their role in environmental degradation.[49] In relation to the modern sciences, ecology was often treated as an 'alternative science' with a holistic approach to nature, based on the theory of the interconnectedness of all things, which resulted in the assumption of the interdependence of all things. This worldview presented the domination and exploitation of nature by humans as unethical. [50]

This positive attitude towards the environment largely resulted in traditional liberal activism. The emergence of the Gaia theory caused some groups to go beyond demanding laws and policies to safeguard the environment.[51] The Gaia theory, proposed by James E. Lovelock and Lynn Margulis in the early 1970's, added a metaphysical character to ecology and became influential for the spiritual Ecofeminists.

Lovelock and Margulis proposed the thesis that "the total ensemble of living organisms which constitute the biosphere can act as a single entity to regulate chemical

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[48] Korfiatis, "Environmental Education," 235.

[49] Ibid., 236.

[50] Ibid., 238. In his article, Korfiatis argues that this representation of ecology is seriously flawed, nevertheless, it presents the popular view of ecology that has also been adopted by the spiritual Ecofeminists. Korfiatis also suggests that the presentation of nature as a balanced system has come to obtain the status of an axiom in ecosystems ecology, rather than a theory, which attaches metaphysical characteristics to ecosystems ecology and discredits it as a science in the modern sense. Korfiatis, "Environmental Education," 242. Kirchner adds that Gaia theory's view of the biosphere as one giant organism that regulates itself to optimize the existence of life is unfalsifiable and therefore not a viable scientific hypothesis (James W. Kirchner, "The Gaia Hypothesis: Fact Theory, and Wishful Thinking," *Climatic Change* 52 (2002): 393). This claim also discredits ecology as a science, as far as it takes the Gaia hypothesis as a starting point, and renders its fundamental assumptions a metaphysical construct including a (potentially anthropocentric) teleology. (Kirchner, "Gaia Hypothesis", 399).

[51] See Bramwell, *Ecology*, 3-5.

composition, surface pH and possibly also climate."[52] Lovelock and Margulis interpreted the chemical disequilibrium present in the Earth's atmosphere as an indication that the atmosphere is part of a living system and therefore a part of the biosphere.[53] Since the gases present in the atmosphere are shown to be largely biological products and the various gases control the Earth's temperature and pH level, Lovelock and Margulis concluded that living organisms were ultimately responsible for the chemical composition of the atmosphere and therefore for the Earth's climate.[54]

Thus far, James W. Kirchner, an opponent of the Gaia theory, assesses the views of Lovelock and Margulis as "a part of a venerable intellectual tradition."[55] The less scientific (in the modern sense, according to Kirchner[56]) conclusion Lovelock and Margulis arrived at next was seen as more problematic. Lovelock and Margulis asserted that the organisms' influence on the chemical composition of the atmosphere was not merely coincidental, but presented a *purposeful* manipulation to optimize the conditions for life.[57]

> Our purpose is to stress that the present knowledge of the early environment suggests strongly that a first task of life was to secure the environment against adverse physical and chemical change. Such security could only come from the active process of homeostasis in which unfavourable tendencies could be sensed and counter measures operated before irreversible damage had been done.[58]

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[52] Lovelock and Margulis, "Atmospheric homeostasis by and for the biosphere: the Gaia hypothesis," *Tellus* 26 (1974): 3.

[53] Lovelock and Margulis, "Atmospheric homeostasis," 5.

[54] Ibid., 6.

[55] Kirchner, "Gaia Hypothesis," 393- 394, 398, 404-405.

[56] Ibid., 393.

[57] According to Kirchner's suggestions, Lovelock's and Margulis' view could be seen as anthropocentric, because their ideas regarding the best conditions for life are synonymous with the best conditions for human life. (See Kirchner, "Gaia Hypothesis," 399-400).

[58] Lovelock and Margulis, "Atmospheric homeostasis," 8. Kirchner describes how the Gaia theory of Earth as a self-regulating organism is incorrect and actually has problematic implications, because the idea of environmental homeostasis suggests that no actions are needed to regulate the Earth's climate, e.g. reduce

Although Kirchner contests the general assumptions of the Gaia theory regarding the somewhat intentional influence of organisms on their environment and the self-regulating abilities of the planet as a whole, Kirchner gives credit to the Gaia theory for advancing the idea of viewing "the Earth as a coupled system."[59]

The bottom line of environmentalism informed by ecology, including the Gaia theory, is that modern science has to change its mechanistic, reductionist, and positivistic worldview and its methodology. It therefore has challenged the modern scientific tradition in similar ways as the social movements of the 1960s have questioned traditional social assumptions.

One important aspect of the Gaia theory for (Eco)feminists is, that it presents scientific verification of their spiritually experienced or intuited interconnection of all beings. This underlying assumption is also present in certain New Age religions, which have become viable alternatives to Christianity for many (Eco)feminists because their central tenets correspond more readily to Ecofeminist values.

The New Age Movement – Spiritual Free-f(or)-All

The New Age movement is a religious phenomenon that emerged in the early 1970s and became socially influential in the 1980s.[60] According to Richard Kyle, New Age represents "a meeting of three cultural forces: the Judeo and Christian traditions, Western occult-mysticism, and Eastern religions."[61] Taking these traditional roots into consideration, the term 'New Age' did not refer to a novel form of spirituality, but points

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greenhouse gas emissions, because the Earth will do so itself. (Kirchner, "Gaia Hypothesis," 398).

[59] Kirchner, "Gaia Hypothesis," 404.

[60] Richard Kyle, "The Political Ideas of the New Age Movement," *Journal of Church and State* 37 (1995): 831.

[61] Ibid., 831.

to a new era initiated by individuals who have achieved spiritual and psychological transformation. In some cases a person's spiritual transformation leads her/him to pursue social change through political activism.[62]

Paul Heelas describes the central tenet of New Age as the view that "inner spirituality – embedded within the self and the natural order as a whole – serves as the key to moving from all that is wrong with life to all that is right."[63] New Age therefore provides an explanation for the problems of the status quo, a vision of an ideal state (of mind), and the means to ascertain it.[64] Kyle presents New Agers as generally criticizing the fragmented modern worldview, including its emphasis on rationality, reductionism, and mechanism. They also object to the modern Western value system, which they view as based on hierarchical, patriarchal thinking. Instead they emphasize holism, interconnectedness, unity, decentralization, monism, and environmentalism.[65] These key aims tie the movement together, which is otherwise very diverse. Heelas describes that, depending on the group, the ideal state sought can centre around a variety of factors, e.g. tennis, writing, material wealth, health, etc.[66]

According to Heelas, New Agers see a person's socialization and cultural influences as the pollution of the authentic, natural self. The aim is to negate one's ego that has been corrupted by outside influences and to concentrate on the inner self that is seen as the highest authority in the pursuit of truth. Rationality is seen as the method by

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[62] See Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 16; Kyle, "Political Ideas," 831. Psychological and spiritual transformation are viewed as having different origins (religious and non-religious) but display the same effects. Different groups within the New Age movement would emphasize one form of transformation over the other.

[63] Heelas, *New Age Movement*, 16.

[64] Ibid., 18.

[65] Kyle, "Political Ideas," 832.

[66] Heelas, *New Age Movement*, 19, 30-32.

which the ego operates. The natural, authentic self ascertains truth through experience and intuition. Truth claims that originate outside the self need to be verified through one's own spiritual experience in order to be valid.[67]

Since all individuals need to access knowledge on their own, the idea of a legitimate teaching authority which is in charge of guiding the beliefs of others does not exist. Heelas asserts that "Indeed much of the New Age would appear to be quite radically detraditionalized (rejecting voices of authority associated with established orders) or in other ways anti-authoritarian (rejecting voices of those exercising authority on their own, even rejecting 'beliefs')."[68]

> New Agers often treat practices . . . which might be thought to involve external authority, in detraditionalized fashion . . . religion, as normally understood in the west, has been replaced by teachers whose primary job is to set up 'contexts' to enable participants to experience their spirituality and authority.[69]

In the New Age movement, teachers therefore fulfil the role of facilitators and/or possibly teach certain skills but no content in contrast to traditional teachers from religious traditions who relay particular knowledge.

Since a person's own experience holds the highest authority for oneself, the relationship between different New Agers is necessarily egalitarian. No person or organization has legitimate authority over spiritual practices or truths. A strong stance against organized religion is therefore characteristic of proponents of the New Age movement, since religious organizations are viewed as negating the individual's authority. According to Heelas, traditional religions are also seen as exercising

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[67] Ibid., 18-21, 36.

[68] Ibid., 22.

[69] Ibid., 23.

responsibility over the lives of others. The emphasis on an individual's personal responsibility for her/his actions is an important feature of the New Age ideology and may or may not include a sense of responsibility for others, depending on the individual.[70]

In accordance with traditional Christian mysticism, for New Agers the spiritual path also proceeds through different stages. First, one needs to free her/his mind from all thoughts that represent socially and culturally conditioned responses. These are seen as the blemishes that conceal the true self. Second, when the self is discovered, a connection is established that leads to the experience of one's inner self. Third, the realization of the inner self transforms the individual, and fourth, this transformation inevitably leads to what is understood as morally good conduct. Since the object of the epistemological inquest is the truth about the self, the means of ascertaining it is self-spirituality.[71]

Heelas asserts that for most New Agers self-spirituality is of intrinsic value. The focus on the inner versus the outer may or may not lead to a generally world negating stance for the individual. However, even when worldly aims are pursued, the emphasis lies on the value of these aims as spiritual paths or for the spiritual path. Nevertheless some groups attribute only instrumental value to their spirituality as means to be more successful in gaining material ends.[72]

Heelas describes two differing views present within the New Age movement regarding the locus and scale of spirituality. One view presents the individual self as the primary location of spirituality rendering the outside world nothing but an expression of

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[70] Ibid., 21-23, 25.
[71] Ibid., 18-20, 24.
[72] Ibid., 30-32.

one's own experience. The other view, which applies more to the spiritual Ecofeminists, presupposes a "spirituality which lies at the heart of the cosmic order as a whole."[73] One's own spiritual path then includes a connection to the all pervading spirituality of the cosmos.[74]

According to Heelas, New Agers are able to accept the practices of various religious traditions as viable spiritual paths, because they disregard the religions' differences, which they view as purely external phenomena. The various forms outer religion took are effects of different historical contingencies. The essence of all religious traditions, however, is the same.[75] Heelas declares that the New Agers' view of reality "involves going beyond traditions as normally conceived, going beyond differences to find – by way of experience – the inner, esoteric core."[76] This general idea of essential features common to all religions, women, humans, or life altogether that ultimately supersede all differences also presents itself in the views of the Ecofeminists.

Ecofeminism – The Path to Radical Egalitarianism (?)

According to Nancy R. Howell, Francoise d'Eaubonne first used the term 'ecofeminisme' in 1974, which appeared in her book *Le feminisme ou la mort*. In this book d'Eaubonne called for a feminist revolution to assure global ecological survival.[77] Since then Ecofeminism has become a very diverse and complex movement that Howell

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[73] Ibid., 35.

[74] Ibid., 33, 35.

[75] Ibid., 27.

[76] Ibid., 28.

[77] Nancy R. Howell, "Ecofeminism: What one needs to know," *Zygon* 32 (1997): 231; Murphy, "Ecofeminism and Postmodernism," 48.

defines as "feminist theory and activism informed by ecology."[78]

Ecofeminism is a worldwide movement, often practiced by women "whose cultures and economies are neither postmodern nor modern ... neither totally isolated from nor fully integrated in to the markets of global capitalism."[79] Murphy's definition of Ecofeminism is taking these facts into consideration: "Ecofeminism, then, is first and foremost a practical movement for social change arising from the struggles of women to sustain themselves, their families, and their communities in the face of maldevelopment and environmental degradation."[80] Although North American Ecofeminists do not necessarily have to deal with this type of basic existential threat on a personal level, they claim to take on the experiences of women of other cultures as their own.[81] Considering that the environmental crisis North American Ecofeminists perceive is a global threat, they employ the same argumentation as Ecofeminist activists in developing countries: that their activism points to a matter of life and death, but on a larger scale.

Ecofeminism took on radical feminism's critique of patriarchy as the underlying ideology of the domination of women by men. It included third wave feminism's consideration of multiple oppressions. It also expanded the scope of perceived social injustice to the non-human realm by responding to the findings of the developing science of ecology, in particular, the Gaia theory.

Ecofeminism promotes a radically egalitarian structure for global society based on the idea of the equal value of all beings, human and non-human. This new value system is

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[78] Ibid., 231.

[79] Murphy, "Ecofeminism and Postmodernism," 49.

[80] Ibid., 49.

[81] See Marlene Longenecker, "Women, Ecology, and the Environment: An Introduction," *NWSA Journal* 9 (1997): 1.

intended to avert what is seen as a social and environmental crisis. The problems with the status quo are largely understood as social issues with the inclusion of nature as a participant in society.[82] The strength of the movement lies in its diversity. The influence of third wave feminism, in particular, led to the inclusion of a great variety of perspectives which resulted in a pluralistic movement that attracted people from all cultural, social, and religious backgrounds. The main tenets of Ecofeminism as described by Karen Warren therefore display a fairly loose formulation that is adaptable to different versions of Ecofeminist views.

> (i) there are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; (ii) understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; (iii) feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and (iv) solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective.[83]

Ecofeminists view the patriarchal ideology as a social construct that promotes dualism and consequently hierarchical thinking. This has legitimized the oppression of women by men and of nature by humans. As other environmental groups, Ecofeminists understand humans' alienation from their natural surroundings as the underlying cause of the environmental crisis. This view is seen as promoted by the modern sciences, which portray nature as mechanistic, and rationalism, which attributes only instrumental value to the environment.

Val Plumwood asserts that in the modern world the attributes that characterized the human being were the ones that distinguished humans from nature (reason, in particular).

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[82] I use an expanded understanding of the term 'society' here that includes nature and non-human beings. It is not to be confused with the perspective of some environmental groups, e.g. animal rights groups, who seek to incorporate non-human-beings into the traditional view of society by attributing rights to them that are characteristic of human societies.

[83] Warren, "Feminism and Ecology," 4-5.

In the patriarchal framework of dualistic and hierarchical thinking this translated into the devaluing of nature in opposition to humans.[84] Plumwood further states that the attributes that distinguished humans from the environment were those aspects traditionally associated with the masculine: mind, reason, objectivity, separation, autonomy, abstraction, universality, activity, transcendence. The opposing aspects (body, emotion, subjectivity, interconnection, interdependence, concreteness, particularity, passivity, immanence) were attributed to the female as well as to nature. This was the basis for the Ecofeminists' view of the women-nature-connection.[85]

Ecofeminists claim to seek an end to all forms of oppression, which is the reason for incorporating environmentalism into their program. Examining Plumwood's views, Ecofeminists operate under the assumption that all oppressions will end when the patriarchal dualistic and hierarchical worldview has been transcended and substituted with an Ecofeminist ideology. The latter is seen as preventing any opportunity for dualistic or hierarchical thinking.[86] According to Plumwood, attributing higher value to traditional female attributes such as "respect, sympathy, care, concern, compassion, gratitude, friendship, and responsibility"[87] could be an answer to all forms of oppression because female moral concepts are seen as inherently non-dualistic. They would therefore provide a better basis for interpersonal (male-female) relationships and an environmental ethic than the patriarchal modern worldview.

According to Marlene Longenecker, for Ecofeminists the connection between

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[84] Val Plumwood, "Nature, Self and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism," *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 10.

[85] Ibid., 8, 11.

[86] See ibid.,8-10, 18. Whether this alternative ideology is also understood as a social construct or seen as representing actual truth is a different (and very interesting) question.

[87] Ibid., 9.

feminism and ecology is vital. Due to the close women-nature-connection, the liberation from male oppression of one is seen as synonymous with the liberation of the other. However, as part of humanity, women are also seen as having a particular obligation to ensure the welfare of nature, because of their connection.[88]

Ecofeminist groups criticize other environmentalists who ignore the necessity of the feminism-ecology-relation, e.g. Deep Ecology. Michael Zimmerman states that Deep Ecologists see the entire universe as an extension of the self and seek to replace anthropocentric hierarchies with biocentric egalitarianism. Deep Ecologists criticize Ecofeminists because they shy away from their radical non-anthropocentrism by maintaining the individuality of all living beings and emphasizing their interconnectedness rather than their identicalness. Ecofeminists, on the other hand, contest that Deep Ecologists overlook the role of patriarchy as a cause of the environmental crisis and in the formulation of their own theories, which makes their proposed worldview non-anthropocentric but still androcentric.[89] An environmental theory and ethic that does not take feminism into consideration is therefore automatically seen as another ideology that allows for the oppression of women.

Howell asserts that the Ecofeminist aim of "integrative thinking about ecology and feminism requires supporting political, economic, social, and cultural analysis."[90] This is where the various sub-groups of Ecofeminism differ in their emphasis. All Ecofeminists strive to change or replace the modern Western patriarchal value system. However, some of them see its fundamental problem in the unequal treatment of men and women in the

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[88] Marlene Longenecker, "Women, Ecology, Environment," 1.

[89] Michael E. Zimmerman, "Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism; The Emerging Dialogue," in *Reweaving the World* eds. Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990), 140-142.

[90] Howell, "Ecofeminism," 232.

legal system, others in its economic structure. Yet others view the different value attributed to men and women in the dominant religious tradition in the modern Western world (Christianity) as the main cause for its hierarchical structure. The Ecofeminist movement can therefore be subdivided into political, economic, social, and cultural Ecofeminists depending on which issue they view as the dominant flaw of the status quo. This categorization also points to the foundation they choose for their new value system and the corresponding ethic it entails.

While the feminism-ecology-connection is essential for all Ecofeminists, proponents of this movement differ regarding their attitudes towards the women-nature-connection. Warren describes two camps within Ecofeminism. One group affirms women's special relationship to nature as opposed to men's and celebrates the female aspects of themselves and nature.[91] This attitude is characteristic of the cultural Ecofeminists. Political and social Ecofeminists, on the other hand, view a focus on the special women-nature-connection as perpetuating "harmful patriarchal sex-role stereotyping which feeds the prejudice that women have specifically female or womanly interests in preventing pollution, nurturing animals, or saving the planet."[92]

This thesis investigates the views of the cultural Ecofeminists. Cultural Ecofeminists attempt to replace the patriarchal value system on the basis of religion. I prefer the term 'spiritual Ecofeminists' over 'cultural Ecofeminists'[93], because it

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[91] Warren, "Feminism and Ecology," 14.

[92] Ibid., 14. See also Longenecker, "Women, Ecology, and Environment," 2.

[93] There is no consistent use of either designation in the literature. Most scholars examine Ecofeminism in general without referring to any strand within this movement in particular. Longenecker mentions the term "cultural feminism" and characterizes this strand of feminism as particularly emphasizing spirituality. (Longenecker, "Women, Ecology, Environment," 2). Murphy identifies a particular "spiritual wing of ecofeminism" (Murphy, "Ecofeminism and Postmodernism,"50), and Howell investigates "religious or spiritual ecofeminism" (Howell, "Ecofeminism," 231). I chose the term *spiritual* Ecofeminism to refer to

emphasizes the importance this particular group of Ecofeminists places on religion/spirituality as a foundation for their views, which is its distinctive feature. It is important to note, however, that the spiritual Ecofeminists are not a religious tradition, nor do they seek to establish a religious tradition. 'Ecofeminism' refers to a particular socio-political ideology that also includes the environment and may include religious aspects. Different Ecofeminists identify the fundamental problems of Western society as economic, religious, political, or social. The spiritual Ecofeminists focus on religion, in particular Christianity. However, they follow a variety of religious traditions, which they use to support the new value system they propose.

The North American spiritual Ecofeminists critique Christianity, since they see it as the patriarchal religion that mostly shaped modern Western society. They see the main problems in the Christian symbol of God as father and God's transcendence. The symbol of God as father endorses androcentrism. God's transcendence gives rise to dualistic thinking about humans and nature. Both aspects of the Christian tradition are seen as promoting hierarchical thinking that emphasizes social, economic, political, religious, and biological difference and supports the domination of the weaker by the stronger.

The reason why spiritual Ecofeminists choose to focus on religion as a cause for the perceived crisis as well as the solution lies in their understanding that religion and society are inseparably intertwined. In order to fundamentally transform society, as mentioned in the Ecofeminist principles above, religion needs to be transformed to support the social change.

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those Ecofeminists who trace the fundamental problems of modern Western society back to a religious ideology and seek to eliminate the social injustices inherent in the system by replacing it with an alternative religious ideology. The fact that these Ecofeminists claim that the metaphysical reality of the new worldview they promote is verified through spirituality makes this concept the central aspect that distinguishes them from other Ecofeminists.

Conclusion – Challenging the Modern Worldview in the 20th Century

The previous five sections have traced the development of feminism from its beginnings to the emergence of Ecofeminism. This chapter also presented influences from other social movements and intellectual, scientific, and religious developments that affected some major assumptions underlying this social movement. The common element of feminism and all influential factors presented here consists of a general anti-institutional attitude that questioned the underlying assumptions of the modern Western worldview and its social structure, of modern science, and of Christianity.

Patriarchy and anthropocentrism, as the authoritative ideologies that derive from Christianity and that shape the modern Western value system, could be understood as corresponding to R. B. Friedman's description of traditional authority. Similar to the late medieval anticlericalism, earlier forms of feminism and the Civil Rights movement engaged in social criticism but did not question the underlying ideologies of the social structure. Only in the 1960s did ideological criticism emerge in form of the Youth Revolt and radical Feminism, which attacked patriarchy but not yet anthropocentrism.

The social movements of the 1960's questioned the legitimacy of the assumptions underlying politics, social values, and education by pointing out that these assumptions had led to social injustices such as racism, sexism, and elitism and that they had promoted the development of institutions that ignored the needs of the individual. Additional ideologies challenged in the 1970's and 80's were modern science and the Christian worldview. The former was seen as promoting rationalism and mechanism, the latter promoted both patriarchy and anthropocentrism, according to the Ecofeminists. Both modern science and Christianity were therefore responsible for dualistic thinking

about the relationship between humans and nature, which was seen as the cause of the environmental crisis. Christianity, viewed as the main promoter of patriarchy, was also seen as the reason for the subordinate position of women in modern Western society.

By pointing out how the modern Western worldview supported ideologies that led to environmental degradation and discrimination, Ecofeminists and proponents of other social movements provided evidence of their negative effects. The presence of these social injustices pointed to the fact that the socio-political system disregarded the best interest of many individuals. The modern Western worldview therefore did not fulfil the moral obligation of a legitimate authority. This assessment shows that the social activists investigated here questioned the legitimacy of the modern Western worldview along the lines of Joseph Raz's dependence thesis. The fact that, in this case, the authority is an ideology rather than a person or group does not eliminate its moral obligation.

Feminism also questioned the legitimacy of the modern worldview along the lines of Raz's justification thesis. By claiming that intuition and personal experience were superior methods of ascertaining knowledge compared to rationality, and by claiming that the knowledge about the cosmos attained through these methods conflicted with the assumptions of modern science, the authority of the modern worldview was effectively challenged.

The following chapter will show how the spiritual Ecofeminists Sallie McFague, Carol P. Christ, and Starhawk build on the ideology critique of radical feminism and Ecofeminism. It also displays how these writers utilize spirituality to discredit the ideologies underlying the modern Western value system and to claim authority for their particular alternative worldviews.

Chapter 5: The Spiritual Ecofeminists

Introduction

The spiritual Ecofeminists Sallie McFague, Carol P. Christ, and Starhawk typify the anti-institutional sentiments of their time. As presented in chapter four, various intellectual, religious, social, and scientific developments between the 1960s and 1980s contributed to the development of Ecofeminism, which promotes a worldview to which McFague, Christ, and Starhawk subscribe. The distinctive aspect of these spiritual Ecofeminists versus other types of Ecofeminists lies in their view of an essential connection between religion and society. This assumption leads them to the conclusion that a society's religious ideology has to be changed in order to ensure the longevity of social change. McFague, Christ, and Starhawk seek to legitimate their particular worldviews on the grounds that these ideologies correspond more closely to reality than the modern Western worldview. They base this claim on knowledge obtained through intuition and spiritual and personal experiences. All three writers perceived their ideologies as solving all social injustices.

The following three sections will examine the views of the spiritual Ecofeminists McFague, Christ, and Starhawk, respectively. The examination of their texts presents the general anti-institutional sentiments of these writers that display postmodern, New Age, ecological, and radical social influences. This investigation focuses also on the writer's ideas regarding inner and outer religion, how these concepts relate, and on the political strategies the spiritual Ecofeminists' employ in order to discredit the authority of the established ideologies and the ethics they entail.

In contrast to the radical Reformers and Sallie McFague, who were/are

proponents of the Christian tradition, two of the spiritual Ecofeminists under investigation follow different traditions: earth-based spiritualities. Christ and Starhawk's view of external aspects of religion therefore differs considerably from the other writers.

McFague relies on the same external aspects as the radical Reformers: the bible, rituals, and doctrines, although she has a different understanding of their role than the radical Reformers did. According to Christ and Starhawk, one of the distinctive features of the Goddess religion to which they subscribe is its lack of reliance on any authoritative text. It also rejects any particular guidelines or metaphysical expectations for the exercise and/or experience of rituals and any doctrines.

For the proponents of the Christian tradition examined in this thesis, the purpose of the external phenomena of religion, such as text, sermons/preaching, or rituals, lies predominantly in relaying information about the order of the cosmos, the purpose of their existence and in presenting ethical guidelines. Spirituality relays the same information, however, while the former operates on a cognitive level, the latter functions on an experiential level. I therefore treat all sources that are viewed by Christ and Starhawk as relaying information about the cosmos and any ethical principles on a cognitive level as external phenomena that fulfil the same function in their religious ideology that Scripture, sermon/preaching, and ritual fulfil for the Christian writers presented here.

Similar to the radical Reformers, the spiritual Ecofeminists examined here do not necessarily use the term 'spirituality' to describe their experiential connection to the greater entity they perceive as reality. McFague uses the term 'fellow feeling', Christ refers to it as 'inner knowing', 'divine presence', or 'love', and Starhawk talks about the 'Deep Self' as a state of altered awareness. The fact that all three spiritual Ecofeminists

examined here view the realization of their connection to the ultimately real as an inner event and proclaim this experience as transformative justifies its equation with the term 'spirituality', according to my definition in chapter one.

Altogether, the purpose of this chapter is to present the views of the selected spiritual Ecofeminists regarding inner and outer aspects of religion, the relation of these concepts, and how their religious worldview influenced the choice of political strategies they implemented in order to subvert the modern Western value system. This data supports the idea that the spiritual Ecofeminists seek to instigate an ideological revolution with the aim to supplant the dominant Western religious ideology (Christianity) with an alternative religious ideology that is perceived as promoting radical egalitarianism.

Sallie McFague – Reverting to Christianity's True Message

Sallie McFague is a feminist theologian with a Protestant background. She was born in 1933 in Quincy, Massachusetts and received her B.A. in English literature before entering the Yale Divinity School, where she received her B.D., M.A., and Ph.D.[1] According to Wesley J. Wildman, she was influenced by Karl Barth's dialectical theology and one of her teachers, H. Richard Niebuhr.[2]

McFague has been described as a theological liberal or postliberal of the cultural-linguistic school and a feminist theologian who links the Ecofeminist movement and

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[1] Rolf Bouma, "Feminist Theology: Rosemary Radford Ruether/Sallie McFague," under "Sallie McFague: Background," http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/WeirdWildWeb/courses/mwt/dictionary/mwt_themes_907_ruether mcfague.htm (accessed January 11, 2007); Wesley J. Wildman, "The Theology of Sallie McFague," http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/WeirdWildWeb/courses/mwt/dictionary/mwt_themes_909_mcfague.htm (accessed January 11, 2007).
[2] Wildman, "Theology of Sallie McFague."

Christian theology.[3] Unlike Christian revolutionaries, McFague sees herself as a proponent of the Christian tradition which she seeks to reform in order to improve women's as well as men's lives.[4] Like other Ecofeminists she critiques Christianity for its patriarchal structure and its promotion of hierarchy. McFague agrees with other Ecofeminists that the Christian worldview has had negative effects due to its dualistic assumptions that justified the view of a qualitative difference between humans and nature, rich and poor, white people and coloured people, etc.[5] However, she sees men as well as women as unconsciously embedded in this ideology.

McFague accepts the ecological/Ecofeminist worldview of the cosmos as a web where all beings are interconnected and interdependent.[6] This is the essential truth claim on which her views are based and according to which she aims at transforming Christianity into a more ecologically minded religious tradition that rejects all forms of domination. According to McFague,

> . . . a credible theology for our time must be characterized by a sense of our intrinsic interdependence with all forms of life, an inclusive vision that demolishes oppressive hierarchies, accepts responsibility for nurturing and fulfilling life in its many forms, and is open to change and novelty as a given of existence.[7]

Although McFague criticizes aspects of the Christian tradition, the concept of tradition itself is nevertheless important to her. She aligns herself with a tradition within

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[3] See Terrence Reynolds, "Walking Apart, Together: Lindbeck and McFague on Theological Method," *The Journal of Religion* 77 (1997): 54-55; Bouma, "Feminist Theology: Rosemary Radford Ruether/Sallie McFague."

[4] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology, Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 152-153.

[5] Ibid., 148-150.

[6] McFague, "Earthly Theological Agenda," 330.

[7] McFague, *Models of God*, 32.

Christianity she perceives as more true than the one she rejects.[8] McFague states that the shift in consciousness she proposes "could be seen as a return to the roots of a tradition that has insisted on the creator, redeemer God as the source and salvation of all that is."[9]

The most important change McFague initiates in her religious tradition is her claim that the essential message of Christianity is not captured with the statement 'God is love' but consists of the statement 'God is life'. This phrase entails a general affirmation of life in all its forms. While the Christian concern was formerly limited to the species that was capable of love, with this manoeuvre McFague expands the focus to include all living beings. McFague also proposes to substitute the model of God as father with the models of God as mother, lover, and friend in her attempt to eliminate the rigidity of traditional Christian dogmatism in order to remake this particular religion in the Ecofeminist image.

In order to be able to implement the suggested changes in the Christian tradition, McFague has to circumvent the problem of its strong traditional aspect that predisposes adherents to Christianity to reject innovation. In order to accomplish this, McFague subjects all theological statements, including her own perspective, to historical relativism.[10]

> In other words, in order to do theology, one must in each epoch do it differently. To refuse this task is to settle for a theology appropriate to some time other than one's own. To be sure, this understanding of theology involves a somewhat different view of the founding (i.e., scriptural) images and concepts than is often held. It sees the rich and diverse metaphors and concepts of

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[8] Sallie McFague, "God as Mother," in *Weaving the Visions*, eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 141; Sallie McFague, "An Epilogue: The Christian Paradigm," in *Christian Theology*, eds. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 379.

[9] Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," in *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, eds. Mary Heather MacKinnon and Mari McIntyre (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 332.

[10] Ibid., 30-31, 35.

the Bible as models or exemplars of theology, rather than as dictums for theology.[11]

Viewing metaphors presented in the Bible as historically appropriate examples rather than truths allows McFague and others to change fundamental ideas of God while remaining within the Christian tradition. However, not just any changes are acceptable and Scripture still functions as a methodological guide for finding appropriate metaphors for one's own time.[12] The Bible, as an external source of knowledge, therefore still plays a significant role for McFague. However, it is not an authoritative text in the sense that it contains authoritative statements regarding the nature of God or prescribes particular ethical behaviour.[13]

Despite her apparent focus on external phenomena of religion, such as the construction of appropriate metaphors and models of God, McFague views spirituality as the essential aspect of Christianity that all aspects of outer religion point towards:

> [The] essential core [of Christianity] is not any book or doctrine or interpretation, but the transformative *event* of new life, a new way of being in the world that is grounded in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Scripture is testimony to this event; doctrines are consensus attempts to formulate its significance; theologies are interpretations of it; but *as event* it stands behind, beneath, and before all our constructions of it. It cannot be captured by any of our interpretations.[14]

What McFague suggests here is that no words can describe what must be experienced in order to be fully understood. In addition, only this experience transforms an individual into a Christian, according to McFague's definition. The fact that she describes the essential event of Christianity as transformative indicates its spiritual nature and thereby places spirituality at the centre of her theology.

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[11] Ibid., 30.
[12] McFague, *Models of God*, 30.
[13] See also McFague, "Epilogue," 384.
[14] Ibid., 378.

McFague does not explicitly promote entering on a particular spiritual path that leads to knowledge about the God-world-relationship and particular ethical principles. Nevertheless, different stages that lead a person from the traditional Christian worldview to a Christian Ecofeminist consciousness can still be discerned. In her description of the God as mother metaphor McFague states that with her description of this model she intends to "sketch the change in attitude, the conversion of consciousness, that could come about were we to begin to live inside the model and allow it to become a lens through which we look out onto the world."[15] At the beginning of the 'conversion' one therefore receives information about an alternative consciousness. One then decides to live according to the ethical demands prescribed by the new consciousness, although one has not yet actually experienced it. The actual 'salvific' experience comes through the continuous practice of the model's ethic. Through practice, one realizes that one is not simply following particular ethical precepts in accordance with a particular view of the world or God-world-relationship, but that this God-world-relationship is in fact true.

In her description of the God as lover model, McFague describes this moment of realization as the experience of 'fellow feeling', which displays mystical characteristics.

> This extension involves a kind of empathy or sympathy, an identification, with all that lives, which, though not as intense as love, derives from the same base of desire for unity with everything else that is. It could be called fellow feeling . . . which unites all life at a deep level of affirmation based on the shared adventure in which we all participate, and on our imaginative ability to enter empathetically into the pain and pleasure of other beings, including nonhumans.[16]

The experience of fellow feeling, like traditional spiritual experiences, is associated

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[15] Sallie McFague, "The Ethic of God as Mother, Lover and Friend," in *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, ed. Ann Loades (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1990), 261.
[16] McFague, "Ethic," 268.

with transformation. "As one sees things differently, one begins to act differently, whatever one's position, influence, or occupation might be."[17] For McFague, the external verification of a spiritual state is therefore a change in the individual's lifestyle.

McFague's idea of the inner and outer religion relation is most apparent in her view of the nature and function of metaphors. Metaphors describe God's connection to humans and the rest of all beings via familiar relationships.[18] McFague explains the benefits of the use of metaphors for this purpose:

> The assumption here is that belief and behaviour are more influenced by images than by concepts, or to phrase it in a less disjunctive way, that concepts without images are sterile. It is no coincidence that most religious traditions turn to personal and public human relationships to serve as metaphors and models of the relationship between God and the world . . . These metaphors give a precision and persuasive power to the construct of God which concepts alone cannot.[19]

By creating an analogy to a familiar relationship, a metaphor does not only contain a source of cognitive information but also evokes the corresponding emotions appropriate for that relationship. The majority of people understand the relationship to their mother beyond what words can describe. The metaphors therefore rely on and also evoke personal experiences connected to certain relationships, which results in a different form of understanding God than abstract statements such as God is great, omniscient, infallible, or love. By emphasizing the emotional aspects of metaphors as the central factor that makes them meaningful and particularly capable of portraying aspects of the God-world-relationship, McFague's confirms the superiority of knowledge ascertained

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[17] Ibid., 269.

[18] Sallie McFague, "Models of God for an Ecological, Evolutionary Era: God as Mother of the Universe," in *Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, eds. Robert J. Russell, William R. Stoeger, S. J., and George V. Coyne, S. J. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 252.

[19] McFague, *Models of God*, 38.

through personal experience over rational intellectual activity.

In her attempt to change society's foundational ideology according to her vision, McFague mainly focuses on the deconstruction of the central Christian metaphor of God as father. She performs this exercise on two levels. On the one hand, McFague questions the ethical implications of this particular metaphor, which she views as an inappropriate construct of the human-divine-relationship. On the other hand, she challenges the position of authority that has been attributed to this metaphor in the Christian tradition.

According to McFague, the deciding factor that legitimates a metaphor of God is its correlation to the new central Christian principle that affirms the value of life in all its forms.[20] McFague asserts that the God as father metaphor promoted the view of God's transcendence. This idea evoked feelings of fear, alienation, estrangement, exclusion, divisiveness, and separation.[21] She describes the modern Western sensibility deriving from the God as father model as xenophobic with an extreme and destructive emphasis on competition.[22] McFague also views the God as father model as responsible for the patriarchal ideology that promotes imperialism, capitalism, and hierarchical thinking. Patriarchy therefore forms the basis for the oppressive structures of racism, poverty, and sexism. Other effects of the patriarchal worldview are environmental degradation and the nuclear arms race that threatened all life on the planet. It is obvious that, according to McFague's views, the model of God as father does not fulfill the criterion of a life-affirming metaphor. According to McFague, "the hierarchical, patriarchal pattern is not a central constituent of Christianity – in fact, it is a perversion of it."[23]

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[20] McFague, "Ecological, Evolutionary Era," 254.
[21] McFague, "Ethic," 269.
[22] See ibid., 273.
[23] McFague, "Epilogue," 387.

Instead, she promotes alternative models of God: first, God as mother, thereby promoting the view of God's immanence which attributes value to all of nature; second, God as lover, urging God and all who follow God to heal the world they love because they empathize with the suffering of all other beings; and third, God as friend, describing God's relation to the world and prescribing the ideal relationship of all beings to each other. These three models are therefore seen as overcoming the patriarchal xenophobia and building a community of equal participants that care for all other members. By substituting the multiple metaphors of God for the patriarchal model, which she views as obsolete, McFague attempts to ensure the correspondence of the Christian worldview to Ecofeminist principles. [24]

In order to dislodge the God as father model from its position in the Christian tradition and to ensure that no other model could attain such a status of authority McFague asserts that the traditional view of models of God as synonymous with representations of God is idolatrous.[25] She states that in the case of the God as father model an idea that represents only a small part of God's being has come to be understood as a depiction of the nature of God. Since humans do not possess the capacity to understand God entirely no words could express the nature of God's being. The dominant status of the God as father model is therefore inappropriate for any metaphor related to God. Instead the various metaphors she promotes share equal status as examples of God's relation to the world.

> All are in the same situation and no authority – not scriptural status, liturgical longevity, nor ecclesiastical fiat – can decree that some types of language or some images, refer literally to

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[24] McFague, "Epilogue," 385.
[25] McFague, "Ecological, Evolutionary Era," 255.

God while others do not. None do. Hence, the criteria for preferring some to others must be other than authority, however defined. [26]

The authority of all metaphors used to describe God is seen as equal in the sense that none have authority because none refer literally to God. When no particular viewpoint is seen as authoritative, no one can justifiably hold a position of authority on the basis of superior knowledge over others. McFague views the God as father model as idolatrous because it has been attributed with authority illegitimately.[27]

For McFague, the major changes she attempts to introduce into Christianity are legitimate because they work in accordance with what she views as the central Christian principle of 'God is life'. When all life, including nature, is viewed as inherently valuable then all beings have equal status, making any type of domination unethical. McFague therefore promotes her version of Christianity as a viable foundation for an Ecofeminist ideology.

Carol Christ – All Knowledge is Equal (Unless you are Wrong)

Carol P. Christ is the director of the Ariadne Institute for the Study of Myth and Ritual in Greece. Christ was a graduate theology student at Yale in the late 1960s.[28] Christ and Judith Plaskow founded the first feminist group of Yale, the Yale Women's Alliance, and Christ organized the first women's caucus at the meetings of the American Academy of Religion in 1971. Christ states that "Yale forced us to become feminists, for which we are grateful. And Yale made us confront the male bias of theology in which the sexist attitudes of our colleagues were rooted."[29]

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[26] Ibid., 253.

[27] McFague, *Models of God*, 35.

[28] Jacqueline da Costa, "From Feminist Theologian to Thealogian: The Life and Work of Carol P. Christ," *Feminist Theology* 14 (2006): 311.

[29] Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds., *Womenspirit Rising* (San Francisco: Harper, 1979), x; see also

Christ began working in the area of women and religion in 1972 and continued to work in the field of feminist theology continuously promoting the integration of personal experience and scholarship. This method has earned her criticism from the academic world.[30] It seems to be Christ's chief mission to transform the patriarchal scholarly ethos of the academy to recognize the nonexistence of 'objectivity' and the significance of personal experience.[31]

Christ was raised in the Presbyterian tradition and later turned to Goddess religion. Like other Ecofeminists Christ attacks the sexism, racism, and the anthropocentrism inherent in the modern Western worldview, which she sees as a result of the influence of the patriarchal religions, particularly Christianity.[32] According to Christ, the patriarchal mindset has brought us to the brink of social and environmental destruction. This aspect discredits this worldview as a viable foundation for social institutions and interactions.[33] Christ does not seek to reform Christianity, which she considers hopeless for the purpose of supporting the Ecofeminist agenda.[34] Instead she proposes an Ecofeminist worldview based on process philosophy combined with Goddess religion as an alternative to the modern Western worldview.

Since Christ abandons the Christian tradition altogether, her views on the external aspects of religion such as Scripture, sermons, and rituals deviate greatly from all writers

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Carol P. Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), xxviii.

[30] Da Costa, "Feminist Theologian," 311-312.

[31] Christ, *Diving Deep*, xi.

[32] Carol P. Christ, *She Who Changes, Re-imagining the Divine in the World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 27.

[33] Carol P. Christ, "Embodied Thinking: Reflections on Feminist Theological Method," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5 (1989): 14.

[34] Carol P. Christ, "Rethinking Theology and Nature," in *Weaving the Visions* eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 319; Carol P. Christ, "Symbols of Goddess and God in Feminist Theology," in *Book of the Goddess*, ed. Carl Olsen (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 239.

examined so far. One of the main purposes of these external phenomena of religion for the Christian writers was to transmit information about the order of the cosmos, human-divine-relationship, and ethical principles that the recipient would process on a cognitive level. The earth-based spirituality Christ subscribes to does not claim any particular text as authoritative Scripture.

Christ asserts that knowledge is primarily attained through other individuals, nature, oneself, and the Goddess and that information received from these sources shape one's view of reality.[35] Instruction from other individuals and from nature can present an external and/or internal source of knowledge depending whether one receives the information on a cognitive or experiential level. These sources therefore resemble the external sources of the Christian tradition, according to their function. Knowledge attained from the Goddess and from ourselves is necessarily experiential because the Goddess, as well as the self, can only be perceived on a spiritual/experiential level.

For Christ, spirituality is the realization and experience of one's interconnectedness with all things.[36] This experience has a transformative effect on the individual and results in morally good behaviour in accordance with the truth just realized. [37] Although Christ places great emphasis on the value of intuited/experiential knowledge, she does not grant this method unqualified authority.

> I have come to understand that I had made the mistake of imagining that insights that came from other than rational sources came directly from the Goddess. I now recognize that while insights that come from what we call the deepest self can and do guide us, we must also speak about them with others and reflect on them, weighing their value in terms of how they make sense of our lives and life as a whole.[38]

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[35] Christ, *She Who Changes*, 143.
[36] Christ, *She Who Changes*, 167-168; Christ, "Rethinking," 321.
[37] Ibid., 153, 168; Christ, "Rethinking," 321-323.
[38] Ibid., 167.

Christ regards the value of all sources of knowledge as equal and information gained through either internal or external methods has to be verified by knowledge gained from other sources.[39] This makes all acceptable sources of knowledge in Christ's view co-dependent. For her the key to greater understanding lies in employing a variety of sources of knowledge and ways of knowing rather than insisting on the authority of one over another. The more sources of knowledge and ways of knowing one accepts, the more enlightened that individual becomes.[40]

Nevertheless, even a person who employs all possible methods of accessing knowledge will only gain partial access to the ultimately real. The knowledge one gains is radically subjective because it depends on how one interprets the knowledge received from the different sources.[41] Christ therefore proposes the view of truth as radically relative. In accordance with process philosophy, she declares that any knowledge one might obtain is always fragmentary and therefore limited and changes constantly due to new experiences that shape our worldview.[42]

This understanding of the concept of truth and the various modes of accessing knowledge is the main reason for Christ's revolutionary rather than reformative attitude towards Christianity. According to Christ, traditional religions such as Christianity operate under the assumption that there is one static principle that is seen as perfect and eternally valid and the majority of people only have mediated access to this reality. This type of worldview supports hierarchical structures and strongly promotes transmission of cognitive knowledge as its exclusive epistemological method, which reinforces its

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[39] See also Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 14.
[40] Christ, *She Who Changes*, 143, 159.
[41] See ibid., 144; Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 15.
[42] Christ, *She Who Changes*, 163.

internal hierarchy.[43] Christ therefore regards the Christian worldview as an inherently inadequate basis for an egalitarian social structure.

The main point Christ attacks in the Christian worldview is the idea of God as male, white, and transcendent. According to Christ, this view of the divine has been used to justify sexism, racism, and the exploitation of the earth.[44] Christ asserts that the traditional assumption that an essential feature of divinity was perfection led to the idea that God must be infinitely powerful. This view was enforced by traditional theologians and philosophers, who based God's omnipotence on the fact that God was eternal and unchanging and therefore not relational.

> Theologians and philosophers have for the most part not questioned the hierarchical notions of power inherent in the images of God as a Lord, a King, or a patriarchal Father. Quite the contrary, they have provided philosophical justification for understanding divine power as unlimited. In "classical theism,". . . perfect power is imagined as absolute and unlimited power. That which is perfect must also be unchanging because to change is to become more or less than perfect. That which is unchanging also cannot be related to anything else, because to be related is to change and to change is to be imperfect. Therefore, God cannot be related ... to the world or its creatures. Therefore, as Hartshorne put it succinctly, God's power is that of a tyrant who is not required to take any account of the needs of his subjects.[45]

Instead Christ proposes a new worldview that is based on an idea of the divine as relational and ever changing, which challenges the modern Western worldview's assumptions regarding authority and the human-nature-relationship. Ideas taken from process philosophy comprise the foundation of Christ's alternative worldview. She views the principles of this particular philosophical tradition as most compatible with the aims of spiritual (Eco)feminism.

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[43] Ibid., 144-145.
[44] Ibid., 27.
[45] Ibid., 27-28.

> Spiritual feminists will recognize many points of connection between process philosophy and our intuitions and yearnings. Like many feminist theologies and thealogies, process philosophy affirms change and embodiment, touch and relationship, power with, not power over, the world as co-created, this life rather than hope for another, and the fragmentariness of all knowledge.[46]

Christ's concern regarding the understanding of truth affects her ideas for a solution to the problems created by the worldviews promoted by the patriarchal religious traditions. Christ confirms the deconstructionists' assessment that traditionally any attempt to find ultimate truth was based on a will to power.[47] Exchanging one truth for another as the essential core of a religious tradition does therefore not solve the problem of the hierarchical order of different truth claims and the inevitable conflicts that ensue from this view. Christ's idea of all knowledge as fragmentary and radically subjective results in the view that all truth claims are equally valid and none can claim superior authority over others.[48]

Although Christ does not accept the authority of any truth claim over another, she nevertheless claims that

> for process philosophy, an enlightened or spiritual person would most definitely be aware that she or he is embodied and embedded in a web of relationships with other individuals, human and nonhuman, and supported and sustained by the love and understanding of Goddess/God.[49]

This shows that despite Christ's view of equality between all truth claims, she still subscribes to a particular worldview that sees all beings as interconnected in the web of life. Spiritual experiences confirm this truth on an experiential level that external sources

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[46] Ibid., 44.
[47] Ibid., 12.
[48] Ibid., 146.
[49] Ibid., 153.

transmit on a cognitive level.[50] According to Christ, the view of the cosmos as an interconnected web of life is proclaimed and affirmed by various sources that require experiential as well as cognitive ways of knowing. This makes the ecofeminist cosmology superior to others that are based on fewer sources and confirmed exclusively through cognitive processes.[51]

Whether one might include such sources as nature and the Goddess and experiential ways of knowing would depend on that individual's judgement regarding their validity. According to Christ, the modern Western mindset influenced by Christianity does not include these sources or ways of knowing because nature is devalued and God is viewed as not relational.[52] The result is that, according to Christ's standards, the modern Western ideology, including its truth claims, are considered inferior to the Ecofeminist one.[53]

The inferiority of the modern Western worldview compared to the Ecofeminist worldview can also be seen on the values it promotes. Christ asserts that the traditional Christian idea of spirituality justified the view of a qualitative difference between men and women because men were associated with spirit and women with nature. This difference in religious value is seen by Christ as the basis for men and women's distinct social values in the modern worldview. In contrast to that, her view of an all pervading spirituality is intended to affirm the inherent equality of all living beings.[54] This view of a connection between religious and social values is the reason why Christ is attempting to change modern Western society on the basis of religion. For Christ, in order for society to

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[50] Christ, *She Who Changes*, 167-168; Christ, "Rethinking," 321.
[51] Ibid., 143, 159.
[52] See Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 5-6, 14-15; see Christ, "Symbols," 237-238.
[53] See Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 14.
[54] Christ, "Symbols," 238.

change religion also has to change to reaffirm any societal change implemented.[55] In order to change the religious value system, Christ suggests the creation of new symbol-systems that avoid the flaws of traditional religions according to the following criteria:

> (1) a symbol system must aid us in overcoming historic injustices between women and men, between races, and between peoples, (2) it must strike a deep chord in our experience; and (3) it must help us better to understand, love, and enjoy the life that has been given to us.[56]

For Christ, whether a symbol system presents a viable alternative to the patriarchal traditions depends generally on "the kind of life they permit or inhibit."[57] Christ seeks to (re)introduce the goddess-symbol as an alternative to the traditional God-symbol.[58] Referring to the deity as 'Goddess' is intended to legitimate and support feminism the way 'God' has traditionally legitimated and supported patriarchy.[59] Christ also views the Goddess symbol as promoting the view of a close human-nature-connection, which would have a positive impact on our relation to nature and could avert a possible ecological and/or nuclear crisis.[60] Christ views the Goddess symbol not only as a means to an end to implement particular changes in social attitudes, but as corresponding to ultimate reality and therefore legitimizing particular social actions.

> Perhaps what we can safely say about the symbols of God-She and the goddess is not the grandiose claim that they will ensure equal rights for women, but the more minimal – but certainly not insignificant – claim that they will help to bring the attitudes and feelings of the deep mind into harmony with feminist social and political goals, and reciprocally, that they will express and bring to articulation the feminist intuition that the struggle for equal rights is supported by the nature of reality.[61]

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[55] Christ, "Symbols," 231, 234; Christ, "Rethinking," 314.
[56] Christ, "Rethinking," 319.
[57] Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 13.
[58] Christ, "Symbols," 245.
[59] Ibid., 248-249.
[60] Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 13.
[61] Christ, "Symbols," 250.

Christ therefore seeks to implement social transformation with the introduction of her new symbol system in the form of Goddess religion. This displays her view of an essential connection of religion and society.

Starhawk – Calling for Magical Politics

Starhawk was born in 1951 as Miriam Simos in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her parents were both children of Jewish immigrants from Russia. Starhawk was raised in the Jewish tradition and later turned towards Goddess religion as a teenager because she was looking for an alternative spirituality that valued women.[62] She is well known as an ecofeminist writer and activist. As part of the group 'Reclaiming', a community of feminist witches, which she co-founded in the late 1970s in San Francisco, she teaches classes and workshops.[63]

The characteristic aspects of Starhawk's views are her emphasis on political activism and the power-energy component of her view of ultimate reality. Along with other Ecofeminists, she affirms the assumptions of the Gaia theory that the earth is a living being and that diversity is valuable.[64] However, in addition to that, she asserts that an energy flow pervades the world and can be tapped and directed towards specific purposes. This energy or power is the life-force of the world that contains everything.[65]

According to Starhawk, proponents of the Wiccan tradition, such as herself, have

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[62] "Encyclopedia of World Biography: On Starhawk," http://www.bookrags.com/biography/starhawk/; "Excerpt from Interview with Starhawk," under "What do you think drives people to investigate alternative spiritualities?" www.researchpubs.com/books/mpex_star.php (accessed Jan 13th, 2007).

[63] Nikki Bado-Fralick, "Book Reviews" *The Pomgranate 6.2* (2004): 262-263.

[64] See Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark, Magic, Sex and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), xvi; Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism," in *Healing the Wounds,* ed. Judith Plant (Philadelphia: New Society, 1989), 178.

[65] Starhawk, "Consciousness, Politics, and Magic", in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 182.

the capacity to manipulate the power of the life-force, to a certain extent. However, 'power' in witchcraft is understood differently than in the modern Western worldview. In contrast to the idea of 'power over' that Starhawk associates with the patriarchal hierarchical system, she promotes the concepts of 'power with' and 'power-from within'.[66] The power of the life-force can therefore only be used for the benefit of all living things, not for personal gain. Starhawk's ideology and ethical principles are based on the underlying foundation of the ecological/ecofeminist worldview including the life-force component.[67]

As a proponent of the Wiccan Goddess religion Starhawk's epistemology and idea of truth correspond closely to Carol P. Christ's views. Starhawk declares all human knowledge as essentially relative and incomplete. This assumption automatically entails the rejection of any hierarchical structure based on the view that some individuals possess superior knowledge. Her tradition recognizes the subjective nature of all truth claims through its deliberate anti-authoritarian structure:

> the model we need to create, has to be open to mystery, to the understanding that we don't know everything about what's going on and we don't know exactly what to do about it ... We can't define how a group or individual is going to experience [the mystery], but we can attempt to structure things so that we don't have dogmas and party lines, so we remain open to many possibilities of the sacred.[68]

Starhawk deliberately juxtaposes Goddess religion to patriarchal religions that rely on dogmas, doctrines, and authoritative religious texts. She attacks Christianity, in particular, which she views as the foundation of the modern Western worldview she

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[66] Starhawk, *Dreaming*, 3-4; Starhawk, *Webs of Power, Notes from the Global Uprising* (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2002), 6-7.
[67] See Starhawk, *Dreaming*, xvi.
[68] Starhawk, "Power, Authority, Mystery," 79.

opposes. According to Starhawk, Christianity's assumption of God as separate from the world renders nature and all living beings as essentially devoid of value. Starhawk calls the modern Western consciousness based on this Christian principle 'enstrangement' and she views the Christian image of God as male and white as legitimating sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression based on the idea that aspects some humans have in common with God legitimates their rule over others.[69]

According to Starhawk, the fact that some humans and nature in general are seen as having no inherent value in the Christian tradition translated into the modern Western view that the experiences of minority groups and experiential knowledge in general have no value.[70] Starhawk asserts that in the modern Western worldview only external sources of knowledge are recognized as valid, which "supports the illusion that truth is found outside, not within, and denies the authority of experience, the truth of the senses and the body, the truth that belongs to everyone and is different for everyone."[71] Another problem is the Christian idea that only certain individuals can access truth, which grants authority to some individuals over others.[72] The modern Western mindset based on Christianity therefore excludes the most important sources of knowledge and methods of access, according to Starhawk's ideology, which renders this established worldview inferior to the wiccan/Ecofeminist worldview.

Starhawk therefore abandons the Judeo-Christian tradition altogether rather than attempting to reform it, because she views any religion that includes a hierarchical structure and denies the value of experiential knowledge as unsuitable to form the

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[69] Ibid., 5-6.
[70] Ibid., 7. See also Starhawk, "Consciousness," 175.
[71] Starhawk, *Dreaming*, 22.
[72] Ibid., 34.

foundation for an egalitarian worldview.

> A spiritual organization with a hierarchical structure can convey only the consciousness of estrangement, regardless of what teachings or deep inspirations are at its root. The structure itself reinforces the idea that some people are inherently more worthy than others. It doesn't matter what guru we follow. The fact that we are following anyone else will prevent us from coming to know the spirit, the power, within.[73]

She further maintains that the Christian view of ultimate, external truth also results in the construction of ethical principles that have no connection to reality and enforcing the rules deduced from these ethical principles necessarily creates social injustice. "Such a story . . . places rules and authority in a realm beyond question, valued above reason or the evidence of the senses. It allows us to cause pain and suffering quite comfortably in defense of the rules."[74]

Starhawk views the modern Western worldview as a social construct and discredits it by declaring it to be "essentially false"[75], by asserting that it imposes "artificial hierarchies"[76], and that it is based on an "illusion".[77] In contrast to that she presents the ecological model of the world as a web of interconnected, interrelated beings as "reality".[78] Another reason for choosing the ecofeminist worldview over the modern Western worldview is the fact that it has "survival value."[79] Starhawk explains that the patriarchal religious ideology promotes dualistic thinking. This view, in turn, promotes hierarchical thinking, mechanism, exploitation, and oppression. In contrast to that the ecofeminist worldview promotes the idea of all beings as equally valuable and

[73] Ibid., 19.
[74] Ibid., 34.
[75] Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism," 179.
[76] Starhawk, "Consciousness," 180.
[77] Starhawk, *Dreaming*, 22.
[78] Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism," 178.
[79] Ibid., 180.

interconnected, which leads to compassion.[80] She views the influence of the patriarchal religious ideology as responsible for all social injustices present in the current socio-political system and for the environmental disaster threatening the entire world. Compassion, on the other hand, is "our only hope for the earth's survival" because it encourages conservation and social, political, and economic liberty and justice.[81]

For Starhawk, Goddess religion as well as Ecofeminism promotes the idea of immanence. She therefore acknowledges the proponents of both worldviews as partners in changing the modern Western consciousness.[82] She portrays witchcraft as a particularly suitable partner for Ecofeminism because of its ethical emphasis on political activism and its capability to provide "a source of strength and renewal of the energies that often burn out in political action."[83]

Starhawk views religion, in general, as a strong influence on social values. Therefore "true social change can only come about when the myths and symbols of our culture are themselves changed."[84] Replacing the modern Western worldview with an ecofeminist worldview therefore necessitates replacing the underlying religious ideology of the former (patriarchy, anthropocentrism based on Christianity) with a religious ideology based on a different religious tradition. Starhawk considers earth-based spiritualities that promote radical egalitarianism as most suitable for this project. Since, for Starhawk, the root of all social injustices in the current system can be identified as enstrangement, the worldview based on the idea of immanence is expected to solve all social injustices.

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[80] Ibid., 178. Starhawk, *Dreaming*, 20-23.
[81] Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism," 180, 182-184.
[82] Ibid., 174.
[83] Ibid., 176.
[84] Starhawk, "Witchcraft as Goddess Religion," 52.

Another result of Starhawk's view of the immanence of the Goddess is that this idea supports both cognitive and experiential processes as viable ways of knowing.[85] "The evidence of our senses and our experiences is evidence of the divine – the moving energy that unites us all."[86] She seems to understand cognitive knowledge as preceding spiritual experiences. "We meet to teach our bodies, our hearts, what we have come to recognize with our minds: that we do not stand separate from the cycles, from the seasons."[87] Since the Goddess is viewed as immanent in the world, all beings and nature are recognized as sources of knowledge regarding the truth about this ultimate reality.[88]

Like other Ecofeminists, Starhawk values personal experiences and symbols, stories, or metaphors that refer to personal experiences over intellectual contemplation.

> Witchcraft has always been a religion of poetry, not theology. The myths, legends, and teachings are recognized as metaphors for "That-Which-Cannot-Be-Told," the absolute reality our limited minds can never completely know. The mysteries of the absolute can never be explained – only felt or intuited. Symbols and ritual acts are used to trigger altered states of awareness, in which insights that go beyond words are revealed . . . inner knowledge literally cannot be expressed in words. It can only be conveyed by experience, and no one can legislate what insight another person may draw from any given experience.[89]

Starhawk affirms personal experience as the superior way of knowing, although one will never be able to experience ultimate reality in its entirety.[90] This results in the equal value of different experiences that reveal different aspects of reality/the Goddess.[91] The assumption that our knowledge about ultimate reality varies according to our experiences and is necessarily incomplete leads Starhawk to the conclusion that no

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[85] See Ibid., 73.
[86] Ibid., 10.
[87] Ibid., 17.
[88] Starhawk, *Dreaming*, xxvi.
[89] Starhawk, "Witchcraft as Goddess Religion," 47.
[90] Ibid., 49; Starhawk, "Immanence," 310; Starhawk, "Power, Authority, Mystery," 79; Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism," 175.
[91] Starhawk, "Witchcraft as Goddess Religion," 49-50.

individual can claim authority on the basis of superior knowledge of ultimate reality. She

describes Goddess religion as promoting this epistemology and view of truth:

> It is not a religion with a dogma, a doctrine, or a sacred book; it is a religion of experience, of ritual, of practices that change consciousness and awaken power-from-within. Beneath all, it is a religion of connection with the Goddess, who is immanent in nature, in human beings, in relationships. Because the Goddess is here, She is eternally inspirational. And so Witchcraft is eternally reinvented, changing, growing, alive.[92]

Starhawk views participation in rituals as the deepest spiritual experience.

"Feminist spirituality, earth-based spirituality, is not just an intellectual exercise, it's a

practice... In ritual we can feel our interconnections with all levels of being, and mobilize

our emotional energy and passion toward transformation and empowerment."[93] The sense

of interconnectedness evoked during the ritual includes an alternate state of awareness

that Starhawk calls the 'Deep Self'.[94] One goal of spirituality evoked in rituals is to

"reinforce that identification of self with Larger-Myriad-Self, so that it becomes not an

intellectual affirmation but a deep, constant psychological state."[95]

Like the other writers examined in this thesis, Starhawk views spiritual

experiences as transformative. However, her ideas regarding the outward expressions of

such a spiritual transformation differ from the other writers. For Starhawk, the view of

the Goddess as immanent in the world requires political action as an ethical consequence

of one's spirituality.[96] In contrast to the patriarchal religious traditions under the

influence of enstrangement, where spiritual activities are directed away from this world

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[92] Starhawk, *Dreaming*, xxvi.
[93] Starhawk, , "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism," 184.
[94] Starhawk, "Ritual as Bonding," in *Weaving the Visions,* eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 326-327.
[95] Starhawk, "Ethics and Justice in Goddess Religion," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 419.
[96] Starhawk, "Immanence," 314.

towards an alternate reality, the immanence of the Goddess calls for direct action in the here and now in the form of political activism.

> For when this world is seen as the living body of the Goddess, there is no escape, nowhere else to go, no one to save us. This earth body itself is the terrain of our spiritual growth and development, which come through our contact with the fullness of life inherent in the earth – with the reality of what's going on here. When what's going on is the poisoning and destruction of the earth, our own personal development requires that we grapple with that and do something to stop it, to turn the tide and heal the planet.[97]

The political and spiritual aspects of Starhawk's religious experiences and exercises are inseparably intertwined. This is particularly apparent in her description of rituals. For her, political rallies are ritualistic, the Goddess rituals she engages in have political purposes and often she combines both.[98] Starhawk's view of a close connection of the religious and the political is another instance of her idea of the interconnection of all things.

Starhawk's insistence on the importance of political activism shows the emphasis she places on humans' responsibility for the fate of the earth. In her view, witches fulfill a special role in the effort to create a better future for our planet.[99] Witchcraft enables people to draw on the earth's energy and ultimately use it to transform the social structure and save the environment.[100] Starhawk calls this process 'magic'.[101] This position as benders and shapers of the life-force gives witches a particular responsibility and therefore a particular status over and above others, who 'only' chose to exercise

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[97] Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality," 178.
[98] Starhawk, "Power, Authority, Mystery," 84; Starhawk, "Ritual," 326, 327, 329; Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality," 177, 184.
[99] Starhawk, "Witchcraft as Goddess Religion," 54; Starhawk, "Ethics and Justice," 421.
[100] Starhawk, "Power, Authority, Mystery," 74, 76; Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality," 175-176.
[101] Starhawk, "Consciousness," 180-183; Starhawk, "Witchcraft as Goddess Religion," 55.

wiccan/ecofeminist values through their lifestyles.[102] Witches also hold positions as teachers and Starhawk states that Wiccan rituals, in particular, help people to develop their intuitive abilities.[103] Although Starhawk professes to promote radical egalitarianism with her ecofeminist view of the interconnection of all beings and the idea of the Goddess as immanent, the role she attributes to Wiccan witches in particular might point to a system that could support an idea of differentiation.

Conclusion – All Knowledge is Valuable

The lives and ideas of the spiritual Ecofeminists examined here display many similarities. They all came from a North-American Judeo-Christian background, they underwent university education, and eventually adopted the Ecofeminist worldview, which they promote as an alternative to the modern Western worldview. All three writers operate under the assumption that religious and social values are closely connected. All three spiritual Ecofeminists therefore understand Christianity as the basis of the modern Western value system. In order to subvert the socio-political system of the status quo, which all three writers perceive as unjust, they seek to either reform this religious tradition or to abandon it altogether in favour of more suitable alternatives.

The criticism the spiritual Ecofeminists voice against the status quo displays radical social, postmodern, and religious influences; the worldview they promote is based on the science of ecology, in particular, the Gaia theory. The relation of (spiritual) Ecofeminism to other current social, intellectual, and religious developments was already discussed in chapter four. McFague's, Christ's, and Starhawk's postmodern idea that the

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[102] Starhawk, "Witchcraft and Women's Culture," 266.
[103] Ibid., 267.

modern Western worldview is a social construct, their ecological/Gaia worldview of the interconnection of all beings, and their New Age assumption that the true nature of all beings in the world is spiritual and all beings are connected through/in the same spiritual entity present aspects adopted from their contemporary influences.

A significant aspect that the spiritual Ecofeminists share with the radical Reformers is the validity of experiential knowledge/spirituality as an important component of their epistemology. However, in contrast to the radical Reformers, who justify their superior knowledge of ultimate truth on the grounds of spirituality, the spiritual Ecofeminists use the same concept to promote the view of truth as radically relative. While the radical Reformers claim authority on the basis of spirituality, the spiritual Ecofeminists propose that claiming authority on the basis of superior knowledge of the ultimately real is impossible.

These discrepancies result from the fact that the radical Reformers were more concerned with pointing out the differences of their ideologies over against others, while the spiritual Ecofeminists focused on the relationships of people/living beings who shared their ideology. Nevertheless, the radical Reformers' ecclesiologies display that they viewed the members of their group as equal. The spiritual Ecofeminimsts' criticism of the modern Western worldview shows that ideologies other than their own are seen as inferior. The proponents of both groups therefore base the qualitative equality of the members of their respective groups on spirituality and also employ this concept to claim superiority over against others.

Another difference is that seemingly unlike the radical Reformers, who continuously verified their spiritual experiences by referring to the external aspect of

Scripture, the spiritual Ecofeminists use spirituality to verify the correctness of the worldview of the interconnection of all beings. However, the spiritual Ecofeminists also rely on external sources that inform them about the structure of the world on a cognitive level, namely the Gaia theory. Cognitive knowledge about the order of the cosmos transmitted through this external source precedes any verification of this cosmology through spiritual experiences. The fact that spiritual Ecofeminists may not rely on a particular authoritative text or doctrine, but on a general worldview that their spiritual experience has to conform to, shows, that the validity of their intuited knowledge still depends on its concurrence with external standards.

Spiritual Ecofeminists claim that the modern Western worldview promotes racism, sexism, and environmental destruction. This authoritative ideology of the 20th century therefore creates an environment (socially, politically, economically, and ecologically) that does not serve the best interests of its subjects. By pointing out these social injustices, the spiritual Ecofeminists show that the modern Western worldview does not fulfil the moral obligation of a legitimate authority. They therefore challenge the modern Western worldview along the lines of Joseph Raz's dependence thesis.

Since superior knowledge is another qualification for legitimate authority, spiritual Ecofeminists effectively discredit the justification of the modern Western worldview's authority and legitimate their own by claiming that the former disregards important sources of knowledge and ways of knowing. This presents a challenge along the lines of Raz's justification thesis. According to the spiritual Ecofeminists, any ideologies that disregard particular sources of knowledge and ways of knowing are inferior to ones that are open to include as many sources and ways of knowing as

possible.

In the spiritual Ecofeminists' views inner and outer ways of knowing are closely related. Like the radical Reformers, the spiritual Ecofeminists advocate that external religious phenomena that relay cognitive knowledge of the divine, such as Scripture, the Gaia theory, symbols, metaphors, preaching, teaching, and rituals also always contain internal/spiritual aspects one might experience at the same time as the external aspect is engaged. The central tenet of the spiritual Ecofeminist's epistemologies is that internal and external aspects can only function properly and to their full extent in conjunction. This view is similar to the one the radical Reformers promoted when they insisted on the necessity of spirituality for the proper understanding of Scripture, preaching, and rituals.

Both groups base their authority and the authority of their views on knowledge ascertained through spiritual experiences and demand ideological change that allows for the inclusion of inner ways of knowing. The fact that, in contrast to the established ideologies that favour cognitive knowledge, access to experiential knowledge is viewed as all inclusive, is expected by all six writers to result in a more egalitarian structure of society where all people/living beings are qualitatively equal.

Chapter 6: Knowing – The Heart of the Matter

Examining the radical Reformers' and spiritual Ecofeminists' views reveals many underlying similarities between the assumptions of the members of both groups and the political strategies they employed. All six writers examined here aligned themselves with the socially disadvantaged parts of the population. They viewed these groups as oppressed by the elite that was considered to be qualitatively distinct. All writers viewed social values as based on religious values, prompting them to attack their respective society's underlying religious ideology in an attempt to eliminate the social injustices they perceived in the system. Both groups developed an alternative (religious) ideology, which they viewed as promoting (radical) egalitarianism. And both groups sought to discredit the dominant (religious) worldview by attacking its epistemology as inferior and claimed superior authority for their own worldview by including experiential knowledge as a valid way of knowing.

This attempt to replace the dominant religious ideology with an alternative religious ideology constitutes an ideological revolution. In accordance with Jack A. Goldstone's definition of revolution, the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists sought to establish the authority of their own worldviews, which they perceived as just orders, in place of the dominant worldviews that were seen as inherently unjust. The purpose of this process was to transform the (political) institutions/society. Altering the factors that constituted justification for (political) authority was the means by which the proponents of both groups sought to gain legitimate authority for their worldviews.

According to Joseph Raz's theory of authority, the qualifications for legitimate authority consist of superior knowledge and ethical superiority. The radical Reformers

and spiritual Ecofeminists as well as their opponents claimed authority for their respective ideologies according to these guidelines. The radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists sought to discredit the ideologies of their opponents by claiming that they were ethically inferior. They substantiated this claim by portraying their proponents' lifestyle as corrupt and by proclaiming that their ideologies sanctioned actions that were destructive and discriminating. They also attacked the claim of superior knowledge put forth by the authoritative institutions/ideologies. The emphasis both groups placed on spirituality plays a significant role regarding this particular qualifying factor for legitimate authority.

The six revolutionaries' attack on the dominant institution/ideology of their time can be reduced to an attack on an epistemology that disregards experiential knowledge and only considers cognitive knowledge as valuable. This general aim found practical expression in their emphasis on spirituality over outer religion and attaches certain social and political attributes to both concepts. The concepts of *outer religion* and *spirituality* can be associated with the two different ways of knowing. The popular view of religion as associated with hierarchy, organization, institutionalization and external phenomena aligns this concept with cognitive knowledge obtained through external sources. Spiritual experiences that bestow knowledge through an individual's extra-sensory perception and emotional responses are associated with experiential knowledge.

The main point of criticism the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists raised against the established ideologies was their underlying assumption that some people had exclusive access to knowledge and that only cognitive knowledge was valid. In the late medieval period knowledge of right and wrong, which determined salvation,

presented the ultimate query and access to this information relayed through Scripture was granted only to the pope, who was viewed as directly linked to God, according to Church doctrine. Knowledge about right and wrong could also be obtained through training in the Church doctrines established by the pope and council, to which the clergy had exclusive access. This privilege predisposed the members of this estate to superior knowledge. According to the radical feminists, in mid-20th-century North America access to knowledge depended on one's rational capabilities and increased according to one's level of training/education. For knowledge about the cosmos, in particular, one relied on the sciences.

The pope's claim of a qualitative difference between clergy and laity due to differentiated access to divine grace turned into one of the central assumptions of the Church's religious ideology justified by the pope's position of authority. Radical feminists discerned the assumption of a qualitative difference between men and women based on the Greco-Roman and Christian idea that men were spiritually, morally, and intellectually superior to women as a central aspect of the modern Western worldview. According to the feminists, in the modern period, up to the 20th century, one's access to knowledge depended primarily on gender. Training and education, became secondary factors. In the cases of the ideologies the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists attacked, superior knowledge, which justified legitimate authority, therefore depended on inherent qualities and access to training.

In both cases, aside from the inherent qualitative differences, cognitive knowledge was seen as the only valid way of knowing that could justify legitimate authority. By excluding experiential ways of knowing, exclusivity of access to knowledge was

guaranteed. According to the opponents of the system, this situation necessarily led to a hierarchical structure of society/institutions, where one's position depended on one's predisposition and level of training.

The radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists sought to subvert the dominant worldview that rendered individuals as inherently qualitatively distinct and recognized only cognitive ways of knowing as valid by affirming the validity of experiential ways of knowing in the form of personal experiences and spirituality. The inclusion of personal experience/spirituality as a valid way of knowing in their epistemology granted access to knowledge to all individuals. This has social and political implications. When access to knowledge is not exclusive in any way, superior knowledge is impossible to attain on an individual level. Equal access to knowledge therefore eliminates the possibility of any person claiming legitimate authority within the group that subscribes to this epistemology. One function of spirituality can therefore be understood as promoting egalitarianism within a system.

Another political aspect of spirituality is displayed when the worldview that includes it in its epistemology competes with worldviews with differing epistemologies. Since spirituality presents a possible way of knowing, it contains the justification for a claim to authority. The radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists utilized this aspect of spirituality. Both groups declared worldviews that disregarded the possibility of experiential knowledge as inferior because important ways of knowing were excluded from their epistemologies. Both groups could therefore claim legitimate authority for their worldview over against others on the basis of spirituality, even if within their worldviews the idea of legitimate authority was eliminated by the same concept that

justified it over against outsiders.

By asserting the value of both ways of knowing and by insisting on the amalgamation of cognitive and experiential knowledge in their own epistemologies, the writers inadvertently made a statement about the ideal relation between outer religion and spirituality. Although both concepts are distinct, they need each other to form viable religious ideologies that can serve as comprehensive foundations for social structures and values. All six writers confirm the significance of spirituality to grant subjective meaning and relevance to the general ethical principles and moral guidelines established through cognitive processes. The writers also acknowledge the importance of relaying information about the religious ideology (e.g. the order of the cosmos) on a cognitive level that precedes corresponding spiritual experiences. The spiritual experiences, in turn, confirm the cognitive knowledge about the religious ideology. Outer religion and spirituality are therefore inseparably intertwined in the conceptions of all six writers, whether they regard the external religious phenomena they utilize as such or not.

This view of an inherent relation of inner and outer aspects of religion is the cause of the writers' turn to spirituality in situations where outer religion/institutionalization appears to have eclipsed the significance of inner experiences. The fact that over the last 40 years or so popular interest in spirituality is rising therefore points to a popular perception of religious over-institutionalization. This phenomenon mirrors the developments of the early modern period where increasing emphasis on the spiritual aspects of the sacraments criticized the lack of meaning perceived in Church rituals.

The fact that in the cases of both the radical Reformers and the spiritual Ecofeminists these anti-institutional sentiments extended beyond religious institutions (it

affected education and, in the 20th century, also science) and resonated in other social and intellectual movements of their time justifies the claim of a general popular dissatisfaction with the established institutions in both periods. The common criticism voiced by all groups against the obsoleteness of the institutions' underlying assumptions and against their disregard of individuals' unique values, needs, and interests presented direct challenges of the institutions' position of authority. The general rejection of association with institutions, which, in religious terms, led to a turn towards non-instituionalized forms of religion, shows that parts of the general population in both time periods sought ways to establish order and meaning in their lives outside the established institutions.

However, neither the radical Reformers nor the spiritual Ecofeminists altogether rejected all aspects of traditionalism. They therefore retained features on which future institutions could be erected. The fact that neither group completely rejected the concept of institutionalization, even though they opposed the established institutions, can be seen in their recognition of the significance of external religious phenomena and their references to tradition.

In contrast to the worldviews they opposed, both groups claimed that experiential knowledge was a valid way of knowing. All six writers used the same sources formerly used exclusively to obtain cognitive knowledge in order to justify the inclusion of experiential knowledge. In the case of the radical Reformers, their interpretations of Scripture confirmed the value of spiritual experiences and therefore varied from the interpretations of other theologians that did not acknowledge spiritual experiences as valid. Nevertheless, they all viewed Scripture as the authoritative text of Christianity,

according to which all ethical guidelines were established.

In the case of the spiritual Ecofeminists, they and their opponents both placed their greatest confidence in science as the discipline that relayed knowledge about the nature and structure of the cosmos. Modern scientists excluded experiential knowledge from scientific investigation. Ecofeminists used spiritual experiences to confirm the cognitive knowledge about the cosmos obtained through the science of ecology. Spiritual experiences were thereby justified as valid ways of knowing because they conformed to scientific findings.

By using the same sources to justify the validity of experiential knowledge that were formerly used to exclude this way of knowing, the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists retained important traditional aspects that granted a certain respectability to their views, while directly challenging their opponents with misinterpretation of these sources. The authority of the sources, however, remained untouched. This maneuver, combined with references to older, purer traditions gives the impression of participation in an order that has greater historical standing and therefore validity than the one being opposed. In spite of the radical Reformers' and the spiritual Ecofeminists' anti-institutional sentiments that were directed against the traditional foundation of the established worldview, the concept of tradition was still used to justify the attempts of both groups to re-structure society. Retaining traditional aspects in their ideologies/epistemologies lent their projects credibility and respectability.

The non-institutionalized forms of religion proposed by the radical Reformers and spiritual Ecofeminists therefore already carry the seeds of institutionalization within them. This condition presents the prerequisite for perpetuating the cyclical progression

from institutionalization to over-institutionalization, to rebellion against the institutions and re-establishment of new institutions as the rebels' religious ideology gains respectability. This view of a circular progression between the establishment of institutions and their rejection renders the current increase of the popularity of spirituality as part of a cycle, not a unique phenomenon as proponents of the spiritual revolution claim assert.

Detecting similarities between phenomena and possible cyclical relations can only occur when one employs a wide historical perspective. Such a viewpoint illuminates the examined phenomena differently and attributes them with greater significance than a limited historical perspective is capable of doing. The view of a connection between the late medieval developments in Germany and the occurrences of the late 20th and early 21st century in North America is helpful in understanding each historically distinct phenomenon better. It also allows for the formulation of more general assumptions regarding concepts such as outer religion and spirituality than the examination of single phenomena permits.

Viewing outer religion and spirituality as separate entities, thereby disregarding their interplay and their necessary connection, can also have problematic consequences. When secularization theorists and other sociologists treat the two aspects of religion as independent phenomena, questionable conclusions, such as the lack of social influence of religion in contemporary society, are the result. The fact that interest in spirituality is on the upswing at this point in history does not diminish the social influence of religion further. It only portrays the temporary casting away of its institutional restrains through an emphasis on spirituality, which, too, is an aspect of religion. Actual rejection of

religion would cause people to abandon this concept altogether by moving towards secularization, not by changing emphasis from one aspect of religion to another.

The examination of the spiritual Ecofeminists' views displays that this contemporary group that emphasizes spirituality uses this concept to attempt an ideological revolution that seeks to re-structure society. This shows that some form of religion continues to be viewed as having social and political influence and because inner and outer religion each contain certain political and social aspects, some form of relationship between religion, society, and politics will likely continue.

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