

Towards a Christian Ecofeminist Theology of Water

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Abstract

My thesis aims to develop a Christian theology of water within ecofeminist theological perspectives. To do so, it uses the lenses of anti-dualism, non-hierarchy, and non-patriarchy in order to address the main problematic causes for the global water crisis and the theological responses which have been offered. My thesis contributes to an understanding that traditional Christian theology has been influenced by dualism, hierarchy, and patriarchy, all of which highlight the unequal relationships between subject and object, humanity and nature, and men and women. Humanity, men, and the affluent have been central to the problems caused by these relationships and I refer to them as “subjects”, while water, women, and vulnerable living beings are considered to be “objects”. Many of those who use water have typically claimed the right to use far more than they need. Their embedded self-centredness and disregard for nature and other living beings have caused not only a severe water crisis but have also created a number of inequalities. Therefore, my thesis argues for the necessity of critical views that appraise and reflect on the current water crisis. I demonstrate how Christians have overly focused on the spiritual meanings of water in comparison with physical water. By applying ecofeminist theological perspectives, I reinterpret two biblical stories – the Samaritan woman and Jesus in John 4:1-42 and Noah’s flood in Genesis 6-9 – and also the sacrament of baptism. This study leads to a focus on life-giving water which is interpreted as the interconnection between physical water and the spiritual meanings of water. In so doing, both the integrity of creation together with cosmological salvation are highlighted in Christian theology. While some Christians place too much focus on the afterlife and on personal salvation (associated with the ‘spiritual’ meanings of water), I argue for abundant life on earth, and for water-honouring faith, which highlights the belief in life-giving water in both physical and spiritual meanings. This belief is what churches need to pursue in the water crisis era, and the reason why I address practical Christian responses to this issue by examining a range of international and ecumenical church documents. Consequently, my thesis intends to motivate a re-examination of traditional Christian theological texts in the water crisis era, as well as stimulate support for the development of an ecofeminist theology of water.

Declaration

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Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to my Mother SIM and my Father KIM
for their endless love, prayers, and support throughout my pursuit for education.

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About the Author

I am interested in ecological justice issues, and in particular, in how ecumenical churches can work together for ecological justice. I completed my Bachelor in Theology (minor in Christian Education) and Master of Divinity at Hanshin University in South Korea, where I studied *Minjung Theology* (a form of liberation theology in my context), ecological Christian education, and feminist theology. I wrote a dissertation about how to participate in God's mission (*Mission Dei*) in a range of Christian education contexts for children. My research interests were broadly focused on social justice issues and practical responses to these in churches.

After completing my Master of Divinity, I worked at the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in Thailand as a youth intern, and after my Ordination in the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea in 2016, I studied at the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Switzerland. As a result of these experiences with international ecumenical organisations, I became very interested in making my own contributions to the ecumenical movement. My interest has not been confined to my local church or denomination; instead, it has been more concerned with how local and global churches can work together. This led me to complete a Master of Theological Studies at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, where I studied with womanist theologians and also began to focus on my research area – eco-theology, in particular, in relation to water justice. I wrote a dissertation exploring contextual water injustice issues in South Korea, which was about the economics and politics of the use and abuse of water resources, and the eco-theological responses as one of the significant missions for global and local Churches.

All of my experience and studies have led me to do my current research on a theology of water. The studies on feminist theology and eco-theology resulted in a growing fascination with ecofeminist theological perspectives. I hope this PhD thesis might encourage ecumenical churches to work together towards water justice.

Chapter 1 Introduction

My research is a theological response to one of the most significant issues in the 21st century, and which I term a 'glocal water crisis' that takes into consideration all varieties of water crises not only globally but also in local contexts.¹ Water crises are occurring worldwide and many Christian theologians and churches are concerned about this. They have attempted to offer theological reflections, suggestions and statements outlining the nature of the crisis and promoting water justice. However, the responses to water and water justice are not yet well organised or developed in Christian theology. This situation calls for specific theological responses to water crises which in its fullest form might be termed 'a theology of water'.

My thesis seeks to develop a theology of water within a framework of ecofeminist theological perspectives which pursue anti-dualistic, non-hierarchical, and non-patriarchal worldviews. Self-evidently, ecofeminist theological perspectives enable us to recognise the value of continuity and inter-connectedness between a variety of relationships (e.g., between water and all living beings on earth, and between women's suffering and water crises). Using these perspectives, I examine three different theological contexts in which water plays a prominent role: a) water crises (and water injustice) in a specific context – South Korea, which is my home country; b) biblical stories (John 4:1-42 and Genesis 6-9) and the theological tradition of baptism; and c) secular, ecclesiastical, and ecumenical responses to water justice. Each is critically evaluated by using ecofeminist theological methodologies (chapter 2).

These analyses highlight four significant elements. First, they help us to recognise problematic situations in relation to water crises in general: in other words, how water is used and misused in contemporary societies. In this chapter, the examination of the South Korean context relating to water and Protestant churches allows us to identify a close relationship between the

¹ Instead of 'global', contemporary theologians use other terms such as 'glocal' and 'transnational'. Kang, a feminist theologian from South Korea, expresses the proactive combination between global and local contexts by using 'glocal' which embraces "trans-national, trans-regional, trans-cultural and trans-religious". Like her, I use the term 'glocal' in order to highlight their co-relationship throughout my thesis. Namsoon Kang, "Re-constructing Asian feminist theology: toward a glocal feminist theology in an era of neo-Empire(s)," in *Christian Theology in Asia*, ed. Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 222.

contextual (historical) background and the contemporary issue. Second, they allow us to discern what difficulties are faced by those wishing to develop and implement a theology of water. Third, they offer an alternative view of water justice on the basis of a critical analysis of the ecofeminist theological perspective. Revisiting biblical interpretations and traditional Christian theology is meaningful as this allows me to demonstrate the importance of ecofeminist theological perspectives (chapter 4 and 5). These are highlighted as a significant view which enables us to find a new way in which we relate to water, all living beings, and God without discriminative or dualistic approaches. Fourth, they make recommendations to the most important Christian and secular organisations that have already demonstrated a concern for and about water and I critique their positions as a part of my thesis (chapter 6).

Consequently, my overall contribution to knowledge is to offer a realistic and contemporary theology of water for glocal societies today. Ecofeminist theological perspectives have enabled me to identify ways in which Christian theology must be reinterpreted in order to develop transformative recognition and action that lead to genuine water justice. Based on these perspectives, my study ends by articulating the significance of a 'right' awareness and 'right' practices that result in the protection of life-giving water. Christian theology is closely related to contemporary issues and human behaviours, thus it is important to offer an alternative way that the world should follow. For this study, it is vital that the recognition of current glocal water crisis issues and a range of theological responses are addressed. Therefore, I explore how serious the current glocal water crisis is, as well as current water injustice issues in our societies, and in this chapter, I outline the various theological responses that can be made: in brief, a theology of water.

1.1 Where are we? The Glocal Water Crisis and Water Injustice

Glocal water crises are getting severe. Chamberlain summarises them as follows:

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the waters around me and around the globe face unprecedented challenges – pollution from agriculture, industry, and human waste; oceans heating up and rising due to global warming; growing populations with increasing

demands for clean water and more food grown through irrigation; expanding industries discharging waste into streams and rivers and ultimately the sea; increasing salinity of fresh water; blockage of the natural flow of rivers and dams or diversions for other needs, often preventing once-rushing rivers from reaching the seas.²

The water crisis has been influenced and caused by the unequal use and abuse of limited water. Guebert makes a compelling point when he states: “As a result of an increasing human population, higher-than-ever per capita resource demands, and widespread improper use of freshwater resources, humans have induced a global water crisis”.³ It might be argued that this water crisis has been influenced by the increase in the worldwide population. However, the most fundamental reason is the specific types of actions of people who use water as much as they want. For example, enforced privatisation causes a number of water-related conflicts such as water price inflation and water quality degradation.⁴ The nonchalant attitude to wasting large quantities of water has caused a severe water crisis, together with a crisis of pollution.⁵ However, it is difficult to say that the rich are the only culprits, since much depends on whether individuals, whatever their wealth or lack of it, are conscious of the need to solve the water crisis and put measures in place to ensure this happens.

It is necessary to recognise the fact that the global water crisis is closely connected to anthropocentric (human-centred) and androcentric (male-centred) perspectives which support a separation between male and female and between humanity and nature. “The impacts of water insecurity and injustices are clearly gendered, where women and girls in much of the global South spend countless hours fetching water for productive and reproductive needs”.⁶ Water and

² Gary L. Chamberlain, *Troubled Waters: Religion, Ethics, and the Global Water Crisis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 2-3.

³ Michael Guebert, “Water for Life: Global Freshwater Resources,” in *Keeping God’s Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective*, ed. Noah J. Toly and Daniel I. Block (Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), 144.

⁴ Chamberlain, *Troubled Waters*, 117-18.

⁵ Johana Herrera Arango, Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos and Elias Helo Molina, “Murky waters: the impact of privatizing water use on environmental degradation and the exclusion of local communities in the Caribbean,” *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 38, no. 1 (2022): 167-68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07900627.2021.1931052>.

⁶ Farhana Sultana and Alex Loftus, “The right to water: prospects and possibilities,” in *The Right to Water: Politics, governance and social struggles*, ed. Farhana Sultana and Alex Loftus (Abingdon, Oxon: Earthscan, 2012), 8-9.

women are viewed and treated as if they were an inferior presence. They are controlled by the same power of the majorities who have control over nature and of men who have power over women's bodies. Although both water and women have the ability to prosper, it is a common tendency to denigrate both the value of water and women's knowledge in relation to access to water. This tendency stops us from thinking more comprehensively and expansively about the equal distribution of water.

I identify what ecological injustice (including water injustice) is because critical thinking about ecological injustice helps me to establish the exact nature of ecological justice more firmly. The term 'injustice' is related to sin, which in traditional Christian theology generally represents relational problems, with the result that a healthy relationship with God, other living beings and this earth cannot be sustained. While many Christians still focus only on personal sins, it is important to recognise not only personal sins, but also social sins and structural sins. McFague argues that both the structure and action which cause poverty and destruction of our planet's ecosystems are evil; these can be called structural sins.⁷ Moe-Lobed encourages Christians to have "the necessity in ethics and morality of honing skills in seeing structural sin".⁸ She demonstrates "structural injustice as structural sin" in more detail: "Racism, classism, sexism, and imperialism are examples of social structural sin. The increasing destructive power of humankind, seen most blatantly in the buildup of nuclear weaponry and in destructive climate change, calls for probing structural sin and its power more deeply".⁹ Sin can account for the fact that the global water crisis is "doing irreversible harm to the integrity of creation".¹⁰ Churches have tended to be silent or indifferent about injustice problems. Indeed, some churches aggravate ecological destruction by focusing on the development of churches and the accumulation of wealth. These social and ecological injustices and sins stop living beings from

⁷ Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 94.

⁸ Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 14.

⁹ Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 58-59.

¹⁰ Susan Kim and Maike Gorsboth, "Introduction," in *Ripples in the Water*, ed. Susan Kim and Maike Gorsboth (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015), xii.

flourishing; this is also linked to hierarchies, discontinuity, and disconnection between a variety of relationships on earth. (I will explore this more fully in chapter 3).

Water Justice Hub, an initiative for water justice research, describes the cycle of water injustice in relation to the water crisis: “The crisis of water availability and access, and degradation of water resources, perpetuates a cycle of water injustice when: (1) people do not have water access to meet their needs (physical, social, economic and cultural); (2) there is inadequate recognition and protection of these needs (including cultural practices); (3) water governance is not inclusive and lacks procedural justice, especially in relation to vulnerable people; and (4) knowledge is withheld, obscured or marginalised to maintain the status quo”.¹¹ This statement stresses the problematic issues based on water injustice very effectively. It leads to the question of why this situation has not been addressed if people have attempted to regard water as just a commodity. Smith highlights five specific types of an ‘economic exploitation of water’: i) water marketing, ii) private provision of water and sanitation services, iii) commercial water bottling, iv) water pricing/user fees, and v) water speculation.¹² This tendency devalues water which is a fundamental basic need for life’s ongoing existence on earth, and further contributes to ecological destruction by abusing water. These situations are understood to be a result of water injustice— inequality and discrimination.

It should be noted that water injustice affects low-income communities and vulnerable beings such as women and communities of colour. For example, women and girls suffer from water injustice more than men and boys in some places where women have tended to play a key role in caring for their family. Vanderwarker argues that “water distribution systems are generally financed and constructed at a local level, with some federal support, but such funding (primarily in the form of loans and grants for infrastructure construction) has a series of barriers for low-income water systems and has traditionally failed to address the underlying persistence of water

¹¹ “Special Issue ‘Water Justice: pathways for voice, truth, reconciliation and inclusion’,” Water Justice Hub, accessed 16 August, 2021, <https://www.waterjusticehub.org/special-issue/>.

¹² Susan Lea Smith, “14. Developing an ecumenical framework for water justice,” in *Global Water Ethics: Towards a Global Ethics Charter*, ed. Rafael Ziegler and David Groenfeldt (OX: Routledge, 2017), 250-51.

problems in low-income communities and communities of colour”.¹³ This means that water injustice is connected not only to economic disparity but also to racism in relation to poverty. It is well-researched by a number of scholars and activists in the U.S. where a variety of people have ancestors from different continents (e.g., African Americans and Hispanics). Nanda states that water injustice causes water insecurity “pollution, overuse of water, travel distance to water sources, drought, and floods”.¹⁴ These threaten our life on earth: “To deny water is to deny life. To pollute water is to pollute life”.¹⁵ Water injustice results from the lack of flowing water (river) and the lack of provision of fresh water for all living beings. This situation affects local areas where consequent local water crises go on to cause even more serious crises. Global and local are not separated; they are connected and interact with each other. My home country – South Korea—like other most developed nations of the world, usually treats water as a consumable material. In the next section, I examine some of the water crises that have occurred in South Korea and the associated challenges and problematic issues that have arisen in churches within that context.

1.2 Water Crisis and Church Issues in South Korea

This section examines the current situation of the local water crisis and responses to it made by the Christian church in South Korea. Although the water crisis in South Korea is not as serious as in other countries such as Bangladesh, India and South Africa, South Korea has certainly struggled with a number of water-crisis issues. “Korea is among the few OECD countries under medium-high water stress”.¹⁶ In order to overcome the water stress, the Korean Water Resources Corporation (K-water) has worked on the basis of a world trend.¹⁷ It has published the *Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)* report recommending “a process which promotes the co-

¹³ Amy Vanderwarker, “Water and Environmental Justice,” in *A Twenty-First Century US Water Policy*, ed. Juliet Christian-Smith and Peter H. Gleick with Heather Cooley, Lucy Allen, Amy Vanderwarker, and Kate A. Berry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 59.

¹⁴ Ved P. Nanda, “The Right to Water under International Law and Environmental Racism,” in *Gonna Trouble The Water: Ecojustice, Water, and Environmental Racism*, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2021), 60.

¹⁵ Miguel A. De La Torre, “Introduction,” in *Gonna Trouble The Water: Ecojustice, Water, and Environmental Racism*, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2021), xiv.

¹⁶ OECD, *Managing the Water-Energy-Land-Food Nexus in Korea: Policies and Governance Options* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018), 44, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264306523-6-en>.

¹⁷ Ministry of Environment and K-water 환경부와 한국수자원공사, *물과 미래* [Water and Future] (Republic of Korea: Ministry of Environment and K-water, 2022), 46.

ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems”.¹⁸ This approach helps to improve water quality and save ecosystems on the national and international stage, yet it is necessary to lead people to change their habits from life-killing culture to life-saving culture at both individual and structural levels. In reality, many Korean Christians and Christian churches are not concerned with matters of water justice. Looking at this context allows us to understand what the problematic issues in a local area are, as well as further afield to a global context, because a local area is necessarily a part of the global world. Consequently, this study contributes to the recognition of the importance of continuity and togetherness between global, regional, national, and denominational approaches and local churches.

1.2.1 Water Injustice in South Korea

Water justice has been one of the important issues in Korean society. However, people have not recognised its significance as a life-giving gift; they have mostly regarded water as a material which they can buy according to their need since water is commercialised.¹⁹ Although the global water crisis has been and continues to be a serious issue, many Koreans have historically been indifferent to this issue. They simply start to be concerned about it when they (and/or their close neighbours) face a water crisis in their life. This indifference has also been apparent in churches. However, more recently, churches have gradually been developing an interest in it, as well as in ecological justice.²⁰ Therefore, this section explores how churches have worked for water justice in the Korean context. I do not deal with all the specific issues in relation to the local water crisis, rather I focus on a big project – the “Four Major Rivers Restoration”, which has resulted in the majority of Koreans being concerned about the water crisis. My research highlights the current

¹⁸ Global Water Partnership, “Integrated water Resources Management” (TAC Background Papers No. 4, Stockholm: GWP Secretariat, 2000), 22, <https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/4986/TACNO4.PDF?sequence=1>.

¹⁹ Se-Woong Koo, “Environment and Korean Consumer Ethics (or Lack Thereof),” *KOREA EXPOSÉ*, 14 Jun, 2022, <https://koreaexpose.com/water-shortage-psy-concert-consumer-ethics-in-korea/>.

²⁰ Giyeong Choi 최기영, “‘기후위기? 관심 있지만 절박하지 않아’ 교회, 기후·환경 문제 어떻게 접근해야 ...” [‘Climate crisis? Churches are interested in this issue, but they are not desperate’ How churches approach the climate and ecological issues...], *KUKMINILBO 국민일보*, 21 Jun, 2022, <https://m.kmib.co.kr/view.asp?arcid=0017199911>.

activities of Korean churches in promoting water justice, as well as raising awareness both of issues from the immediate past and the present.

As is taking place in other countries which are concerned about the global water crisis, Koreans are considering crucial issues relating to water. Koreans and churches in South Korea have been seriously concerned about water crisis issues since “Four Major Rivers Restoration” which was a massive government project from 2008 to 2012.²¹ This project had three specific tasks and five objectives:

The Four Major River Restoration Project consists of three sets of projects: (1) Main projects – the Han, Nakdong, Geum and Yeongsan rivers revitalisation projects; (2) projects on the 14 tributaries of the four major rivers; and (3) refurbishment for other smaller-sized streams. The project has five key objectives: (1) securing abundant water resources against water scarcity; (2) implementing comprehensive flood control; (3) improving water quality and restoring ecosystems; (4) creation of multipurpose spaces for local residents; and 5) regional development centred on rivers.²²

The government proposed this project as a green growth project, yet it is necessary to ask these questions: Was this project primarily for the restoration of rivers and in the interests of humanity? Was it a real ‘green’ growth project? The responses to these questions contribute to my overall conclusions in my thesis.

There have been various views about the Four Major Rivers Restoration project. Some scholars have attempted to present the current outcomes of the project in positive ways.²³ However, most ecologists and environmental activists have argued for the importance of flowing water and of supporting the circulation of natural water. They point out that weirs (low barriers which are

²¹ This project was planned and proceeded by former president Lee Myung-Bak Administrations; it is interesting that Lee, a conservative politician, is an elder of a conservative church. This fact encourages conservative church members to support his government on the basis of strong bond – the group of Christians and Conservative.

²²Yoon Jung Cha, Myung-Pil Shim and Seung Kyum Kim, “The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project,” (paper presented at UN-Water International Conference: Water in the Green Economy in Practice: Towards Rio+20, Zaragoza, Spain, 3-5 October 2011), 2, https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/green_economy_2011/pdf/session_8_water_planning_cases_korea.pdf.

²³ Cha, Shim and Kim, “The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project,” 9-10.

built across a river in order to control or direct the flow of water) cause negative impacts on the water quality and its circulation. “According to the annual report on the generation of algae (algal bloom) and response, water quality problems such as T-N²⁴ and T-P²⁵ increases and algal blooms have occurred in the Nakdong River Basin every year since 2013, lasting for up to 161 days in 2015, when the country suffered its most severe drought”.²⁶ Building weirs and restoring a proper amount of water seemed to be an effective way of protecting unpredictable drought seasons in a superficial way. However, in real life the human control of its natural flow results in yet more unpredictable situations and, eventually, a serious water (ecological) crisis. Lah, Park and Cho reveal mixed outcomes in three different effects: technical, economic and social.²⁷ They find positive impacts on social aspects in terms of the increase of water leisure activities and of the number of visitors, yet they cannot identify any significant positive impacts in technical and economic aspects because of the extreme negative impacts.²⁸ In other words, their conclusions confirm that the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project has been unsuccessful in its aims. First, the project has been overly focused on humanity, and under-focused on water itself and nature; and second, the ineffective, further negative outcome of the project cannot be hidden. Eventually, focusing on economic recovery and economic vitalisation contributes to the loss of both the ultimate hope (economic growth) and superficial hope (ecological care) of the project.

Therefore, the Four Major Rivers Restoration project proposes three important lessons: a) water injustice is mainly caused by human-centredness and dualistic (subject and object) perspectives. Too great a focus on economic growth and development easily destroys this earth and pollutes natural resources; b) it is necessary to set a limit on human activities on nature because water is a resource that people should not overuse and abuse freely; and c) Christians are called to revisit why water justice is important on the basis of Christian faith and how to work for water justice

²⁴ Total Nitrogen

²⁵ Total Phosphors

²⁶ Jiwan Lee, Yonggwon Lee, Soyoung Woo, Wonjin Kim and Seongjoon Kim, “Evaluation of Water Quality Interaction by Dam and Weir Operation Using SWAT in the Nakdong River Basin of South Korea,” *Sustainability* 12, no. 17 (2020): 6845, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12176845>.

²⁷ T. J. Lah, Yeoul Park and Yoon Jik Cho, “The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project of South Korea: An Assessment of Its Process, Program, and Political Dimensions,” *Journal of Environment & Development* 24, no. 4 (2015): 384-88.

²⁸ Lah, Park and Cho, “The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project of South Korea,” 385.

as a life-giving mission. These challenges are closely connected to responses to global ecumenical movements on water justice which are addressed in chapter 6. Around the globe, as technologies advance, humanity seeks convenient and effective ways of controlling water, while at the same time ignoring whether their actions are primarily life-killing or life-abundant-making. I demonstrate that it is possible to control our earth by human power. Hence, the Four Major Rivers Restoration project can be regarded as one of the specific examples. It seems that humanity has the ability to restore rivers by reconstructing the river systems. However, this is not a sustainable way of solving the water (environmental) injustice issues. Instead, this kind of project creates even more problematic issues in direct contradiction to the expectations before the project was embarked on. Chang expresses this arrogance with the word “almighty” in his argument that humanity dominates nature. ‘Almighty’ is usually used for the characteristics of God, yet by using this word for humans, their human-centredness is deliberately highlighted.²⁹ It is also connected to the term “dominion” in Genesis 1:28, which could be easily misunderstood as humans exercising dominion over nature.

Based on a division between a variety of church denominations, Korean churches have adopted different opinions about and actions on the Four Major Rivers Restoration project. In South Korea, there are two different representative Christian organisations: the Christian Council of Korea (CCK) which is a conservative organisation and the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK) which is a progressive organisation. Both have a significantly different view of history and of their relationships with North Korea, and, finally, of the river project.³⁰ Their different stances affect many of the local churches which are involved. It is interesting that most conservative Christians adopt either a passive attitude towards the government project (resulting in an indifference to

²⁹ Yoon-Jae Chang 장윤재, “강물이 흘러 바다로 가거라” – ‘전능하신(?) 인간’과 ‘끽끽 앓는 하나님’ [“Let the River flow to the sea”: Almighty(?) Man and Groaning God], *Theological Thought Institute 신학사상* 153 (Summer 2011): 114.

³⁰ Shin-Young Kim 김신영 and Sun-Jin Yun 윤순진, “4대강 사업을 둘러싼 개신교 내부의 입장 차이에 대한 비판적 담론분석 보수 개신교계의 침묵과 동조를 중심으로” [A Critical Discourse Analysis on Differences of Opinion among Protestant Groups Surrounding the Four Major Rivers Project: Focusing on Silence and Support of Conservative Protestant Churches], *The Korean Association For Environmental Sociology ECO 한국사회학연구* ECO 17 no. 2 (2013): 176.

social issues) or they support the project (evidenced by strong support for the government).³¹ They do not regard it as a dangerous life-killing work. Rather, they support this project as a green (life-giving) work by approving the argument of the government.³² On the other hand, the NCKC and most progressive denominations opposed the project. They actively attended a boycott and worshipped and prayed together in order to emphasise the need for protection of the four rivers from the disastrous project.³³ For example, my church denomination in Korea – the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) – has established the ‘Ecology Community Movement Center (ECMC)’ to work together for this social and ecological issue.³⁴ A number of progressive theologians and ministers have highlighted in conferences, in the river prayer pilgrimage programme, and in articles, sermons or prayers, the significance of repentance on account of the destruction of nature and the search for water justice. They were also in close communication with other religious groups and Roman Catholic Churches in Korea which were mostly united to work for water justice in comparison to a variety of responses of Protestant Churches.³⁵ Although these efforts could not stop the government’s process, this tragic event has become a trigger for (some) Korean Christians to recognise the significance of water justice and the importance of working together in order to achieve it.

The impact of the Four Major Rivers Restoration project is still ongoing. It is therefore hard to articulate any concrete views of either its positive or negative aspects. However, it is clear that the project had problematic factors such as human-centredness, dualistic and hierarchical activity between humanity and the river (water), and was very-focused on economic ‘growth’ rather than on ‘green’ recovery. Interestingly, these can be closely linked to the problematic

³¹ Kim and Yun, “A Critical Discourse Analysis on Differences of Opinion among Protestant Groups Surrounding the Four Major Rivers Project,” 178.

³² Myeong-Gu Lee 이명구, “한기총, 4 대강 사업 일방적 지지 표명” [The Christian Council of Korea expresses its support for the Four Major Rivers Restoration project], *News&Joy 뉴스앤조이*, 25 May, 2010, <https://www.newsjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=31233>.

³³ Ja-deuk Sim 십자득, “생명의 강을 그대로 흐르게 하라” [Let the River flow as it is], *Dangdang News 당당뉴스*, 30 April, 2010, <http://m.dangdangnews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=14798>.

³⁴ “생태공동체 운동본부” [Ecology Community Movement Center], The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea 한국기독교장로회총회, accessed 10 August, 2022, <http://prok.org>.

³⁵ “Four Rivers protests become mainstream religious campaign,” *Hankyoreh*, 11 May, 2010, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/420183.html.

issues in Korean churches. Looking at the commonalities between them might help to find alternative ways of reducing upcoming problematic issues. Hence, in the following paragraphs the project's negative factors are addressed, together with the challenges faced by Korean churches. First, some Christians need to free themselves from traditional theological interpretations which are more focused on redemption than on both creation and salvation. Influenced by a strong faith in personal salvation and by exclusion of (for example) non-Christians, they tend to focus more on themselves than on others, on humans rather than on non-human beings, and on the afterlife rather than on the present life on earth.³⁶ This view is fundamentally based on self-centred and dualistic perspectives which can easily cause inequalities. This view treats water as a commodity. It challenges the boundaries between need and greed. Second, Korean Christians need to realise water is incredibly valuable for all living beings and this earth. It is commonly known that water is one of the essential natural resources to live, yet a lot of people are inclined to forget the most important fact – interconnection, which is one of water's characteristics. This world is connected through water, and all life and land on earth can be linked through water circulation. In addition, it is necessary to recognise the reciprocal relationships. Polluted water continually affects living beings and earth everywhere and anywhere. If water is stopped (dried up) or is unable to flow (e.g., by being transformed into a solid, liquid, or gas) unpredictable things happen.

1.2.2 Fundamental Conflicts in South Korea

In order to understand the conflicts and tensions between political understandings and church denominations in South Korea which are deeply related to water injustice issues, it is necessary to examine a number of historical contexts in relation to churches in this context. There have been a variety of historical events in South Korea since the beginning of the 20th century. However, three huge events – Korea under Japanese rule (1910-1945), the division of Korea into North and South (1945), and the pro-democracy movement (1970-1993) – have been the most

³⁶ Ick-Sang Shin 신익상, 한국 개신교의 배타성과 교회의 미래 [The Exclusion of Protestant Churches in South Korea and the Future of Churches], in 한국 기독교의 보수화, 어느 지점에 있나 [Where is the Conservative Christianity in South Korea?], ed. Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development 한국기독교사회문제연구원 (Seoul: Dongyeon, 2020), 32-33.

remarkable in terms of leading Koreans to develop their own thoughts and perspectives on political, economic, and cultural issues.³⁷ The description and estimation of these events vary. This section briefly explores their main points which have affected the mixed views of the churches.

First, Koreans have been very focused on poverty reduction, building their properties, economic growth, and development. During and after the colonisation and the Korean War (1950-1953) between North and South, Koreans suffered from severe poverty.³⁸ Most of them lost their houses, properties, and economic abilities to support their families due to these historical tragedies. This situation has led Koreans to work hard to accumulate wealth. The capitalistic system contributes to a focus on development; which causes more subject-object relationships between humans and between humanity and nature. Kim and Kim make an important point when stating that while Korean ancestors sought “co-existence and co-evolution between humankind and nature, bioregionalism, substance and energy circulation, and regional community”, modern South Koreans tend to use nature as a method (object) for humanity (subject), their own personal economic growth or for development.³⁹ This has resulted in: a) a gap between the rich and poor, and b) an ecological crisis such as the local warming, both of which are increasingly serious in South Korea.

Second, Korean society has experienced a variety of types of discrimination such as age, gender, and race. Koreans have also tended to classify themselves according to their economic abilities (the rich and the poor), political inclinations (conservative and progressive), and regional groups (in particular, Jeolla-do province (South-western Korea) and Gyeongsang Province (South-eastern Korea)). Koo asserts that “not only has economic inequality increased significantly, but also the

³⁷ cf. Gi-Wook Shin, Paul Y. Chang, Jung-eun Lee, and Sookyung Kim, *South Korea's Democracy Movement (1970-1993): Stanford Korea Democracy Project Report*, (California: Stanford University, December 2007), 117-21, <https://web.yonsei.ac.kr/paulchang/website/Research/south%20koreas%20democracy%20movement.pdf>.

³⁸ Jeffrey Henderson, David Hulme, Richard Phillips, and Eun Mee Kim, “Economic Governance and Poverty Reduction in South Korea” (working paper, Manchester Business School, 2002), 2, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/51179523.pdf>.

³⁹ Kwi-Gon Kim and Kweesoon Kim, “Sustainable Cities and Korean Ecological Traditions,” *Journal of Environmental Studies* 38 (2000): 29.

way this inequality is manifested in people's work experiences, consumption behaviours, and educational pursuits has changed significantly".⁴⁰ It is interesting that Koreans have been concerned with traditional social relationships such as nepotism which highlights "(1) the same educational institution that actors attended, isochronous or not (in Korean: *hakyon*, 학연); (2) blood ties, attained by belonging to the same family (nuclear and extended; *hyulyon*, 혈연); and (3) social ties based on the same place of birth (i.e., hometown; *jiyon*, 지연)".⁴¹ These ties sometimes act positively to create an appropriate interrelationship within a group, yet they often cause negative effects such as regional conflicts, spurious and often unwarranted privileges for certain social classes and families, and corruption. In other words, patriarchy and hierarchy have prevailed (this is getting less serious, but still exists in a variety of places) in Korean society.

Korean women have suffered from living in a hierarchical and patriarchal system. The disparities between men and women were severe in the 20th century; men ruled their wives and most women worked at home instead of engaging in gainful occupations.⁴² Many women served their parents-in-law. This situation highlights the disparity between men and women as well as between the value of work between gainful occupations beyond the house and household, and housework without pay. Taking care of their family was treated as a matter of course for women, while men earned money outside the home. For these women, water was a very close natural resource, because housework is inextricably linked to water (e.g., in cleaning, washing, and cooking). Women have a lot of knowledge about how to support their family and how to deal with water in order to do their housework. However, this valuable knowledge was mostly disregarded in comparison with men's knowledge gained in their workplaces. It is a matter of

⁴⁰ Hagen Koo, "The Changing Faces of Inequality in South Korea in the Age of Globalization," *Korean Studies* 31 (2007): 15.

⁴¹ Sven Horak and Yuliani Suseno, "Informal Networks, Informal Institutions, and Social Exclusion in the Workplace: Insights from Subsidiaries of Multinational Corporations in Korea," *Journal of Business Ethics* 186 (2023): 638.

⁴² Boo Jin Park, "Patriarchy in Korean Society: Substance and Appearance of Power," *Korea Journal* 41, no. 4 (December 2001): 43,

https://www.koreasociety.org/images/pdf/KoreanStudies/Monographs_GeneralReading/GettingtoKnowKorea/GTKK%206%20Boo%20Jin%20Park%20Patriarchy%20In%20Korean%20Society.pdf.

regret that this situation still continues in the 21st century where a number of women work outside their houses but a considerable number of mothers (women) are expected to work both for their working places and homes. In other words, the contemporary society seems to require women to be superwomen who have both knowledge to successfully fulfil not only their housework but also their professional work. (Although the current trend is that men and women work together for their family instead of the work falling predominantly on women, this prejudice (sexism) is deeply entrenched in Korean society).⁴³ In addition, a glass ceiling exists for women in the labour market.⁴⁴

These factors have affected Korean Christians' views, and in particular Korean Christian women. In Korean society they have felt that there is no place to relax and nothing to rely on, and they have an ongoing struggle with *Haan or Han* (한, "an unresolved feeling that rises out of the experiences of the injustice of the people").⁴⁵ For them, churches have traditionally been a place to find comfort in their lives, appease their physical hunger by sharing food together, and hope for the future by trusting God's help and by encouraging each other. Through worship, unique Korean church cultures such as early morning prayer services at 5am and *Tongsung Kido* (통성기도, which means "praying together out loud"), Korean churches have highlighted the importance of prayers and communal activities.⁴⁶ This means that Koreans have a lot of community spirit; they are very interested in others and help each other as if it were their own work. For example, *Jeong* (정, which is a unique Korean concept meaning "an emotional bond that develops and matures over time in interpersonal relationships") is closely connected to these practices; Chung and Cho highlight the fact that "Bonded by *Jeong*, collective efforts toward a common goal, overcoming crises, and survival are relatively frequent scenes among Koreans or

⁴³ Jung-a Song, "South Korean women face glass ceiling in workforce," *Financial Times*, 12 June, 2013, <https://www.ft.com/content/50242166-ce60-11e2-8313-00144feab7de>.

⁴⁴ "[Editorial] Solution is urgently needed for S. Korea's gender pay gap issue," *Hankyoreh*, 2 September 2021, https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/english_editorials/1010247.html.

⁴⁵ Chang-Hee Son, *Haan* (한, 恨) of *Minjung Theology* and *Han* (한, 韓) of *Han Philosophy: In the Paradigm of Process Philosophy and Metaphysics of Relatedness* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2000), 42.

⁴⁶ Yohang Chun, "Tongsung Kido (A Unique Korean Prayer)," The Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church, 10 May, 2017, <https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/tongsung-kido-a-unique-korean-prayer>.

Asians”.⁴⁷ This results in Koreans having a strong bond among themselves which enables them to work together for a common goal such as human rights and water justice.

However, this strong bond risks maximising the disparities between those inside and outside a group. This can cause a variety of exclusivism; Korean churches tend to be against other religions and cultures. A number of Korean Christians tend to seek redemption for themselves, to disregard other religions, and to aggressively attempt to lead non-Christians to God because of a strong belief in monotheism.⁴⁸ Interestingly, Kim finds the reason for exclusivism from Japanese colonisation: “many native religions were regarded as false or superstitions not by the early missionaries but by Japanese colonialists to establish the unification of thoughts through stressing one Japanese national religion (i.e., Shintoism)”.⁴⁹ In addition, some Korean churches have focused on a connection between God’s blessings and economic growth or good health. Hence, a number of churches seek church growth. These blessings are not problematic in themselves; a church’s growth, wealth and health can be visible blessings which God provides.⁵⁰ Church growth itself can be a goal of churches in the sense of spreading the gospel. However, it is necessary to have a right understanding of church growth. If this is not the case, it is easy to misunderstand God’s blessing which could allow Christians to focus on their own growth and personal development rather than on communal and cosmological faith.⁵¹ In addition, churches’ growth ideology and exclusivism can cause a variety of dualistic and hierarchical disparities between big (mega) churches and small churches, and between different denominations which are based on a variety of theological foundations. Jang points out that “a) church growth should never be thought of solely in terms of an increase in numbers only; b) church growth operates

⁴⁷ Christopher K. Chung and Samson Cho, “Significance of “Jeong” in Korean Culture and Psychotherapy,” Harbor-UCLA Medical Centre, accessed 24 September, 2021, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Significance-of-“Jeong”-in-Korean-Culture-and-Chung-Cho/b492d8398d95aade1cf99f3782621cf6a55cb6?p2df>.

⁴⁸ Chil-Sung Kim, “A Study on the Origin of Religious Exclusivism and Aggressive Evangelism in the Korean Church,” *Theological Forum 신학논단* 86 (December 2016): 63.

⁴⁹ Kim, “A Study on the Origin of Religious Exclusivism and Aggressive Evangelism in the Korean Church,” 74.

⁵⁰ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 116.

⁵¹ Evangelical churches have speedily revived the belief in personal salvation. A lot of people have gathered in evangelical churches such as Evangelical presbyterian churches, Baptist churches and Pentecostal churches; finally, several mega churches have emerged in South Korea.

within a specific context; c) church growth is not practised at the expense of church health; d) church growth is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit through the church; e) church growth is a sign, not an instrument of mission; f) there is a fundamental difference between the growth of a church and that of a business; and g) balance in church growth cannot be over-emphasized".⁵²

The most noticeable point is the fact that a number of local churches in South Korea are still not concerned with social justice and ecological issues; the reason is that they have been influenced by Christian fundamentalism and by prosperity theology.⁵³ These churches have focused on personal salvation and on quantitative revivals (the number of church members). 'Just believe!' has been the central message of some church leaders, accompanied by the trifold emphases of human-centredness, men (priest)-centredness, and heavy-handed teaching about behaviours, beliefs and lifestyles. These have led Christians in South Korea to have two simple Christian premises: they believe that a) strong faith in the Bible and its teaching contributes to receiving blessings from God and to experience life after death; and b) this earth will be destroyed when Jesus comes again, thus they focus on the new creation which is mentioned in the book of Revelation (21:1-8). In addition, fundamentalist Christians have pursued prosperities and developments which are based on a capitalistic economy. This contributes to the destruction of the ecological system; although they believe that humanity has an obligation, as God's steward, to protect creation, they focus on themselves and take nature and natural resources for granted. This approach requires a revisiting of the awareness of the relationships between God, nature, and humanity.

Therefore, it is necessary to recognise a) what the (on-going) problematic factors which cause conflicts and disparities are for Christians and for churches and b) how to overcome these issues in order to practise Jesus' life-giving missions in the contemporary societies. My thesis addresses both these things as a means of articulating a number of theological responses to water and

⁵² Hyun Woo Jang, "More Than Numbers: Church Growth in South Korean Churches" (Master's thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2009), 102-06, <https://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/2262>.

⁵³ Jang-Hyun Ryoo 류장현, "번영신학에 대한 신학적 비판" [A Theological Critique of the Prosperity Theology], *Theological Forum 신학논단* 61 (2010): 25.

water justice. Several theologians have attempted to develop a theology of water; hence, the next section examines what this is by looking at the views of different scholars, which will enable me to explore the significant challenges embedded within the development of a theology of water.

1.3 A Theology of Water

What is a theology of water? This is one of the key questions which lie at the foundation of this research. In the Bible, there are no texts which have led to the development of a theology of water only.⁵⁴ Theologians have been concerned about a variety of ecological crises since the beginning of the 20th century,⁵⁵ some Christian theologians have explored meanings of water in relation to the sacraments and scripture (e.g., baptism, and a variety of biblical narratives in relation to water). Certain scholars (e.g., Russell, De Gruchy, and Ferris) who are concerned about the context of water crises have begun work in this area and have proposed a small number of general 'theologies'. Increased concerns about water crises in contemporary societies are leading people to seek a more specific theology in relation to their own contexts.

In order to determine what a theology of water is, it is necessary to investigate the theological responses of contemporary scholars, representing a variety of analyses of water. There are several reflections relating to the relationship between theology and water. I use Marais's classification which offers three different theological reflections focusing on hydrotheology, aqua-centric theology and blue theology.⁵⁶ The arguments express different forms of theological (biblical) reflections on water. In different ways each depends on its motivation and perspectives. However, they remain tentative and their meanings and emphases are slightly different. Work is still necessary to determine what each term means, what the differences between them are, and

⁵⁴ David Toshio Tsumura, "A Biblical Theology of Water: Plenty, Food and Drought in the Created Order," in *Keeping God's Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective*, ed. Noah J. Toly and Daniel I. Block (Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), 180.

⁵⁵ Some theologians have argued that the modern ecological crisis is caused by the anthropocentric perspective of Christian faith. This claim initiated intense academic debate which has given rise to a growing body of 'eco-theology' literature. cf. Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (March 1967): 1203-07.

⁵⁶ N. Marais, "#Rainmustfall – A Theological Reflection on Drought, Thirst, and the Water of Life," *Acta Theologica* 37, no. 2 (2017): 70.

what the common meanings of a theology of water are. These studies allow me to recognise their contributions in terms of the development of a theology of water. Therefore, in the next subsections, I review the recent theological analyses and reflections on water with those different terminologies and highlight the gap in the literature which this thesis aims to address. Furthermore, I suggest a common terminology based on my argument – a theology of water – which can bond the different perspectives and articulations: water crises must be viewed and addressed as one example which also contributes to the recognition of water itself or of water justice in a more specific way.

1.3.1 Hydrotheology

Hydrotheology was first identified by Fabricius who published a book, '*Hydrotheologie*' in 1734. The book is based on natural theology (physicotheology) which values the ordinary experience of nature and reason in order to argue for the existence of God. Fabricius attempts to observe "the properties, distribution and movement of water, to encourage human beings to love and admire the benevolence of the powerful Creator".⁵⁷ He focuses on two main themes: a) an examination of water on the basis of natural theology; and b) a search for God's presence by examining the characteristics of water. Some scientists have been interested in natural theology and hydrotheology and furthermore seek a revival of them in terms of a communication between science and theology.⁵⁸ For example, Russell, a scholar of history and the philosophy of science, pursues a natural theology for water and argues for the expansion of hydrotheology.⁵⁹ He asserts that "hydrotheology is placed within the wider context of natural theology as a whole", and he considers its implications for environmental concern by looking at chemical and natural properties of water and the study of the historical development of the debate about water from Egyptian times to today.⁶⁰ His work leads us to know the significance of hydrotheology, which contributes to the recognition that water is the important visible resource which represents

⁵⁷ This citation is the subtitle of *Hydrotheologie*; here, I refer to Russell's article (2007) because this article translates the book's subtitle (German) into English.

⁵⁸ Colin A. Russell, "Hydrotheology: towards a natural theology for water," *Science & Christian Belief* 19, no. 2 (2007): 180.

⁵⁹ Russell, "Hydrotheology," 181-82.

⁶⁰ Russell, "Hydrotheology," 161.

God's presence throughout earth's history. However, hydrotheology tends to confine God's transcendence or self-revelation to human experience; it is the fundamental issue of natural theology, which "is concerned with what we can know about God purely by being rational creatures, and so without recourse to any special revelation".⁶¹ In other words, hydrotheology has a limitation that confines God's revelation to design and teleology as known by reason. The view focusing only on visible water is primarily dualistic as it generally overvalues the characteristics of water rather than the invisible God's revelation. This is a problem for a theology of water because the hierarchical balance between visible water and the invisible God's revelation is easily perturbed.

1.3.2 Aqua-centric Theology

Aqua-centric theology is proposed by De Gruchy, a South African theologian. He begins with a concern about a contextual moment – cholera in 2008 and 2009 in Zimbabwe.⁶² Cholera as a waterborne disease leads De Gruchy to observe the key theological point that water created by God for life is now turned into a source of death. He accounts for this paradoxical predicament by pointing to the economic and political injustices in the sharing of the earth's resources, in particular, water on the one hand and rampant urbanisation and industrialisation resulting in the treatment of water as a commodity on the other hand. From such a contextual theological reflection on water, De Gruchy moves to a more ecological view of interconnectedness in explaining the relationship between water and theology. Further, he calls for an inter-traditional or inter-religious reading to evolve aqua-centric theology: "a theology that is willing to listen to those traditions that speak of the sacredness of water, of rivers, of wells".⁶³ This definition highlights the fact that aqua-centric theology contributes to the importance of listening to a variety of voices in relation to water – something connected to ecofeminist theological perspectives which give the voices of vulnerable living beings (and in particular those of women and nature that have been too little heard in traditional Christian theology) a value.

⁶¹ Rodney Holder, *Ramified Natural Theology in Science and Religion: Moving Forward From Natural Theology* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), ix.

⁶² Steve de Gruchy, "Water and Spirit: Theology in the Time of Cholera," *The Ecumenical Review* 62, no. 2 (July 2010): 188.

⁶³ De Gruchy, "Water and Spirit," 198-99.

Aqua-centric theology demonstrates that water has an important role in biblical texts. For example, De Gruchy proposes what he calls the 'Jordan River motif' which is "to raise up an aqua-centric moment in salvation history, in which the crossing of the waters that flow from life (Sea of Galilee) to death (the Dead Sea) is understood to be the moment of ethical commitment in the formation of the new community".⁶⁴ This motif allows us to recognise not only the salvific role of water in saving lives but also the destructive power of water which results in death although it ultimately demonstrates that water is a life-giving material that has the function of empowering the new fruitful community. Aqua-centric theology challenges romantic ecological views which are just contemplation of the mysteries and the sacredness of water, insisting that Christian theology has to be rooted in the midst of water crises such as water shortages, people denied access to water, and cholera. By doing this, De Gruchy addresses a real contextual issue related to water from a biblical and theological justice viewpoint. In so doing, this eschews the risks of romantic nature environmentalism in which the ideal is to contemplate nature as a mystery.

1.3.3 Blue Theology

Blue theology is introduced by Ferris, an eco-theologian. She articulates several definitions: a) "a theology of water conservation that teaches that all water, salt and fresh, is precious and sacred"⁶⁵; b) "a response to the coming crisis of water scarcity and safety around the world and, as such, it calls for theologians to join the voices that advocate change and work towards solutions locally and globally"⁶⁶; and c) "a new branch of ecotheology that is emerging as a leading voice for conservation of all the world's waters".⁶⁷ These definitions have a number of things in common, notably that blue theology focuses not only on the value of water itself but also on humanity's action towards water conservation. In particular, various practical theological responses and actions are highlighted towards water justice in the water crisis era.

⁶⁴ De Gruchy, "Water and Spirit," 200.

⁶⁵ Margaret H. Ferris, "Sister Water: an introduction to blue theology," in *Deep Blue: Critical Reflections on Nature, Religion and Water*, ed. Sylvie Shaw and Andrew Francis (London: Routledge, 2008), 195.

⁶⁶ Ferris, "Sister Water," 197.

⁶⁷ Ferris, "Sister Water," 211.

Blue theology has been influenced by eco-theology, feminist theology, and liberation theology: a) listening to the crises of water, nature and living beings; b) ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues; c) ancient practices of kindness to nature; d) rejection of the objectification of women and nature; and e) the close relationship between water scarcity and poverty (poor and vulnerable living beings).⁶⁸ Based on these, blue theology highlights the need for a deep respect for water, the conservation of water, and activists' role for change. The most important fact is that it deals with the gender issues in relation to water justice that I am also concerned with throughout my thesis. However, blue theology also focuses on realistic issues in relation to visible water and water justice, rather than on metaphorical and sacred meanings of water which are represented in biblical texts or Christian traditions.

1.3.4 Suggestion: A Theology of Water

Hydrotheology, aqua-centric theology, and blue theology all address the value of water in Christian theology. Hydrotheology shows the significance of a variety of characteristics of water (such as God's presence). Aqua-centric theology represents a negative (aggressive) power of water such as flooding or water-transmitted diseases, and extends this to a positive perspective and the influence of water on vulnerable living beings. Lastly, blue theology emphasises the search for water justice by using a variety of theological perspectives. I agree that it is important to deal with the characteristics of both water and water justice in theology. However, it is impossible to confine God's revelation within water, so it can be said that hydrotheology is unable to look beyond visible water in order to discern God's invisible presence. The way that aqua-centric theology attempts to find a deep meaning within biblical texts in relation to water helps me to focus on a variety of meanings of water in Christian theology. A theology of water suggests the significance of the reinterpretation of biblical stories by focusing on meanings of water in different contexts. While hydrotheology and aqua-centric theology highlight the reinterpretation of biblical texts or Christian sources, blue theology stresses practical Christian responses toward water justice. Although blue theology has a tendency to over-stress the ethical approaches to

⁶⁸ Ferris, "Sister Water," 198-204.

water justice, the point is a reminder of how valuable water justice is in terms of theological responses.

These three theologies can be individually classified, yet I affirm that they must be grouped as part of a 'theology of water' which deals with the value of water or water justice in Christian scriptures, traditions, and missions. It presents theological responses to water crises and to water itself (which is a part of God's creation). There is no limitation to the ways in which interpretations of the meaning and role of water are articulated in the relationship with God and God's creation. In other words, a number of theological works are regarded as resources for a theology of water. However, this does not mean that water is only interpreted in metaphorical, sacred, and non-realistic ways ('spiritual meanings'). A theology of water cannot be separated from scientific analyses, which value visible, material, mundane and real water ('meanings of physical water'). Water, as a material, is identified by science-based works such as the properties of water and the water circulation system. Therefore, the most important concern of my thesis is that I identify the inter-relationship between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water. This is the basis for a new, 'realistic', theology of water in which spiritual and physical meanings are connected. My work is therefore able to contribute to the development of a theology of water, as: a) a recognition of the value of water in the relationship between God, all living beings and this earth, and b) the development of theological responses to the water crises which threaten a variety of living beings and nature. For the purposes of my research, the next section examines the meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water in order to understand why and how these inter-relate.

1.4 Meanings of Physical Water and Spiritual Meanings of Water

The relationship between physical water and some of the spiritual meanings that are attributed to it lie at the heart of my study, and are a significant dimension of my research. A number of Christian theologians have recognised the value of water.⁶⁹ It is not unusual for them to engage

⁶⁹ Sean McDonagh, *Dying for Water* (Dublin: Veritas, 2003), 83-97; Christiana Zenner, *Just Water: Theology, Ethics, and Global Water Crises*. 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 1-27.

in ethical reflections on this relationship which is based on Christian faith. However, they tend to focus primarily on the spiritual meanings of water. I highlight this tendency and critique it by examining what each is and what the relationship between them is in this section. While a variety of religions and indigenous people have studied spiritual meanings of water, my research examines Christian sources. I explore different aspects of physical meanings of water and spiritual meanings of water, and connections between these different aspects. Before beginning this exploration, it is instructive to delineate the aspects of physical and spiritual meanings of water that will function as a guide through the rest of my thesis.

I use the term 'physical' water to refer to the range of meanings of water that exist on earth such as 'ordinary water', 'material water', and (occasionally) 'visible water'. Physical water embraces characteristics of the different types of water found on earth, ranging from fresh to sea water, stagnant to flowing water, drinking water and non-potable or contaminated water, and more. According to the water cycle (also known as the hydrologic cycle), water has three different physical states, solid, liquid and gas, all of which are part of a variety of climate systems.⁷⁰ In other words, water is everywhere in different types and shapes on earth (e.g., commodified bottled water, rivers, streams, sea, ice). My thesis focuses on the water of life such as clean water and potable water for living beings in order to critique human-centred approaches which cause water shortages, contaminated water by pollution, and conflicts or wars by using controlled water as a weapon. However, it is crucial to clarify that this focus does not advocate for an exclusively anthropocentric definition of life. Instead, by delving into the idea of 'life' shared with the spiritual meanings of water – which will be further elaborated in the next paragraph – I strive for a comprehensive understanding that transcends the confines of a solely human perspective. It is self-evident that physical water is a vital life-giving material. It helps bring living beings to birth (e.g. in amniotic fluid), to sustain their bodies (e.g., by regulating their temperature, and by moving nutrients around bodies, through being used as a component in more complex chemicals), and to heal them as well as the earth (e.g. through hydrotherapy). Since the beginning

⁷⁰ "Water Cycle," NASA SCIENCE, accessed 18 February, 2022, <https://science.nasa.gov/earth-science/oceanography/ocean-earth-system/ocean-water-cycle/>.

of civilisation, finding and living near a place where living beings can get water (such as rivers, lakes, and wells) has been hugely significant.⁷¹ Water helps living beings to quench their thirst and enables lands to be fertilised. It allows living-beings and the earth to be fruitful. In addition, water has a significant function in that it cleanses dirt. Bathwater, dishwater, and the water used in sanitation facilities are ways in which we clean ourselves, our materials and our places. Water also has a transformative ability and a power that humans are unable to master in certain situations, for example, heavy floods or tsunamis.

On the other hand, spiritual meanings of water describe possible interpretations of physical water in relation to religious rituals or faith. Spiritual meanings of water are influenced by characteristics of physical water, yet they are affected by the prophetic literature.⁷² Soskice highlights the meanings of water in relation to God who is portrayed as the source of life in certain biblical texts (e.g., Isaiah 55:1; Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 14:8; Revelation 22:1).⁷³ Oestigaard, on the other hand, emphasises the wider images of water on the basis of a detailed examination of biblical texts: 1) Water in the origin of the cosmos and the Earth; 2) Water as the origin of life; 3) Water is the Promised Land; 4) Water possesses divine qualities; 5) Water reveals divinities and divine power; 6) Absence of water is a place for divine challenges; 7) Water purifies and annihilates human sins; 8) Water heals and works as a medium; 9) Water generates prosperity and wealth for humans; 10) Water as a moral index; 11) Water as a penalty for human sin and misconduct on earth; 12) Water as Doomsday and Armageddon; 13) Water as a torment in Hell; 14) Water as a reward and grace in Heaven; and 15) Water links the divine and human realms.⁷⁴ These interpretations embrace a number of metaphors for and symbols of water.

In general, scholars have distinguished between metaphors and symbols. For example, Ricoeur states that “metaphor occurs in the already purified universe of the *logos*, while the symbol hesitates on the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*. It [the symbol] testifies to the primordial

⁷¹ David A. Pietz and Dorothy Zeisler-Vralsted, *Water and Human Societies: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 1.

⁷² Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 156.

⁷³ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 156-57.

⁷⁴ Cf. Terje Oestigaard, *Water, Christianity and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2013), Chap. 2, Kindle.

rootedness of Discourse in Life. It is born where force and form coincide".⁷⁵ However, Avis disagrees with his distinction, and highlights the relationship between metaphor and reality: "Metaphor also can reveal reality and evoke presence. A metaphor can be a compressed and condensed symbol; symbols can be enlarged and elaborated metaphors."⁷⁶ From the frame of analysis of my thesis, it is appropriate to favour Avis's argument rather than that of Ricoeur because Avis highlights metaphor in relation to reality (*bios*). This point is related to the fact that both metaphors and symbols of water are fundamentally based on physical water (reality). Therefore, it is vital to understand spiritual meanings of water on the basis of meanings of physical water.

A number of spiritual meanings of water are found in the Bible. Water is one of God's creations in the story of creation (Genesis 1:2; 20). Water is fertility, God's blessing and gift (Deuteronomy 6:11), and redemption (Exodus 14:21-31; 1 Kings 18:41-45) based on God's generosity. In spiritual meanings, life-giving water is highlighted as a means of praising God; and it becomes a material to confess God's presence (Exodus 17:5-7). In addition, water is related to purity: purification is an important ritual in Christianity. Baptism, as a sacred practice, is the most significant ritual to become a member of the Christian community. Water is also highlighted not only as physical cleansing but also as spiritual cleansing. For example, Naaman was cleansed by water which in turn healed his leprosy (2 Kings 5:13-14). This story demonstrates both cleansing and healing. In other words, physical water is expanded to perform the role of both physical and spiritual cleansing (John 9:1-12). Furthermore, water is regarded as Spirit (Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 44:3-4; Psalm 42:1) in the spiritual meanings of water.

Christians praise God by connecting the awe of water with the presence of God. However, from time to time, natural disasters such as droughts, floods, storms and tsunamis occur. Through the eyes of living beings (in particular, human beings), these are regarded as a destructive power or

⁷⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 59.

⁷⁶ Paul Avis, *God and the Creative Imagination: Metaphor, symbol and myth in religion and theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 93.

a frightening power rather than the natural cycle of water or a part of creation that inspires praise of the creator, often through song. These unpredictable disasters are symbolised through negative images such as death, evil or God's punishment, thus some Christians easily interpret a disaster as a call to repent of their sins and to return to God. On the other hand, they can focus on God's power which can control nature (Matthew 8:23-27) in comparison to humans who are weak and afraid of natural disasters. This leads Christians to focus more on an image of God – transcendence – which highlights God's supernatural power rather than God's immanence.⁷⁷ In addition, some Christians have limited God's blessings to humanity or only to Christians who are chosen by God, which leads to them dominating other creatures and viewing them as objects. Hart points out:

Earth has continued to be seen by many Christians as a planet to be dominated and exploited, and as a temporary place of trial and suffering which serves as a prelude to the real reason for human's creation: an afterlife (blessed or damned) in a world to come. People believe that the Creator intended nonhuman creation to serve humans; actually, this is a form of idolatry: humans are as gods served by the created world. The goods of Earth continue to be designated "resources" to be extracted and used primarily for human benefit. Anthropocentrism still finds its cultural expression in pronouncements and practices that foster human domination or dominion over the rest of the created world.⁷⁸

Based on an anthropocentric approach, some Christians still attempt to treat water as an object for humans or themselves (focusing on water's instrumental value), to forget the fact that water is a finite natural resource, and to be oblivious to water loss and contamination which are severe issues in the 21st century. The conservative churches' responses on the Four Major Rivers Restoration project (section 1.2.1) in South Korea is one example.

Consequently, the meaning of physical water and spiritual meanings of water are interrelated, not separated or privileged/underprivileged, although the distinction between them is always present: the meanings of physical water are represented by a reality or phenomenon whereas the spiritual meanings of water are related to metaphors of phenomena and what they

⁷⁷ cf. Chin-Tai Kim, "Transcendence and Immanence," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 3 (Autumn, 1987): 537-49.

⁷⁸ John Hart, *Sacramental Commons: Christian Ecological Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 121.

symbolise. However, it is significant to learn that some theological interpretations of water face challenging issues such as possibilities of misunderstanding by overly focusing on spiritual meanings of water as well as on very selfish and anthropocentric understandings of certain Christian groups. In my thesis, I critically address these existing and possible issues in Christian theology with a view to enabling Christians to transform (or construct) their thoughts and lifestyles in a way which respects water and God's creation. In order to seek an alternative way, I use ecofeminist theological perspectives which lead us to recognise the fundamental causes of these water crises and enable us to find a new interpretation. The perspectives are addressed in chapter 3 in detail.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced two important topics for my thesis: one is about global water injustice and specific issues in relation to churches and theological reflection in South Korea. The other is a theology of water and challenging theological issues. Based on my methodology (which is outlined in chapter 2), the contextual examination of the water crisis and its anthropocentric action helps us to understand the severity of the water crisis in global places, the huge influence on vulnerable living beings, and the degree to which people and social structures are indifferent to nature. An analysis of Korean historical contexts reveals how much the society and churches have been influenced by a variety of dualistic perspectives and conflicts. These recognitions highlight the significance of anti-dualistic and non-anthropocentric approaches in the global water crisis era.

Water crises are a constant and ongoing focus of attention in relation to Christian ecological reflections; one that is not separated or disconnected from the bigger whole. Marais highlights "the need for theological (re)imaginings of water" in a range of ongoing water crises.⁷⁹ The literature reviews of theological responses to water and water justice lead me to recognise a variety of possibilities that permit the development of a theology of water. In particular, the

⁷⁹ Nadia Marais, "Blue is the warmest colour: Theology, ethics, water," in *Justice-based ethics: Challenging South African perspectives*, ed. Chris Jones (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2018), 122.

significance of the absence of specific theological interpretations to overcome dualistic, hierarchical, and patriarchal approaches is evident. Even though it is clear that meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water are interrelated, Christians have focused more on spiritual meanings, so they have easily overlooked physical water and this earth where God blesses all living beings to live together. Therefore, my thesis emphasises the significance of ecofeminist theological perspectives which enable Christians to rise above their human-centred, dualistic, and patriarchal perspectives. They also allow Christians to identify fundamental issues in relation to Christians' response to the global water crisis and how to seek water justice both theoretically and practically. In the next chapter, I explore ways of using the perspectives to develop a theology of water.

Chapter 2 Method and Approaches

This chapter outlines how the key issues of a theology of water within an ecofeminist theological perspective are explored, together with how my key research questions were developed, and the structure of my thesis as a whole. I also provide a brief overall argument of the research. This offers a full overview of my research: its focus, and ways in which I address the water crisis issues and meanings of water (and water justice) in a theological way. I do not examine a specific ecofeminist theological perspective in detail (this is addressed in chapter 3); rather this chapter shows how to apply the perspective in an effective way to search for answers to my research questions.

2.1 Methodology

In order to develop a theology of water, I use three methodological approaches: a) a tradition-centred approach of ecofeminist theology together with a reconstruction of an earth-centred approach; b) a praxis (practice and theory) cycle; and c) a five-step process.

2.1.1 Approach

My research is based on a tradition-centred approach of ecofeminist theology by focusing on the reinterpretation of Christian sources and historical practices in relation to water and water justice. However, I do not simply add ecological reflection into Christian reflection as apologetic eco-theologians or revisionist eco-theologians sometimes do;⁸⁰ rather, I deconstruct the traditional meanings which have focused on humanity, and reconstruct alternative meanings that prioritise a genuine concern for the earth. This is because I value the earth-centred approach of ecofeminist theology as well, which pursues the fundamental reconstruction of the relationship between God, humans and the earth. Eaton, an ecofeminist theologian, clearly contrasts these two distinctive approaches in ecofeminist theology.

⁸⁰ Apologetic and revisionist eco-theologians have recovered ecological wisdom from Christian sources. They focus on the eco-friendliness of texts in traditional Christian theology; therefore, they attempt to support the positive relationship with nature in Christianity, especially within biblical texts. cf. H. Paul Santmire, *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 7.; David G. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2010), 11-12.

In a tradition-centred approach we would look for inspiration within biblical texts, seek ecologically oriented texts, interpret and stretch the message of Jesus to include the earth, expand justice to ecojustice, etc. But in an earth-centred approach the earth is a primary source of inspiration, as the earth is the source of humans and human consciousness. The bible is understood as one sacred text among many within the long journey towards a consciousness of the Sacred. From an earth-centred view, religious texts are part of the recording of a deep spiritual awakening within human consciousness at a stage in human history when social organization was sufficiently developed.⁸¹

Based on this statement, it is clear that a tradition-centred approach gives the impression of being human-centred because it concentrates on Christian resources (which can be understood as human history) rather than on earth-centred sources which embrace a variety of studies or disciplines and which have typically regarded earth as primary (e.g., the science of water such as hydrology, or the politics of water). However, I do not think that a tradition-centred approach is in direct contrast against an earth-centred approach. They do not need to be incompatible, despite the fact that the tradition-centred approach begins with Christian (religious) sources and the earth-centred has its 'feet' firmly rooted on earth.

Some theologians and religious scholars use an earth-centred approach to build a 'new' ethic of water. Here, as examples, I examine the research of three different scholars: Chamberlain (a theologian who has researched the connection between ecology and theology), McAnally (a religious scholar who has written a book *Loving Water Across Religions*), and Hart Winter (an ecofeminist theologian).⁸² Chamberlain suggests four approaches to a water ethic.⁸³ First, a utilitarian cost/benefit analysis, seeking the greatest happiness of the greatest number, must include the social and environmental costs of water extraction and use. Second, a natural law that there is a basic right to water must seek the common good of the earth. Third, a cosmic perspective of Buddhist ethics, which emphasises the interrelation of all beings, leads to realising

⁸¹ Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 74.

⁸² Chamberlain and McAnally are not classified as ecofeminist theologians. However, their approaches do not differ significantly from the tradition-centred approach or the earth-centred approach of ecofeminist theology. They use both approaches to research an ethic of water, so I examine their resources in this section.

⁸³ Chamberlain, *Troubled Waters*, 141-47.

the deep awareness of nature, including water. Fourth, Chamberlain stresses an ecofeminist perspective, focusing on the relationality, each context of all beings, and various stories related to water. It supports the principle of equality and participation for water justice. By these approaches, Chamberlain emphasises the awareness of the sacred dimension of water. His assertion about the policies and practices for water realistically fulfils important criteria for an ethic of water. However, the arguments relating to religious perspectives are oversimplified by the lack of first-hand source study of each religious tradition. His theology is not limited to Christian theology because his water ethic is for all religions. Interestingly, he is influenced by the earth-centred perspective from Buddhism, unlike Hart Winter who was impressed by the earth-centred approach of ecofeminist theology.

McAnally develops an integral ethic of water by applying inter-religious studies. The integral water ethic is based on her research into three different religious teachings: 1) Christianity, baptism and sacramental consciousness of water, 2) Hinduism, the Yamuna river, and loving service of water, and 3) Buddhism, Bodhisattvas, and compassionate wisdom of water.⁸⁴ In order to articulate the need for the integral water ethic, McAnally argues that the sacramental consciousness of baptism in Christianity leads to reverence of all creation including water.⁸⁵ She expands the sacred character of the water in baptism to the importance of water all over the world. Her approach is challenging scholars to be concerned about inter-religious dialogue focusing on an ethic of water. On the other hand, Hart Winter suggests a water ethic based on stories and rituals in Christian scripture. She is concerned with biblical texts relating to water. Through the paradoxical power of water in the biblical texts of Genesis and Psalms, she identifies a number of meanings of water: “water plays a central role in creation, cleansing, and liberation”.⁸⁶ She argues that water is a human right and is of intrinsic value for the earth. Her argument is a trial for not only overcoming the economic commodity perspective but also the seeking of the interdependence of all beings. Based on Christian Scripture and ecofeminism, her

⁸⁴ Elizabeth McAnally, *Loving Water Across Religions: Contributions to an Integral Water Ethic* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2019), 21-22.

⁸⁵ McAnally, *Loving Water Across Religions*, 48.

⁸⁶ Rachel Noelle Hart Winter, “Just Water: A Feminist Catholic Response to the Commodification of Water.” (PhD diss., Loyola University, 2014), 16, http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/897.

argument is valuable to attempt the building of a water ethic on Christian traditions. These three scholars highlight the compatibility between tradition-centred and earth-centred approaches. Chamberlain focuses primarily on an earth-centred approach while McAnally deals more with a tradition-centred approach by addressing different traditional resources. Hart Winter's approach is the basis for my own approach in my thesis, because her approach emerges as the most balanced between an examination of Christian scriptures and an examination of ecofeminism.

Keller argues that it is necessary to adopt a third way which is neither "faith tradition" nor "secular liberalism".⁸⁷ In order to find the third way, I focus on discerning each of these and on identifying a concrete way that is related to both. The tradition-centred approach (which Keller calls 'faith tradition') is focused more on revising Christian (religious) sources whereas the earth-centred approach ('secular liberalism') attempts to build a radical theological structure by using interdisciplinary sources. However, both approaches are compatible. They are connected in terms of an ultimate concern: life and healing for the earth. Although Christian sources are characteristically human-centred, hierarchical, and patriarchal, the main points seek spirituality to heal this earth, which is linked to the earth-centred approach with the goal of visible caring for the earth. For example, Ruether argues for the necessity to reshape Christian traditions so that they can be free from the constructions of the patriarchal hierarchical perspective, but she does not disregard Christian traditions; rather, she seeks "the covenantal tradition and the sacramental tradition" to fulfil the ecofeminist theology and spirituality.⁸⁸ I agree that Christian sources have played a central role in human history, yet this does not mean that a tradition-centred approach can only advocate for the Christian tradition more than the earth (or physical water). Like Ruether, I stress the importance of revisiting the tradition-centred approach and introducing the concerns of earth-centredness. The reason is that a tradition-centred approach does not preclude us from re-reading Christian scriptures, traditions and justice while taking into

⁸⁷ Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 2.

⁸⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 9.

account the concerns about the ecological crisis. Consequently, I affirm that the tradition-centred and earth-centred approaches are compatible, while Eaton argues the reverse.⁸⁹

Christian sources have not yet been fully interpreted in a deconstructive way which critique previous readings that are based on dualistic, hierarchical, and patriarchal understandings. In addition, in the water crisis era, it is vital to be concerned about water injustice issues, and to reinterpret Christian sources on the basis of this context. For this, I incorporate insights from an earth-centred approach which not only values a physical and material earth but also overcomes the human-centric, hierarchical and patriarchal approaches by adopting a reconstructive method which pursues the revision of traditional Christian approaches (e.g., male-centredness, and hierarchy). In short, my approach enables us to re-read Christian sources such as Christian scriptures, the sacrament of baptism, and ecumenical documents on the basis of a concern for water.

2.1.2 Praxis Cycle

My framework is a praxis cycle which seeks that practice and theory shape one another. According to ecofeminist (and ecowomanist) theologians, personal and communal experiences and critical understandings of each of these are important to develop a theology.⁹⁰ For me, not only contextual stories but also practices and actions (with a view to establishing theory) are important in order to construct a theology of water; that is why I begin with South Korea and later on engage with ecumenical practical works. According to Graham, “By focusing on the reality of practice, we are able to recognize that theory and practice do not exist independently. ... Theology is properly conceived as a performative discipline, in which the criterion of authenticity is deemed to be *orthopraxis*, or authentic transformatory action, rather than *orthodoxy* (right belief)”.⁹¹ Practise itself is not theology; yet overall, my research asserts that practice is central to theology and actions around water justice are theological. This idea is

⁸⁹ Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 73.

⁹⁰ Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 2.

⁹¹ Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (London: Mowbray, 1996), 7.

influenced by the 'Theology-in-Action: Praxis' method outlined in *Theological Reflection: Methods* which represents the importance of a) right action over right belief; b) integration with social analysis; and c) a logic of practice-theory-practice.⁹²

A 'See, Judge, Act' method of the Pastoral Cycle (one of the key analytic and practical tools of the discipline of Practical Theology) is the same as the cycle I propose as a means of exploring and developing a theology of water.⁹³ In my research, 'see' is to explore social situations and churches' responses in relation to water crises. This stage allows us to see what is really happening in practice. 'Judge' involves examining the fundamental issues of water injustice and their causes by engaging in theological reflection. Overall, I argue that human- and male-centred perspectives have encouraged or even promoted a misunderstanding of the value of water and an unequal relationship between water and humans and between physical water and spiritual meanings of water. These crucial analyses help us to recognise not only a variety of meanings of water within Christian sources but also a close linkage between water (in)justice issues and theological understandings. 'Act' is to suggest how to respond to these issues in a practical way; in particular, as part of an ecumenical journey. This leads us to raise awareness and transform our lifestyle by adopting a cyclical method of theological analysis. Within the cycle between practice and theory, I suggest practical actions in dialogue with the sources outlined above.

⁹² Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2019), 247-48.

⁹³ Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection*, 235.

2.1.3 A Five-step Process

In light of these considerations, I intend to use the seven-step process proposed by Harris which she terms an “ecowomanist method”, although reducing her structure to five steps.⁹⁴ Her method is well organised and uses a) both theory and praxis, b) race-class-gender as analytic categories, and c) a deconstructive and constructive approach. These are the important factors in methods of ecofeminist theology as well. For example, I have already mentioned (c) in my approach (section 2.1.1), (a) in my presentation of the praxis cycle (section 2.1.2), (b) in chapter 3 in the context of ecofeminist theology. I argue in favour of these factors in later chapters in order to develop a theology of water. The step frame is helpful to understand what Harris’s argument is. Therefore, I want to use the step frame in order to organise the main points I consider. Yet, my actual methodology is different from hers. I acknowledge that her personal eco-autobiography and a collective ecomemory of African-Americans are significant in her ecowomanist approach.⁹⁵ However, this is not what my thesis focuses on. My thesis is more concerned about misunderstandings within Christian traditional theologies and about finding an alternative understanding, reinterpretation, and actions in relation to water justice. For this, I use ecofeminist sources and approaches in order to develop a theology of water in our water injustice era and demonstrate why it is significant on the basis of a critical approach of the current existing hierarchical and patriarchal worldview.

The first methodological step of the five I have selected is to explore contextual issues. This is a part of the ‘practice’ in the praxis framework and the ‘seeing’ in the pastoral cycle. Step one is a

⁹⁴ Harris introduces her seven-step method and approaches: 1) Honoring Experience and Mining Ecomemory, 2) Critical Reflection on Experience and Ecomemory, 3) Womanist Intersectional Analysis, 4) Critically Examining African and African American History and Tradition, 5) Engaging Transformation, 6) Sharing Dialogue, and 7) Take Action for Earth Justice: Teaching Ecowomanism. Harris’s fifth, Engaging Transformation, explores four different scholars’ thoughts and arguments on ecowomanist spirituality. This method is impressive in terms of the exploration of a variety of understandings and a clear construction of the nature of ecowomanist spirituality and of how to practise earth-honouring faiths and spirituality in this current era of ecological crisis. However, my thesis is more focused on specific documents which are related to meanings of water and water justice issues in a cultural background, the Bible, Christian traditions, and ecumenical movements. This involves both a deconstructive as well as a constructive approach, which draws on certain specific scholars in order to demonstrate the importance of water-honouring faiths. See: Melanie L. Harris, *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths* (New York: Orbis Books, 2017), 23-58.

⁹⁵ Harris, *Ecowomanism*, 27-28.

broad description and a map that enables us to see what the scene and the contextual description is. This approach is regarded as a descriptive-empirical task: “gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts”.⁹⁶ This is based on a core task of practical theological interpretation, which is articulated by Richard Osmer. My thesis is closely related to practical theology; in particular by using the praxis framework. Therefore, in my thesis, this step allows us to recognise water injustice issues in my own context of South Korea.

The second step reflects critically on the injustice situations outlined in the previous exploration of the South Korean context. It uses a critical lens or a deeper analysis of the map provided by step one. This critical lens enables us to recognise what the fundamental issues in the contextual analysis are. It reveals and critiques structural oppressions such as hierarchical and patriarchal aspects in my thesis. This step is a part of ‘Judge’ in the pastoral cycle as well as a dimension of the earth-centred approach. It highlights the need to reconstruct some traditional conclusions resulting from theological reflection which have been influenced by a human- and male-centred worldview. This critical analysis is a deconstructive way of identifying what the problematic issues are. This step helps us to recognise the necessity of an ecofeminist theology of water.

The third step is ecofeminist intersectional analysis which is connected to social analysis, itself highlighted by the Theology-in-Action method. Although I mostly address Christian sources on the basis of a tradition-centred approach of ecofeminist theology, this step represents my conviction that my research should not be limited to Christian texts or traditions. It is linked to an earth-centred approach which emphasises the transformation of traditional Christian understandings on the basis of interdisciplinary sources. “Using an intersectional lens helps us view phenomena in more complicated and nuanced ways that pay special attention to social differences, institutions, and power”.⁹⁷ By examining ecofeminist theory and anthropology,

⁹⁶ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 4.

⁹⁷ Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, *Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 3.

ecofeminist theological analysis is expanded and connected to different stages of theories. This intersectional analysis helps us to seek an interconnectedness in diversity and to realise the significance of the ecofeminist analyses that paves the way towards the growth of an alternative world.

The fourth step is to analyse Christian scriptures and traditions in relation to water. With an earth-centred approach, I focus on the reconstruction of Christian traditional readings in order to discover the importance both of critical understandings and of the deep messages revealed within them in relation not only to water justice but also to a consciousness of the Sacred. Biblical stories (John 4:1-42 and Genesis 6-9) and the sacrament of baptism are critically examined on the basis of ecofeminist theological perspectives. In so doing, I demonstrate how these perspectives contribute to recognising biblical texts and the sacrament of baptism in interconnectedness and continuity. This step is valuable to churches and Christians who seek to care for God's creation and to value water in both physical and spiritual ways.

The fifth step is not only to examine ecumenical documents and activities on the basis of an ecofeminist theological perspective, but also to suggest action which eliminates power games caused by discrimination. I critically examine a selection of UN documents on water justice and ecumenical churches' documents in relation to water (and water justice) and then suggest how to support water justice and the integrity of creation in ecumenical dialogue. While an earth-centred approach allows for a broader connection with other religions, I focus on Christian documents in order to enable Christians and (ecumenical) churches to transform their thoughts and actions. This step is meaningful because it allows them to find a way or a direction for working together. Therefore, this step focuses on making suggestions that develop a theology of water in practical ways within ecumenical movements. It also explores practical Christian responses in the specific context of South Korea; this is connected to chapter 1 which deals with the Korean context.

In short, my thesis moves across these five steps within a tradition-centred approach of ecofeminist theology by focusing on Christian sources, and using a reconstructive way of an earth-centred approach. In so doing, we can identify not only the importance of awareness of water as a life-giving gift, but also the continuity between ordinary and spiritual meanings of water. My methodologies allow us to explore and identify: a) the contextual water crisis issues in South Korea, b) dualistic problems between subject and object,⁹⁸ c) a deeper understanding of the visible issues. These methods lead us to examine critically d) biblical texts and the Christian tradition and e) ecumenical documents and activities. As an outcome of my methodologies, action for water justice in (ecumenical) churches is addressed on both the global and the local (glocal) stage. Overall, my five-step method pursues both a theoretical understanding and practical responses by using an ecofeminist theological perspective which is able to explore both a deconstructive and reconstructive way forward.

2.2 Overview: A Christian Theology of Water

The aim of my research is to develop a Christian theology of water within ecofeminist theological perspectives. It draws on an analysis of water in Christian scripture and traditions, and has due regard for ecological challenges and water justice in terms of ecumenical matters and mission. In order to fulfil this study, I identify key research questions as well as consider how best to structure my responses to those questions through my thesis.

2.2.1 Key Questions

My investigation takes the water crisis issue as its main concern. However, I am not only concerned about the crisis itself; I also explore the fundamental causes of problematic issues and a number of key Christian reflections or theological responses to these. These matters can be interpreted through a variety of lenses, yet I have chosen to use ecofeminist theological perspectives, which lead me to employ both non-hierarchical and non-patriarchal analyses. In order to use these perspectives, it is necessary to know what they are and to determine how they

⁹⁸ For example, humanity treats water as an “object” for themselves, which is related to the relationship between men (subject) and women (object) in a patriarchal system.

might be appropriately used in the re-reading of Christian sources in my research. This realisation leads me to articulate my first key questions: “How might an ecofeminist theology develop a Christian theology of water?”

In a reading of Christian sources, I have found that there is a tension between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water. Many Christians (and theologians) have prioritised the spiritual meanings of water over meanings of physical water. This seems to be influenced by a dualistic and hierarchical perspective. I therefore explore the tension between these by using ecofeminist theological perspectives. That is why my second key question is: “How might an ecofeminist theology of water explore the tension between the physical water and spiritual meanings of water?”

My research is not only focused on establishing a theoretical analysis. I explore both theoretical and practical reflections on water, in particular, in terms of Christian ecumenical responses which need to be more concerned about this issue. Any resulting documents must accurately reflect these approaches for use by ecumenical movements and churches. I want to argue that ecofeminist theological perspectives offer an alternative view in order to develop an ecumenical response in a practical way. Consequently, my third research question is: “How might the resulting ecofeminist theology of water inform Christian ecumenical responses on mission?”

2.2.2 Research Structure

Throughout seven chapters, I explore my “answers” to these research questions. My investigation follows the five methodological steps which I have addressed in section 2.1.3. I have already written how I have applied my methodologies in detail. Therefore, this section briefly outlines my research structure. In chapter 1, I applied the first methodological step by exploring current contextual situations and problematic issues in relation to water and water justice. Chapter 1 is closely connected to chapter 3 because the current issues are critically examined, in particular, on the relationship between water and women (the second step). This study is not confined to ecofeminist theology; as the third methodological step, I investigate an intersectional study on ecofeminist theory and look at the detailed analysis of ecofeminist theological

anthropology. In chapters 4 and 5, I reinterpret biblical stories and the sacrament of baptism by applying a reconstructive reading of ecofeminist theology. These chapters critique the human- and male-centred interpretations and suggest alternative readings on the basis of the fourth methodological step. In chapter 6, I focus on practical responses to the ecumenical journey (the fifth step). These studies conclude in chapter 7 with an overall argument that an ecofeminist theological analysis leads to the development of a theology of water and also helps Christians to transform their theological understandings and actions. My research structure can also be regarded as an iteration of the “See-Judge-Act” of the pastoral cycle: See (chapter 1), Judge (Chapters 2-5), and Act (chapter 6). This does not mean that individual chapters separately address different interests or topics. Rather I want to clarify the fact that each chapter is interconnected like a cycle.

2.3 Overall argument of my thesis

Throughout my thesis, I argue for the necessity of ecofeminist theological perspectives, which enable Christians to reinterpret Christian resources in terms of the emphasis on the interconnectedness between physical water and spiritual meanings of water. The perspectives critique androcentric and anthropocentric perspectives, and pursue notions of continuity, interconnectedness, and inter-relationality. I also suggest alternative ways which are based on Christian values and contrast against dualistic, hierarchical, and patriarchal worldviews. My thesis demonstrates how Christian resources and activities support water justice. By applying ecofeminist theological perspectives, a range of different Christian resources are critically constructed and deconstructed in a new way which highlights the interconnection and interrelationship between diverse living beings and this earth. Therefore, my thesis is able to offer insights to a variety of audiences with an interest in a relationship between water justice and Christianity.

The most important argument of my thesis is that both meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water should be integrally valued in Christian theology. For this argument, I demonstrate how a tradition-centred approach and an earth-centred approach of ecofeminist

theology can be compatible. In order to uncover the significance of meanings of physical water in Christian theology, I reveal the contextual situation and current problematic issues in relationship to water and water justice (section 1.1 and 1.2). My methodology deals with specific Korean contextual issues, which identify social/structural sin in relation to water injustice issues. This fact can be applied in a variety of contexts, not confined only to a Korean context and churches in South Korea. Others can explore their own contexts and seek water justice together. This approach is connected to ecumenical movements which support all different contexts, churches, and denominations all over the world. Based on this glocal interconnectedness, I affirm that all Christians should recognise how to understand the biblical texts and the sacrament of baptism in anti-hierarchical, anti-dualistic, and anti-patriarchal worldviews and practise actions. From the next chapter onwards, I present how I have researched these matters through my methodology and the way in which I have developed an ecofeminist theology of water.

Chapter 3 Water and Ecofeminist Theology

This chapter explores an aspect of the fundamental causes of the global water crisis. Water is obviously something physically important, but it also plays an important role in social and political contexts. While a variety of arguments about the causes might be proposed, I focus on ecofeminist analyses which affirm the need for a critical understanding of human- and male-centred social structures as well as of the theological framework that has frequently been used to explore and justify these. Based on my methodology, this chapter examines the main arguments of ecofeminist theology, and in particular, the relationship between water and women. It is concerned with an analysis which is a specific application of an earth-centred approach by looking at the relationship between ecofeminist theory and ecofeminist theology. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the significance of the reconstructive way towards non-hierarchy and non-patriarchy is highlighted. This in turn requires me not only to revisit the relationship between God, nature and humanity, which I deal with under the title of 'ecofeminist theological anthropology', but also to propose an ecofeminist theology of water which has its foundations in the reconstructive method of an ecofeminist framework. Consequently, this chapter argues in favour of the importance of recognising the water crisis which affects all living beings, and in particular women and the vulnerable. It emphasises the necessity of a non-hierarchical and non-patriarchal approach in theological responses.

3.1 Water and Women

As I have mentioned in my methodology (section 2.1), 'seeing' is important in my thesis. While I have looked at the Korean context in relation to water issues in chapter 1, this section is more focused on a selection of contextual understandings in terms of the specific relationship between water and women. This is because the water crisis affects vulnerable living beings, and in particular women who are mostly living in developing nations. Water is often the context in which both the suffering, oppression, subjugation and exploitation of women, together with the misuse and abuse of the environment, are closely related. Thus, this section focuses on the relationship, intersections and critical dialogues between water and women in ecofeminist theology. I address the relationship between them in two different ways: a) from the perspective of a water crisis (a

shortage of water)⁹⁹ and b) from the perspective of gendered hierarchy in relation to water. This study offers a theoretical and critical link between water, and the suffering of nature and of women. This also allows us to look at what an ecofeminist framework is in the relationship between water and women in the next chapter.

3.1.1 The Perspective of a Water Crisis

Water is important to meet basic needs. Although there are different types of water, I am solely concerned with fresh water, without which many living beings cannot live. Pope Francis highlights the fact that water should be distributed to all beings equally so that it is necessary to reduce poverty due to water scarcity in the era of environmental degradation.¹⁰⁰ However, people have mainly used water as a commodity. In so doing, the overuse of water takes place. On the basis of the fact that water is a limited resource, this situation is a violence towards nature. Shiva argues that the over-using of water “which works against, and not with, the logic of the river” is a form of violence.¹⁰¹ The violence done to nature not only affects humanity but also impacts the entire earth’s ecosystem as in the case of the water crisis. Women, poor people, and indigenous people are suffering hugely from this violence since both clean water *per se* and water specifically for drinking are affected by the intersectionality of gender and class. The upper classes and privileged people can access a greater number of water resources in comparison to the lower-classes and marginalised people. Therefore, it can be said that a question of water is also a question of power and life.

Water has been regarded as a human right in relation to the suffering of lower-class women. In other words, all living beings have been influenced by this water crisis, yet women and girls are the most affected by water scarcity because of their close relationship with water in daily life.¹⁰² Poor women tend to experience a significantly burdensome workload but also frequently

⁹⁹ Although there are a variety of water crises, here I want to look at the issue in the context of a lack of water as one example which describes well the relationship between water and women.

¹⁰⁰ Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’ of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), no. 28-30.

¹⁰¹ Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1988), 186.

¹⁰² Jennifer Tisdell Schorsch, “Small Loans for Safe Water: Unleashing Women’s Power,” *IMPAKTER*, 19 March, 2019, <https://impakter.com/small-loans-for-safe-water-unleashing-womens-power/>.

contract skin disease from contaminated water. In developing countries, a number of women have a domestic responsibility to collect a bucket of water every day.¹⁰³ They have to walk further to search for water as potable water has dried up. These vulnerable women rely very much on water for domestic work and farm tasks. Graham, Hirai, and Kim analyse the labour required for water collection in 24 Sub-Saharan African Countries:

Among households spending more than 30 minutes collecting water, adult females were the primary collectors of water across all 24 countries, ranging from 46% in Liberia (17,412 HHs) to 90% in Cote d'Ivoire (224,808 HHs). Across all countries, female children were more likely to be responsible for water collection than male children (62% vs. 38%, respectively). Six countries had more than 100,000 households (HHs) where children were reported to be responsible for water collection (greater than 30 minutes): Burundi (181,702 HHs), Cameroon (154,453 HHs), Ethiopia (1,321,424 HHs), Mozambique (129,544 HHs), Niger (171,305 HHs), and Nigeria (1,045,647 HHs).¹⁰⁴

The issue for water and women can be categorised into three large areas: health, safety and security. A large number of women in developing nations still suffer from the lack of fresh water and a poor sanitation infrastructure.¹⁰⁵ The equitable access to water is associated with food safety. It is easy to be infected by water-borne diseases due to lack of sanitation facilities and poor hygiene. The lack of safe drinking water and water for sanitation affects mostly women.¹⁰⁶ One of their primary tasks is to carry water for their families. They are not able to afford the education that is given at public schools due to the priority of their domestic work for their daily living. In addition, those who procure water and seek areas for sanitation are more likely to experience sexual assault since women go to well-known public places on a regular basis and are in danger of being attacked by sexual predators. In short, the water crisis is deeply involved in the plight of women.

¹⁰³ UNICEF and WHO, *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2022: special focus on gender* (New York: United Nations Children's Fund and World Health Organization, 2023), 17.

¹⁰⁴ Jay P. Graham, Mitsuaki Hirai, and Seung-Sup Kim, "An Analysis of Water Collection Labor among Women and Children in 24 Sub-Saharan African Countries," *PLoS One* 11, no. 6 (2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0155981>.

¹⁰⁵ "Gender, Water and Sanitation: A policy brief," UN Water, accessed 7 July, 2020, <https://www.unwater.org/publications/gender-water-sanitation-policy-brief/>.

¹⁰⁶ Georgia L Kayser, Namratha Rao, Rupa Jose, and Anita Raj, "Water, sanitation and hygiene: measuring gender equality and empowerment," *Bull World Health Organ* 97, no. 6 (2019): 438, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6560376/pdf/BLT.18.223305.pdf>.

Consequently, the question of power and life in relationship to the contemporary water crisis is pointing to its deeper causes. The vulnerability of nature and women is caused by inequalities of gendered social roles and poverty paving the way for water-related suffering of women. In addition, the water crisis is accelerated by the nature of development proposed and permeated by the capitalist social construction of material reality and natural resources. Hence, the argument by Shiva that water scarcity is man-made makes sense. She states, “most villages are facing new water scarcities created by maldevelopment and a reductionist science”.¹⁰⁷ Although the limitation of her statement is that it focuses on Indian contexts in the 20th century, it portrays the developed and developing world in unequal terms, which adds a Continental dimension to the problem. Merchant compares the different responses of women from developed and from developing nations: “First World women combat these assaults by altering consumption habits, recycling wastes, and protesting production and disposal methods, while Third World women act to protect traditional ways of life and reverse ecological damage from multinational corporations and the extractive industries”.¹⁰⁸ Although there is a question whether or not it is really possible to reduce or even do away with the dividing line between developed and developing nations, these factors indicate that regardless of nations the relationship between water and women has been addressed in a valuable and reconstructive way in ecofeminist theory. (This will be addressed in detail in section 3.2)

3.1.2 The Perspective of Gendered Hierarchy in relation to Water

Gendered hierarchies have caused this inequality, something which can readily be seen when considering women’s access to water in some developing nations such as India and Africa. Ahmed and Zwarteveen endorse Feldstein and Poats’ identification of three specific ways in which social divisions between men and women are markedly operative: the division of labour, the division

¹⁰⁷ Shiva, *Staying Alive*, 179.

¹⁰⁸ Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: the search for a livable world*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 194.

of property, and the division of incomes.¹⁰⁹ Linking their considerations to the social role of water, they argue that whereas women are regarded as vital care-givers for their children and families, men mainly work for irrigation and water management. Only a few women have their own property. Women cannot get income from domestic work. The authors demonstrate that women are less visible in water-related work. In other words, they critically reveal that decision-making about water is associated more with men than with women. According to the International Water Association (IWA) which conducted an investigation in 15 developing nations (mostly in South Asia and in Africa) and was subsequently reported by the OECD, “Women and girls are the primary providers, managers, and users of water; however, women make up less than 17 % of the water, sanitation, and hygiene labour force in developing economies and a fraction of the policymakers, regulators, management, and technical experts”.¹¹⁰

Although the argument might be refuted with reference to developed nations in which women are actively participating in the decision-making relating to water while men are increasingly involved in household matters, it is necessary to see a variety of glocal contexts where women who live in (some) developing nations continue to struggle with this issue. This does not mean that I only focus on the relationship between water and women in developing nations; rather, I am concerned with women as well as with vulnerable living beings more generally in relation to the access of water regardless of contexts, whether developing or developed nations. It is important when recognising the current unequal situation that all humanity is equally embedded in nature, yet here it is necessary to prioritise between the genders and social classes because they are more exposed to a vulnerable situation.

¹⁰⁹ Sara Ahmed and Margareet Zwartveen, “Gender and Water in South Asia: Revisiting Perspectives, Policies and Practice,” in *Diverting the flow: gender equity and water in South Asia*, ed. Margreet Zwartveen, Sara Ahmed, and Suman Rimal Gautam (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2012), 15-18; cf. Hilary Sims Feldstein and Susan V. Poats with Kathleen Cloud and Rosalie Huisinga Norem, “Conceptual Framework for Gender Analysis, in Farming Systems Research and Extension,” in *Working Together: Gender Analysis in Agriculture*, vol.1, *Case Studies*, ed. Hilary Sims Feldstein and Susan V. Poats (West Hartford: Kumarian, 1989), 7-26.

¹¹⁰ “Women in Water Decision-Making,” OECD, 5 November, 2021, <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/regionaldevelopment/Women-in-water-decision-making-final.pdf>. cf. International Water Association, *An Avoidable Crisis: WASH Human Resource Capacity Gaps in 15 Developing Economies* (Seacourt, UK: IWA, 2014), 32-33.; Anne-Marie Hanson and Stephanie Buechler, “Introduction: Towards a feminist political ecology of women, global change, and vulnerable waterscapes,” in *A Political Ecology of Women, Water and Global Environmental Change*, ed. Stephanie Buechler and Anne-Marie S. Hanson (London: Routledge, 2015), 10.

Consequently, I argue that the water crisis (and water) is an ecofeminist question for two reasons. First, the crisis mostly affects women and vulnerable living beings in societies which have been influenced by hierarchical and patriarchal approaches. Second, thinking with water is a way of thinking with life abundance for all living beings, thus bearing these in mind allows us to make progress in bringing about justice and peace on earth. This is because water is not only a human right but also a path towards gender equality, sustainable development, and poverty alleviation.¹¹¹ For achieving the just and equal reorganising of societal relationships, Chakraborty, an Indian social scientist, affirms the empowerment of women: “the engagement of women in the process of the conservation of environment has not only ensured them the platform to voice their issues and concerns, identification and prioritization of needs but has also overcome both overt and hidden power struggles”.¹¹² The empowerment of women becomes an important factor in the field of Christian theology as well. Ecofeminist theologians, who are concerned about the degradation of nature and women, contribute to the retrieval of the hidden voices of vulnerable living beings and to the reconstruction of a traditional Christian theology which has been influenced by human- and male-centred approaches. I have been very influenced by their perspectives; that is why I apply these perspectives in order to develop a theology of water in this thesis. Recognising the value of water (nature) and women (all living beings), is a challenge to Christian theology. This is one of the main arguments of this research, and a reason why I emphasise the need to explore what ecofeminist theology is and how to develop a theology of water based on this theological aspect. Therefore, in the following sections, I explore definitions and characteristics of an ecofeminist framework such as theory, theology, and theological anthropology in relation to water and women which have been examined in this section.

¹¹¹ According to article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, “1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection”. In the relationship with water, human rights are fulfilled by distributing water in a just manner to all. UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, A/RES/217(III) (10 December 1948), available from [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/217\(III\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/217(III)).

¹¹² Meghadeepa Chakraborty, “An Eco-feminist Water Revival Project in Gujarat,” *ANTYAJAA: Indian journal of Women and Social Change* 1, no. 3 (2018): 78.

3.2 Ecofeminist Theory and Ecofeminist Theology

Throughout my thesis, one of the most important aspects is to investigate what ecofeminist theology is; that is why I set this as my first key research question (section 2.2.1). Since I propose that ecofeminist theological perspectives contribute to the development of a theology of water, it is necessary to examine the perspective in detail. On the basis of the immense degree of diversity that exists within ecofeminist theology, I explore diverse discourses of the perspectives as literature reviews. However, this study is not a general investigation. Rather, I address significant characteristics of an ecofeminist framework by applying an interdisciplinary study (that of ecofeminist theory), which is based on the 'earth-centred' approach (section 2.1.1). The reason is that, in this section, I want to demonstrate that a) both ecofeminist theory and ecofeminist theology are interconnected, and b) my tradition-centred approach cannot be separated from a reconstructive way of earth-centredness.

3.2.1 The Search for Diversity within Practical Contexts

An ecofeminist framework places a great deal of weight upon the diversity within practical contexts. According to Warren, a well-known ecofeminist, ecofeminist theory consists of a variety of unique "patches" in contexts.¹¹³ Indeed, in the beginning of ecofeminist theory, the movement was limited to Western culture as they were mainly written by white women scholars. However, nowadays the discrimination towards nature and women evident within ecofeminist theory is connected to other majority and minority groups more broadly, such as other ethnic groups, racial groups, and sexual minorities.¹¹⁴ This means that ecofeminist theory is gradually expanded to diverse races, classes, sexualities, and ecosystems. This fact is also importantly addressed in ecofeminist theology. Ruether highlights the fact that ecofeminist theologians have affirmed a variety of types of theological reflection, which are rooted in their contexts such as class and race.¹¹⁵ Ecofeminist theology values the specific context of each being – either background or

¹¹³ Karen J. Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 66.

¹¹⁴ Karen J. Warren ed., *Ecofeminism: Women, culture, nature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 3.

¹¹⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Introduction," in *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1996), 6.

history – so that it is concerned with a variety of aspects such as religious, cultural, and ecological insights as well as political economies. For example, Korean ecofeminist theologians who live in the divided country have recognised the cold war system as a significant context in South Korea.¹¹⁶

Along with ecofeminists, ecofeminist theologians have been concerned with the suffering of nature and vulnerable living beings (women). This is connected to my approach in the beginning of this chapter (section 3.1). Like me, some ecofeminist theologians address the questions of vulnerable living beings (women) and the ecological crisis (water crisis) in their search for ecojustice (water justice). Hart Winter, who situates her proposal for water justice both in the Christian tradition and in ecofeminist theory, introduces a contextual story from the Marshall Islands which she visited and where she saw and heard about women’s hardships and sacrifices due to the lack of fresh water.¹¹⁷ She compares this context with her region of Chicago in the USA in which water is regarded as a commodity and is overused: “the commodification of water has changed the shape of water, constricting its fluidity to conform to market structures”.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, Gebara, a Latin-American theologian, describes a range of experiences of the poor in her region of Brazil.¹¹⁹ She is concerned with the poor who are the victims of garbage dumps: “The rich throw their garbage in the spaces used by the poor: Cities often open garbage dumps right where the poor build their homes. In areas in which there is no drinking water, in which air pollution is most dense, and in which health problems abound, the poor jostle one another for a few square feet on which to live”.¹²⁰ While Hart Winter mainly critiques consumerism, Gebara focuses on an interconnection between a variety of issues such as poverty, water crises and related systemic ill health by highlighting that the garbage is not a simple issue. However, both Hart Winter and Gebara look at social injustice in contexts and reject escapism (a way of denying contexts) and domination (a way of exploiting the vulnerable living beings and this earth). This

¹¹⁶ Ae-Young Kim 김애영, “생태여성신학의 한반도적 수용을 위한 비판적 고찰” [A Critical Consideration of Ecofeminist Ecofeminist Justice in Korea], *Journal of Korean Feminist theology 한국여성신학* 16 (1993): 60-66.

¹¹⁷ Hart Winter, “Just Water,” 156.

¹¹⁸ Hart Winter, “Just Water,” 164.

¹¹⁹ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 68.

¹²⁰ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 3.

emphasises the fact that contextual reflection is necessary to overcome (and transform) the current issues. Consequently, ecofeminist theory and theology have focused both on theory and practice by exploring a variety of contexts;¹²¹ this shows that an ecofeminist framework is linked not only to academic movements but also to activist social movements. This realisation led me to begin with the examination of contextual situations in South Korea in Chapter 1.

3.2.2 A Critique of Doubly Oppressive Structures

The main role of an ecofeminist framework is to recognise the doubly oppressive structures which elevate humanity above nature and men above women in a variety of contexts. Ecofeminist theory (ecofeminism) is a theory that draws links between the degradation of nature and the oppression of women.¹²² It critiques not only anthropocentric but also patriarchal paradigms, which consequently cause a number of dualistic disparities such as in the relationship between mind and body, between the subjective self and the objective world, and between men and women. Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist, reveals some of the embedded issues within this perspective: a) patriarchy, which is a social construct that stresses the importance and power of men over and above women, in Western development schemes and modern science treats nature and women as passive objects; b) patriarchy attempts to form mono-cultures which devalue indigenous cultures and localised systems; and c) modernisation and development have caused the dualistic and discriminative structures which are based on patriarchy and which are key detrimental influences of nature, people and culture.¹²³

While Shiva focuses on critiquing patriarchy, Plumwood carefully defines the concept of dualism in relation to hierarchy. “Dualism is a relationship of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of beings construed not merely as different but

¹²¹ Celia Deane-Drummond, *A Primer in Ecotheology* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2017), 47.

¹²² Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), 20; Mary Mellor, *Feminism & Ecology* (UK: Polity Press, 1997), 1; Warren ed., *Ecofeminism*, 4.

¹²³ Shiva, *Staying Alive*, 1-6; 17-18.

as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence as not open to change”.¹²⁴ In a specific way, she describes the logical structural of dualism with five characteristics: a) backgrounding (denial): the existence of the background to the master is denied; b) radical exclusion (hyperseparation): the dualistic distinction is maximised through exclusion; c) Incorporation (relational definition): the colonised self in a relationship with the other; d) Instrumentalism (objectification): the intrinsic value of the underside is treated as a means to the upper side; and e) Homogenisation or stereotyping: the making of stereotype cannot embrace and respect the individual.¹²⁵ These specific characteristics represent the problem of dualism. Therefore, it can be said that the prevalent value of dualism, hierarchy and patriarchy which are endorsed by the neoliberal, colonial, and capitalist systems favour the androcentric and anthropocentric development model which in turn aggravates an inequality and an ecological crisis such as the water crisis.

Based on the critical thought, ecofeminists attempt to identify the close relationship between women and nature. “While women's productive roles were decreasing under early capitalism, the beginning of a process that would ultimately transform them from an economic resource for their families' subsistence to a psychic resource for their husbands, the cultural role played by female symbols and principles was also changing”.¹²⁶ On the basis of the historical background, different understandings are explored; these depend on different types of ecofeminist theory such as cultural/spiritual, social, and socialist/materialist ecofeminism.¹²⁷ Cultural ecofeminist theory largely argues that 1) women are closer to nature than men because of the reproductive capacities of women; 2) women have more knowledge and experience about nature so that they can solve the environmental problems better than men; and 3) women's bodies are specially honoured in pre-modern spiritual rituals. On the contrary, social ecofeminist theory critiques all the arguments of cultural ecofeminist theory. Social ecofeminist theory, which is based on the social ecology of Murray Bookchin, sees the social construction in which the identities of women

¹²⁴ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 47-48.

¹²⁵ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 48-55.

¹²⁶ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 155.

¹²⁷ Merchant, *Radical Ecology*, 198-209.

are treated unequally. They point out that women and nature have been devalued in patriarchal culture. While cultural ecofeminists are interested in the personal aspects, social ecofeminists tend to value social aspects. Socialist/materialist ecofeminism, which claims that nature and women are not only culturally connected but also socially constructed, can be regarded as a middle position between cultural and social ecofeminism. Socialist/materialist ecofeminists recognise the crucial role of women which is historically close to nature, but while cultural ecofeminists affirm the biology of women as a given, they do not agree. The argument that women have essential attributes biologically is not accepted. It is rather regarded as the social relationship between nature and women. It is historically clear that both nature and women are oppressed by the patriarchal environment and dominant culture. Ecofeminist theologians, who critically deal with gender inequality and the domination of nature in Christian Scriptures and in theological reflection, are also influenced by those different types of ecofeminist theory. For example, Ruether is concerned with the view which regards woman as “Mother Nature”; because “the female is seen as a life force to be used or worshipped in relation to a male-centred definition of humanity”.¹²⁸ Her expression seems to be closer to a cultural or socialist/materialist ecofeminism rather than to a social ecofeminism. Although it is often difficult to identify which types we are involved with, I agree with the socialist/materialist ecofeminists because their understanding does not devalue a cultural and a social understanding and seeks the middle position between them, which is linked to my methodological approach of ‘interconnectedness’. Hence, my arguments in relation to women and nature are based on the socialist/materialist ecofeminism rather than on cultural and social ecofeminism.

It is hard to deny that Christian sources have been influenced by anthropocentric, dualistic and patriarchal paradigms. Daly is a central person who critiques the dimension of the Christian tradition, rejecting it on account of its deep roots in a strongly patriarchal system.¹²⁹ Conversely, Ruether accepts the critiques from a position within the Christian tradition, unlike Daly who, on

¹²⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 6.

¹²⁹ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 71.

a personal level, eventually abandoned Christianity altogether. She demonstrates how the degradation of nature and women has been caused by the separation of mind and body; something which stems from Greek culture although has also influenced the Christian heritage.¹³⁰ While Shiva critiques modern mechanistic thought and enlightenment, Ruether contributes to uncovering the Christian heritage that is deeply connected to a dualistic and patriarchal culture. Ruether critiques the presupposition of Christianity that depends on an estrangement between humans and nature. This means that she establishes a worldview that requires a change to the biblical-classical theological traditions. She argues in favour of using classical Neoplatonism and apocalyptic Judaism as the fundamental root of Christianity.¹³¹ Ruether's historical approach helps one understand the origin of anthropocentric and patriarchal paradigms. This approach establishes that these paradigms are not a temporary phenomenon; rather, they have affected Christianity in a significant number of ways. In short, ecofeminist theologians have investigated this issue with a critical eye and have argued that Christian sources should enable these paradigms to be overcome.

3.2.3 A Search for an Alternative View

An ecofeminist framework suggests an alternative view which supports cosmic models instead of the anthropocentric and androcentric models. Ecofeminist theory engages with the principles such as liberty, equality, and sustainability in the study of the correlational existence of nature (water) and both women and men. This is ultimately related to the supporting of ecofeminists' hopes and vision – the building of egalitarian societies, which recognise not only “the full humanity of each human person” but also the “intimate partnership with nonhuman communities” on this earth.¹³² Howell outlines four ecofeminist presuppositions, which are influenced by social ecologists who are concerned about relationships between humanity and their environment: (1) “social transformation is necessary for the sake of survival and justice”, (2)

¹³⁰ Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth*, 16.

¹³¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power* (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), 115.

¹³² Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Ecofeminist Philosophy, Theology, and Ethics: A Comparative View,” in *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, eds. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller (NY: Fordham University Press, 2007), 80.

“social transformation must include an intellectual transformation”, (3) “reforming the way that nature is valued should transform human relationships with nature”, (4) “what ecology teaches about nature is equally relevant to humans, since humans are part of nature and participants in ecological processes”.¹³³ These ecofeminist presuppositions demonstrate that ecofeminism seeks not only egalitarian relations but also social transformation in our world. Ecofeminist theology also seeks an alternative view and aims to identify and expose societies in which those paradigms which easily cause disparities and hierarchies in a variety of types of relationships are overcome. In other words, an earth-centred approach which supports a reconstructive way is addressed in ecofeminist theology, which seeks a non-anthropocentric and non-androcentric world. However, based on methodologies or perspectives, ecofeminist theologians offer different paths towards an alternative world. Although there are a variety of suggestions, I look at two scholars – Ruether and Primavesi – who use significantly different approaches: Ruether assumes a more tradition-centred approach and Primavesi uses a predominantly earth-centred approach.¹³⁴ Based on a tradition-centred approach, Ruether values the covenantal and sacramental traditions within Christianity. This does not mean that she simply highlights those traditions; instead, she discovers liberating potential in those traditions based on the critiques of patriarchal prejudice.¹³⁵ In those traditions, she highlights two voices of God: one is “the voice of power and law” which seeks for the protection of the weak; the other is “the voice of Gaia” which leads all creation into communion.¹³⁶ These two voices facilitate a concern for both vulnerable living beings and this earth, as well as to see the interconnection between all beings and nature. Her study contributes to the revision of Christian traditions and speaks about the voice of Gaia from the Christian tradition.

¹³³ Nancy R. Howell, “Ecofeminism: What One Needs to Know,” *Zygon* 32, no. 2 (June 1997): 233-35.

¹³⁴ The difference between tradition-centred and earth-centred approaches are introduced in my methodology (section 2.1.1).

¹³⁵ Ruether, *Gaia & God*, 205-07.

¹³⁶ Ruether, *Gaia & God*, 254.

On the other hand, Primavesi's approach starts from a position linked to contemporary scientific analysis, and in particular Lovelock's Gaia theory.¹³⁷ By highlighting biological processes (evolution), Primavesi reconstructs the nature of God within earth's history and not simply human's history.¹³⁸ Her research places a great deal of weight upon the need for the recognition not only of each organism's value but also of the relationship between God, humans, non-human beings and the earth. She proposes *EarthScape* which identifies theology as an earth science: "A major task then for theology as an earth science is to resist any process or tendency towards such devaluation by stressing the connectedness, diversity and sacredness of all beings. Gift events between organism and environment connect us personally, interpersonally, communally, individually and systemically".¹³⁹ This view highlights the fact that theology is based on the understanding of the dependency of living beings and their connectivity on earth. It is clear that her study allows us to acknowledge a need for a reconstructive ecological understanding in Christian theology. Primavesi favours the alternative view, yet she does not attempt to reinterpret or re-constitute traditional theological reflection in detail. With the key understanding that earth science is importantly addressed in theology, I want to search for alternative cosmic values in Christian sources. The main characteristic of this approach is a concern not only with a liberating potential but also a critical understanding of traditional Christian texts and traditions. Therefore, this approach leads me to critique the oppressive structures in Christian sources and to argue for an alternative of non-hierarchy and non-patriarchy. This is the reason that I apply a tradition-centred approach with the reconstructive understanding of an earth-centred approach throughout my thesis.

In short, ecofeminist theology has been influenced by ecofeminist theory which pays close attention to the relationship between nature and women. Ecofeminist theory provides a useful platform to do this as it enables us to take an interdisciplinary approach and analysis. However, while ecofeminist theory is not concerned with the 2000-year-old history of Christian inquiry, I

¹³⁷ Gaia theory uncovers the close relationship between the biosphere and the physical components of the earth. In addition, it regards earth as a single organism. This approach has affected a number of theologians who want to find a bridge between the physical ecosystem and the Christian faith in God's creation.

¹³⁸ Anne Primavesi, *Sacred Gaia: Holistic theology and earth system science* (London: Routledge, 2000), xix.

¹³⁹ Primavesi, *Sacred Gaia*, 169.

am committed to examining Christian reflection on the basis of an ecofeminist framework in order to highlight the importance of ecofeminist theology. It should be noted that this section contributes to the recognition of what the characteristics of ecofeminist theology are and which perspectives should be transformed or valued in Christian theology. These characteristics of ecofeminist theology attempt to support not only the importance of a non-dualistic approach but also of all beings in a way devoid of discrimination. It helps us to realise the innate value of nature, which is a part of the creation, and respect for all beings. Ecofeminist theology seeks a basis for gender equality and social justice issues in relation to eco-resources such as water. Identifying and exploring the connection between nature and women helps us to see the close relationship between water and women and women's suffering due to the water crisis in our contemporary contexts. An investigation in to why an ecofeminist theological perspective is significant in order to develop a theology of water is provided in the next section where I examine ecofeminist theology in detail; and in particular, ecofeminist theological anthropology which allows us to transform the awareness of humanity's presence in the relationship between God and nature.

3.3 Ecofeminist Theology and Ecofeminist Theological Anthropology

3.3.1 Ecofeminist Theology

Ecofeminist Theology emerged in the late 1970s when Françoise D'Eaubonne argued for egalitarian relationships between the genders by critiquing the patriarchal systems she observed.¹⁴⁰ She wrote an article in 1974 which highlighted some of the key factors, and this laid the foundations for ecofeminists to be concerned about earth-centred religious practices. However, as ecofeminist theologians began to emerge, ecofeminist theology became a contemporary theology which critiqued the oppression of women and the domination of nature. It pointed out that Christian theologians had adopted a view of both women and nature being subjected to men. It revealed the hierarchical dualisms as a problematic perspective for both women and the natural world. More recently, in 2007 Case-Winters noted the current situation of women in society, identifying a gender power gap, the feminisation of poverty, and the

¹⁴⁰ She is the well-known person who coined the term 'Ecofeminism'. Cf. Françoise D'Eaubonne, *La féminisme ou la mort* (Paris: Pierre Horay, 1974), 113-24.

subjugation of women.¹⁴¹ She critiqued the domination due to a graded differentiation, and also argued that "self" has to be reinterpreted in relation to the earth community.¹⁴² Consequently, ecofeminist theology advocates egalitarian relationships between nature and humanity and between women and men based on the fact that all beings are a part of the earth community (God's creation). It has reinterpreted anthropology, creation, scripture, spirituality and ethics.

Ecofeminist theology applies multidisciplinary methods. First, ecofeminist theology emphasises the interdependence of life. It focuses on the mutuality and interconnectedness of all beings. It counters anthropocentrism and hierarchical dualism. Ecofeminist theologians seek to abolish the hierarchical, dualistic, and anthropocentric worldview. This approach has reinterpreted biblical themes which were understood from the patriarchal perspective. For example, ecofeminist theologians push against the interpretation of stewardship that still keeps hierarchical dualisms. McFague, a well-known ecofeminist theologian, critiques a consumerist/militarist paradigm which focuses on privileged human beings and the neo-classical economic model, claiming that human beings have benefits which allow them to control all other beings.¹⁴³ For her, sin is the refusal to share and work for a just and sustainable planet.¹⁴⁴ McFague argues in favour of an ecological-economic model, which is based on a communitarian view of humanity that is characterised by ecological (living together) and economic (sharing resources) concerns.¹⁴⁵ Like her, ecofeminist theologians rearticulate what sin is in relation to the ecological crisis and seek to reinterpret Christian biblical texts and theological reflection based on the fact that all creatures are interrelated and interdependent.

Second, ecofeminist theology values contextual methodology based on experience. In so doing, it focuses on this world and on specific contexts where living beings reside. Ruether highlights not only the interconnectedness of the cosmos but also the contemporary context.¹⁴⁶ A new

¹⁴¹ Anna Case-Winters, *Reconstructing a Christian Theology of Nature: Down to Earth* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Pub, 2007), 65-68.

¹⁴² Case-Winters, *Reconstructing a Christian Theology of Nature*, 75.

¹⁴³ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, 87.

¹⁴⁴ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, 38.

¹⁴⁵ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, 32.

¹⁴⁶ Ruether, *Gaia & God*, 5.

turning toward the earth dreams neither of a primordial paradise nor of a mechanised future. Ruether emphasises that consciousness is related to the experience of organisms and kinship.¹⁴⁷ This seeks to create a sustainable society on the earth in this current era. Ecofeminist theology leads to concern about the poor, women, and nature that are vulnerable all over the world. Gebara and Kwok, who are from the South and East respectively, have revealed more about the importance of contextual methodology. Kwok, an Asian feminist theologian, articulates that the breaking down of the eco-balance affects vulnerable people such as women and children in developing nations.¹⁴⁸ This view is deeply connected with liberation theology. Therefore, ecofeminist theology is often called ecofeminist liberation theology. Gebara, a Latin American ecofeminist liberation theologian, suggests a praxis-oriented methodology that highlights both theory and praxis. Gebara's interests are in the contexts of daily life such as the poor, the ecological crisis, health and education.¹⁴⁹ Nogueira-Godsey, a researcher of the ecofeminism of Ivone Gebara, names the praxis-oriented methodology of Gebara as "on-the move".¹⁵⁰ It reflects that ecofeminist theologians have to listen to experiences of oppression carefully and also be concerned with the ethical core practically. The most important meaning of the emphasis on experience and its context in Christian theology is to free Christians from the extreme after-life faith and to know how to live as a Christian on earth, in particular in the water crisis era and in hierarchical and (ongoing) patriarchal societies.

Third, ecofeminist theology seeks the transformation of epistemology. Gebara examines ecofeminist epistemology from a philosophical perspective.¹⁵¹ She argues that the first step of knowing is experience, the second step is the expression, and then theological truths. That is, the meaning of the deepest beliefs could be developed in minds and bodies; that meaning can communicate the real value; and it can place individuals within the traditions of their

¹⁴⁷ Ruether, *Gaia & God*, 250.

¹⁴⁸ Kwok Pui-lan, "Ecology and the Recycling of Christianity," in *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, ed. David G. Hallman (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1994), 108.

¹⁴⁹ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 2.

¹⁵⁰ Elaine Nogueira-Godsey, "A History of Resistance: Ivone Gebara's Transformative Feminist Liberation Theology," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (2013): 90.

¹⁵¹ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 19.

ancestors.¹⁵² Gebara constantly mentions that knowing is related to not only the human reality but also the wider cosmic identity. She states eight different traits of ecofeminist epistemology.¹⁵³ a) Interdependence in knowing: Humans have usually forgotten the importance of non-human beings such as animals, vegetables, and cosmic forms of consciousness. Yet, it is important to remember that all beings are also part of our greater body. Ecofeminist theology is focused on the greater body beyond the anthropocentric horizon. Ecofeminist theology is not seeing the world or other humans as objects. b) Knowing as a process: Gebara points out that ecofeminist perspective goes beyond the linear model of patriarchal epistemology. Knowing is an ongoing process from the given cultural context to the universe. c) The necessary bond between spirit and matter, mind and body: Ecofeminist perspectives stress the indissoluble unity and the intercommunion, going beyond the division between spirit and matter. d) Gender-based epistemology and ecological epistemology: For a long time, the myth of masculine universality was prevalent. Women and nature were regarded as objects. These perspectives have caused more discrimination including against women and oppressed people in official history. Thus, Gebara argues for the importance of solidarity. e) Contextual epistemology: Gebara stresses that a universal localness is important for ecofeminist epistemology. f) Holistic epistemology: Holistic epistemology leads one to think about “the possibility of multiple ways of knowing”.¹⁵⁴ g) Affective epistemology: Most people who are influenced by patriarchal structure had accepted the traditional distinctions between rational and emotional and between men and women. Yet, in fact, affective epistemology can be connected with “their individual characters, their life situations, and their cultures”.¹⁵⁵ h) Inclusive epistemology: This epistemology can be started when the diversity of experiences is recognised. These traits of ecofeminist epistemology are closely related to my methodology (section 2.1). Hence, I pursue the transformation of epistemology on the basis of ecofeminist theological perspectives. Gebara’s third approach (‘c’ above) is the main argument of my thesis in relation to water (and water justice): the interconnectedness between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water.

¹⁵² Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 50.

¹⁵³ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 52-65.

¹⁵⁴ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 62.

¹⁵⁵ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 64.

In short, these three methods of ecofeminist theology demonstrate the definitions and characteristics of ecofeminist theology. These cannot be understood as “new” descriptions in my thesis as I have already mentioned them in previous chapters in order to articulate my overall research approaches and methodology, based on ecofeminist theological perspectives. However, this section contributes to the presentations of theological reflection of some major ecofeminist theologians in relation to the characteristics of an ecofeminist framework (section 3.2). In the next section, I revisit the meaning of the presence of humanity and the relationship between humans, nature, and God on the basis of ecofeminist theology. This study leads us to realise the significance of understanding theological anthropology in order to develop a theology of water.

3.3.2 Ecofeminist Theological Anthropology

What is humanity and why is it important to look at the presence of humanity? The understanding of humanity is linked to the relationship with water and water justice issues. Human arrogance often has a direct relationship with the cause of a water crisis. For Christians who believe in God, an awareness of humanity cannot be a simple investigation. The reason is that human beings are understood through the lens of the relationship between God, other living beings and nature. However, it is hard to deny that a traditional Christian understanding of anthropology has been influenced by hierarchical and human-centred approaches. These approaches are related to a dualistic tendency which regards the spiritual world, the soul, and male-ness as ‘good’, in comparison to the material world, the body, and female-ness as ‘evil’.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, in this section, by critiquing these approaches, I emphasise the need for the reconstruction of the relationship between human beings, all living beings, earth and God. This research ultimately recognises what ecofeminist theology seeks and how to develop a theology of water by applying this reconstructive way.

¹⁵⁶ Gillian McCulloch, *The Deconstruction of Dualism in Theology: With Special Reference to Ecofeminist Theology and New Age Spirituality* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Theological Monographs, 2002), 1.

Christian theologians have addressed understandings of human beings in a variety of ways. A number of scholars have focused on a structural, or essentialist, account and/or a functionalist account of an image of God, both of which tend to be hierarchical.¹⁵⁷ First of all, they have interpreted human beings as special beings in comparison with other creatures. According to Gen 1:27, God created humans in the image of God (*Imago Dei*), particularly with reference to the ontological way of understanding of humanity. For example, Augustine affirms that all humans share the same properties such as rationality; these shared properties contribute to what is commonly spoken of as *Imago Dei*.¹⁵⁸ This insistence is definitely based on an anthropocentric and dualistic approach: 1) it disregards the value of other living beings by viewing human beings as superior to all other creatures; 2) it over-values rationality in comparison with the whole human body or the fullness of humanity; and 3) it ignores vulnerable beings who have low cognitive capabilities. Consequently, traditional Christian theology has been influenced by these invalid or questionable paradigms. Therefore, human beings could easily be a deluded dominator or master of/over nature.

A functional account presupposes a strong separation between humanity and nature. According to a functional view, *Imago Dei* is interpreted by focusing on what humanity does. In Gen 1:26, God said, “Let them (humankind) have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” These words imply that humanity has special duties and responsibilities with regard to the other creatures on earth. These are also related to Gen 2:15 which is a popular verse for stewardship: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it”. These two verses lead humanity to regard itself as being in a special relationship with God in a functional way. This has been regarded as an important principle in

¹⁵⁷ Cortez offers a multi-faceted view, which combines three different perspectives: structural (ontological), functional and relational. This multi-faceted approach seems to be a way of combining the strength of the other options and reducing their weaknesses. However, it does not work because it is impossible for both hierarchy and continuity to co-exist on account of the difficulties of integrating both approaches into one. Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2010), 18-29.

¹⁵⁸ Saint Augustine, *On the Trinity: Books 8-15*, trans. Stephen McKenna and ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7.

classical theological anthropology and it helps us to understand the special responsibilities of humanity.

However, it is necessary to recognise that a functional role of humanity such as stewardship tends to disregard other living beings. Hall, an eco-theologian, favours a relational ontology, which is based on conversational characteristics, in order to reinterpret *Imago Dei*.¹⁵⁹ He does not focus on the image of God through physical similarities such as mutual rationality and mutual ability to dominate. Clifford, an ecofeminist theologian, proposes that the biblical symbol of *Imago Dei* affirms both the full human dignity of both genders and “the solidarity of humans with God, the Earth and all its life forms”.¹⁶⁰ Her view supports the relational account which connects with full humanity, God and the Earth. The reinterpretation of *Imago Dei* indicates that ecofeminist theological anthropology seeks to build an ontological non-anthropological approach, a functional responsibility towards mutuality between all creatures and humanity as well as relational equality. This approach contributes to the transformation of patriarchal relationships and domination into non-hierarchical and non-patriarchal relationships.

Like Clifford, Ruether addresses the question of the reality of hierarchical structures in the relationship of human beings. She also emphasises the need for a full humanity in which both women and men are equal players.¹⁶¹ She reinterprets the structural and functional approaches on the basis of equality and mutuality. As I have indicated throughout this chapter, according to the androcentric understanding, men with mind and soul are superior, while women with body are inferior. This understanding emphasises that women have responsibility for human sin and women are inferior to men. Ruether critiques the subjugation of women, which can be a part of patriarchal anthropology in traditional Christian theology.¹⁶² In addition, according to her, the fundamental problem of the domination of the earth is the dualism between soul and body. It is

¹⁵⁹ Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 60.

¹⁶⁰ Anne M. Clifford, “When Being Human Becomes Truly Earthly,” in *In The Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O’Hara Graff (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1995), 187.

¹⁶¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press books, 1993), 19.

¹⁶² Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 95.

based on Greek tradition which emphasises the value of rationality rather than bodiliness: the soul tends to be valued more highly than the body. This leads us to understand, incorrectly, that the body and the earth are less valued than the soul and the spirit. Based on this critical understanding, Ruether supports equality between women and men in the image of God and its restoration in Christ.¹⁶³ She develops an ontological way of conceiving *Imago Dei* in order to address concerns about equalities between genders. In a functional way, she highlights the human responsibility rather than the opportunity for humans to dominate other living beings on Earth. She also expands the relational approach in order to consider the fundamental causes for the anthropocentric, hierarchical, and patriarchal perspectives and it is useful to develop an authentic theological interpretation of nature and women relationships. Her analysis is the perspective which ecofeminist theology challenges, and on which my study is based.

This perspective is closely related to alternative anthropological positions which have been proposed by Gebara and Bingemer. They put forward four important shifts: a) from a male-centred to a human-centred anthropology, b) from a dualistic to a unifying anthropology, c) from an idealist to a realist anthropology, and d) from a one-dimensional to a pluri-dimensional anthropology.¹⁶⁴ These shifts are valuable since they help us to overcome the male-centred, dualistic, idealist and one-dimensional tendency of Christian anthropology; instead, the full humanity, unifying, realistic and pluri-dimensional approaches are emphasised. Gebara proposes a new anthropology which supports poor indigenous women and black women. She develops a critique of the praxis in Latin-American theology which did not value women's experience and perspectives. Gebara values women's experience and perspectives which critique male-centred and dualistic theological discourses, resulting in a gender biased Christian anthropology. She favours an awareness of humanity as "being in relationship, then consciousness, then personal creativity".¹⁶⁵ Her anthropology contributes to the highlighting of an egalitarian relationship

¹⁶³ Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 99.

¹⁶⁴ Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer, *Mary: Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates Ltd, 1989), 3.

¹⁶⁵ Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, trans. Ann Patrick Ware (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 134.

between women and men, and individual personal identity including race. However, this anthropology should be further understood in relation to the natural environment on earth.

For this anthropology, the position of humanity on earth must be reinterpreted and reminded to humans. Humans tend to consider themselves as the centrepiece on earth. This is seen in a variety of injustice issues such as water issues. It has led ecofeminist theologians and eco-theologians to be interested in the relationship between humanity and the earth. For example, Ruether affirms that humans and nature are in deep kinship.¹⁶⁶ In addition, humans are finite beings, and as stated in Gen 2:7, created from the dust of the Earth. It is necessary to respect the value of all other interdependent beings and humbly recognise human finiteness. Furthermore, Conradie, an eco-theologian, applies *oikos* (the family or the house) for describing this earth.¹⁶⁷ He demonstrates that humans and creatures are part of the 'household' of God.

“The metaphor of the household of God is indeed able to integrate a variety of ecumenical social concerns, including a) the integrity of the biophysical foundations of this house (the earth’s biosphere), b) the economic management of the household’s affairs, c) the need for peace and reconciliation amidst ethnic, religious and domestic violence within this single household, d) a concern for issues of health and education, e) the place of women and children within this household, and f) an ecumenical sense of the unity not only of the church, but also of the human community as a whole and of all of God’s creation, the whole inhabited world (*oikoumene*).¹⁶⁸

The image of a household is not static. It entails a variety of relatedness, including the etymological link between ecology and economy. This awareness allows us to advocate for the economic life of God in and to the earth in the 21st century. However, ecofeminist theologians seek a more radical and specific way than eco-theologians. Here, I examine McFague’s constructive understanding in detail as an example among ecofeminist theologians. While Conradie present the close relationship between God, humanity and nature through the metaphor of the household of God, McFague revisits and reconstructs images of the world, God,

¹⁶⁶ Ruether, *Gaia & God*, 22.

¹⁶⁷ Ernst M. Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology: At Home on Earth?* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 6.

¹⁶⁸ Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology*, 7.

and nature because she wants to overcome the traditional Christian understandings which have been influenced by anthropocentric and androcentric approaches. McFague suggests a model of the world as the body of God.¹⁶⁹ She refers to God as the spirit of the body which is interdependent from the world. Although the model can limit God within a visible body, she ultimately emphasises the embodiment of God in nature and this world. The embodiment also leads us to rethink the image of God, which has traditionally been interpreted in patriarchal, imperialistic, and transcendent ways. McFague critiques the inappropriate images for God like king, lord, father and ruler in our current context. Rather, she proposes alternative models of God such as mother, lover, and friend which are based on anti-dualistic and non-hierarchical structures.¹⁷⁰ The image of God and the world contributes to the significance of the immanent God, processes of creation and feminist epistemology. That is, God is a continuing creator, not an external architect. This understanding allows us to recognise the intrinsic worth of all creation as well; not power and particular groups such as humans (as distinct from nature), men, and privileged people. This is based on the fact that all creatures are sacramental: because a) all is from God; b) all reveals the presence of God; and c) all advocates the image of God who is both immanent and transcends this world. However, there is no doubt that nature has been polluted and destroyed because of having been plundered by humanity. Overpopulation, consumption, and an instrumentalist approach tend to disrupt the intrinsic value of creation. These contribute to regarding nature as a passive matter to humanity. McFague affirms that “human beings have caused nature to be the new poor in the same way that a small elite of the human population has created and continues to create the old poor – through a gross imbalance of the haves and have-nots”.¹⁷¹ This is an attempt to move away from a human-centred approach towards the inclusion of nature as a category of a vulnerable presence on earth. McFague, furthermore, regards humans as guardians so that both the interrelationship between all beings and the common responsibility for the earth are emphasised.¹⁷² Like her, ecofeminist theologians have sought to achieve ecological harmony and human responsibility on this earth.

¹⁶⁹ Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 16.

¹⁷⁰ Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 91.

¹⁷¹ McFague, *The Body of God*, 166.

¹⁷² McFague, *The Body of God*, 109.

Consequently, ecofeminist theological anthropology demonstrates the specific reconstructive claim about the relationship between humans, all living beings, earth, and God on the basis of ecofeminist theology. The reconstructive way leads me to recognise how important it is to apply non-hierarchical and non-patriarchal approaches in Christian theology. It is significant that Christian sources must be reinterpreted by the reconstructive understanding which highlights inter-relatedness. However, the importance of this reinterpretation is not yet reflected within certain Christian sources. This is why I want to apply the approach in order to re-read Christian texts on water throughout my thesis. In order to highlight the ecofeminist framework in relation to a theology of water, I use the term 'ecofeminist theology of water'. This is addressed in the next section.

3.4 An Ecofeminist Theology of Water

Based on the ecofeminist theory and theological characteristics which I explored in section 3.2 above, in this section I demonstrate a theology of water with an ecofeminist theological perspective, arguing that it is a specific description and extension of ecofeminist theology. The necessity of the term 'an ecofeminist theology of water' might be questioned, yet I assert that this study contributes to a development of not only specific theological reflection in relation to water but also one of a variety of ecofeminist theological analyses.

An ecofeminist theology of water has four key features. First, water is addressed as a main issue. Water embraces a range of meanings in relation to diverse relationships. According to Lahiri-Dutt, "A range of meanings of water can emerge from cross-cultural comparisons of specific social, spatial, economic and political arrangements, cosmological and religious beliefs, knowledge and material culture, as well as ecological constraints and opportunities".¹⁷³ Peppard affirms that "Water is rarely "uniform": it is experienced culturally and geographically, mediated by particular places and histories, political economies, institutional arrangements, and social frameworks. In

¹⁷³ Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, "Introduction," in *Fluid Bonds: Views on Gender and Water*, ed. Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (Kolkata: Stree, 2006), xvi.

other words, water is a socio-natural substance, a material reality mediated by multiple cultural and social constructions".¹⁷⁴ Like their understanding, water is an important substance in the middle of a variety of relationships and it has a range of meanings. Furthermore, Peppard describes the characteristics of water, as follows: "First, water holds a central role in cosmological narratives. Second, fresh water is essential for human and ecosystem survival and flourishing. Third, water is materially, geographically, and culturally mediated. Finally, since the Industrial Revolution, human activities have dramatically affected the quality and quantity of available fresh water supply".¹⁷⁵ Her statement shows that water is inextricably associated with a relationship with: a) cosmological narratives, b) humanity and ecosystems, c) a variety of contexts, and d) human activities. This fact allows me to value those four points in my thesis. I examine water and meanings of water in biblical stories in relation to cosmological narratives (chapter 4) in detail. I do not look at the creation narrative in Genesis 1, which is the popular cosmological narrative, yet the Samaritan woman and Jesus' story and the story of Noah's Flood are similarly related to cosmological narratives. In addition, by looking at the sacrament of baptism (chapter 5), the relationship between water and cosmological narratives are addressed. These studies support the fact that water connects not only to all living beings and ecosystems but also to a variety of contexts beyond time and place. The impact of human activities is addressed relatively frequently in ecumenical movements (chapter 6). Since water has both a physical and a spiritual value, it is regarded as a link that leads me to conclude that both meanings are significant. Therefore, an ecofeminist theology of water addresses the ongoing relationship between meanings of physical and spiritual meanings of water.

Second, an ecofeminist theology of water is concerned with a variety of contexts which are related to the issues provoked by the current global water crisis. My thesis is more focused on a specific context in South Korea since focusing my study on one particular country helps me to recognise one of the diversity of contexts in relation to water (chapter 1). This arises from the fact that anthropocentric, dualistic and patriarchal paradigms, which introduce a disjuncture

¹⁷⁴ Christiana Z. Peppard, "Hydrology, Theology, and Laudato Si'," *Theological Studies* 77, no.2 (2016): 431.

¹⁷⁵ Christiana Z. Peppard, "Water," in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Willis Jenkins, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 286.

between humans and non-humans and between men and women, are regarded as the main problematic causes for the water crisis issues. This approach is similar to liberation theology in a) the prioritization of practice and context before developing a theoretical approach; b) a 'from below' approach (starting with vulnerable living beings); and c) liberation from the current unjust situations (and systems).¹⁷⁶ However, an ecofeminist theological approach is unique and specific to this context as it firstly critiques the patriarchal system which causes a number of different subject-object relationships such as men-women and humanity-water, and secondly is concerned with not only vulnerable people but also all creatures and nature (this is not confined to humanity). Based on this approach, an ecofeminist theology of water contributes to the establishment of a renewed value of water and action from both a practical and theological perspective in the glocal water crisis era.

Third, an ecofeminist theology of water critiques the dualistic anthropocentric and the holistic approaches, both of which can result in the misinterpretation of humanity itself and of the relationship between humanity and non-human creatures on earth. As I examined previously, an anthropocentric approach creates a hierarchy, which leads to exploitative relationships with nature. Privileged groups (power elites) affect not only social imbalances between humans but also impact ecological destruction. Bookchin argues that this is because of "selfishness", not from an "excess of selfhood".¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, it might be argued that holism is the opposite of a dualistic hierarchy; however, this is not the case. The holistic approach, which tends to amalgamate all beings and ecosystems into one, regards humanity as a single species and denies diversities or differences between individuals as well as societies. Alternatively, Plumwood suggests mutual selfhood: "The self makes essential connection to earth others, and hence as a product of a certain sort of relational identity".¹⁷⁸ The ecological identity of 'mutual selfhood'

¹⁷⁶ Peter C. Phan, "Method In Liberation Theologies," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000): 41-42.

¹⁷⁷ Bookchin is one of those who says hierarchies in society lead to hierarchy of humans over nature. He is following anarchist traditions, so the problem is social organisation in the forms of hierarchy that leads to human-nature hierarchies. His social ecological thought reveals that human power elites, who rule over others and treat nature instrumentally (we can regard it as "selfishness"), cause the domination associated with hierarchies. cf. Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," *Green Perspectives: Newsletter of the Green Program Project*, nos. 4-5 (Summer, 1987), <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-social-ecology-versus-deep-ecology-a-challenge-for-the-ecology-movement>, 10.

¹⁷⁸ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 185.

leads me to consider the relationship between all beings and the earth. This approach denies the model of master and helps to develop a notion of interconnectedness (continuity). Consequently, this can be understood as an alternative which enables us to overcome both dualist anthropocentric and holistic approaches.

Fourth, an ecofeminist theology of water seeks the recovery of the integrity of creation. This was first highlighted by the WCC Assembly at Vancouver in 1983.¹⁷⁹

By the “integrity of creation” I mean *the value of all creatures in themselves, for one another, and for God, and their interconnectedness in a diverse whole that has unique value for God*. To forget the integrity of creation is to forget that the earth itself is a splendid whole which, in conjunction with the stars and galaxies, is a source of divine delight. It is to forget that the myriad animals and plants on earth, whose habitats we destroy through deforestation and urban sprawl, contribute to “a diverse whole that has unique value for God”. And it is to forget that the animals we torment in laboratories and food production, in consumer testing and recreation, have value “in and for themselves”, as well as “for God”, quite apart from their usefulness to us.

The integrity of creation has attracted the attention of theologians and ecumenical churches who have proposed a variety of theoretical and practical responses. Although the integrity of creation can be regarded as an old-fashioned affirmation because it has been addressed over the last 40 years, it is still important research which should be more examined more deeply in Christian theology. The most significant fact is that the integrity of creation has already embraced the significance of the liberation of women and nature. An ecofeminist theology of water addresses meanings of water in a non-hierarchical way as well as being a means of connecting mutual selfhood. One can argue that humanity and all living beings are dependent on water while water is not dependent on humanity. However, the possibility that humanity easily causes water crises shows the interdependence between them. Therefore, humanity has a responsibility to care for water on earth which is in and with God’s presence. An ecofeminist theology of water addresses this fact; therefore, I concentrate on this within the context of an ecumenical movement (chapter

¹⁷⁹ The definition of “the integrity of creation” can be found in the report of the consultation at Annecy, France in 1989. I introduce this source from this McDaniel’s writing because he describes accurately the definition on the basis of the WCC report. cf. Jay McDaniel, ““Where is the Holy Spirit Anyway?” Response to a Sceptic Environmentalist,” *The Ecumenical Review* 42, no. 2 (April 1990): 165.

6). In so doing, an ecofeminist theology of water offers a theoretical and practical possibility to overcome commodification, patriarchy and hierarchy on earth.

In short, an ecofeminist theology of water helps us to realise the relationship between God, water, and humanity on earth by highlighting water as God's blessings and God's care to all. In addition, this suggests how to address a range of unequal water issues which have been caused by a number of anthropocentric and hierarchical perspectives. Based on the cosmological love of God which cannot be confined to only Christians, life-giving water is not only for rich or privileged people, but for all living beings regardless of their race, property, and gender.

3.5 Evaluation and Conclusion

Amidst this range of different theories and theological reflections, I have demonstrated that ecofeminist theological perspectives are well positioned to develop a theology of water. This is because ecofeminist theology pursues a) the critique of anthropocentric, dualistic and patriarchal paradigms which are oppressive in placing male above female, mind above body, human (culture) above nature, and transcendence above immanence, b) the interconnectedness of all beings, and c) the incorporation of theory and practice.

In section 3.1, the examination of contexts on the relationship between water and women helps me to recognise the fact that water and women are closely related as well as why the global water crisis should be an imperative issue that we have to consider in the 21st century. So far, most examples or contexts in which water is related to women have been situated in developing nations. There is an interesting point that water issues are different between women in developing nations and in developed nations. While the gendered social roles regarding water are not a significant issue in developed nations, developing nations commonly think that women have a greater responsibility than men to get drinking and clean water for their family. On the other hand, Mellor argues that the global North has an invisible water crisis in comparison with the global South. The issues in the global North tend to revolve around poverty and health with access to clean water, while the global South needs urgent support in order to survive a water

crisis.¹⁸⁰ It is essential to note that such a binary distinction can be perceived as oversimplified as in fact each region has a complex set of issues, and while there may be overarching trends, it's important to recognise the diversity of challenges and contexts within each. Nevertheless, it remains evident that distinct water-related concerns and social situations arise in different glocal contexts.

The most noticeable point is that this chapter contributes to the search for an alternative Christian worldview which opposes anthropocentric, hierarchical, and patriarchal worldviews. The alternative worldview focuses on interconnectedness between all creatures and nature. This study is important because it provides room for the question of women and water. The search for a reading to interpret the relationship between water and women critiques the anthropological foundations of Christian theology. The relationship between humans and non-humans looks into the re-individuation of the human self. However, human relationships are both prone to and structured within hierarchies – binaries and dualisms — grounded in the major traditions of Hebrew and Greek metaphysics.¹⁸¹ The organic and life-producing nature of women and water is a theological point to meditate on. An ecofeminist theology of water articulates the co-relationship between God, all living beings, and nature (water); it is related to the image of God; and it is related to the eschatological dimension of earthly existence.

By examining the ecofeminist framework in section 3.2, I have demonstrated the interconnection between both ecofeminist theory and ecofeminist theology. This research is significant because an earth-centred approach is applied in my thesis by looking at an interdisciplinary work such as ecofeminist theory. My research has highlighted the reconstructive way, which is influenced by the earth-centred approach, to seek an alternative Christian view based on non-hierarchical and non-patriarchal worldviews. Ecofeminist theological anthropology represents how to apply an earth-centred approach in Christian sources. The arguments of well-known scholars such as Ruether, Gebara, and McFague have helped me to realise the significance of an earth-centred

¹⁸⁰ Mary Mellor, *Ecofeminism & Ecology* (UK: Polity Press, 1997), 25.

¹⁸¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Ecofeminism – The Challenge to Theology," *DEP*, no. 20 (2012): 23.

approach in order to re-read Christian sources. Ruether's research (re-reading the Christian texts and traditions by using the reconstructive way) shows me a way in which earth-centred and tradition-centred approaches might be complemented. On the basis of this perspective, the next chapter examines Christian sources, and specifically, biblical texts in order to seek the integrity of creation. Therefore, my thesis demonstrates that the issue of water crises and the disparity between genders is no longer an addendum to Christian theology.

Chapter 4 An Exploration of Christian Scripture within an Ecofeminist Theology of Water¹⁸²

In order to demonstrate the fact that tradition-centred and earth-centred approaches are compatible, this chapter explores an account of water in John 4:1-42 and Genesis 6-9 on the basis of ecofeminist theological perspectives. Looking at Scripture is a typical tradition-centred approach, yet by using a reconstructive way that is earth-centred, I demonstrate how the two work together. John 4:1-42 is a text in the New Testament which depicts an event in the context of water shortages (characteristic of the region), while Genesis 6-9 is a text in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible which describes floods. The role of water in these two different contexts – water shortage and floods — can be interpreted in a variety of ways. A number of scholars have focused on the spiritual living water of Jesus and the punishment of God through the flood. They have valued drinking water for the Samaritan woman and the meaning of blessing through flood much less, if at all.

As I have examined in chapter 3, ecofeminist theology not only critiques anthropocentric, dualistic and patriarchal paradigms, but it also values the interconnectedness between God, all living beings, and nature. This approach, therefore, pursues an alternative Christian worldview which is more focused on all living beings on earth without any disparity. In addition, it is important not to undervalue one or other of the two interpretations of water (water as a physical resource and as a spiritual metaphor), if this leads us to put a greater emphasis on the former to the detriment of the latter. Still, commentators on John 4:1-42 and Genesis 6-9 have found it quite hard to maintain the two together. Therefore, this chapter examines these two scriptural passages from the perspective of understanding water as a practical means of giving life and a sign of God's blessing, and how they make a contribution to combining the two approaches. My study helps us to understand the variety of meanings of water in contrasting contexts in the biblical texts. Both meanings of water are interconnected with each other, rather than separated.

¹⁸² Some parts of sections 4.1 and 4.2 have been published in *Practical Theology* and is available here: Seoyoung Kim, "The story of the Samaritan woman and Jesus (John 4:1-41) focusing on water within an ecofeminist theological perspective," *Practical Theology* 15, no.5 (2022): 467-478.

In this chapter, ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics are employed to explore directly-opposing situations related to water: drought and flood. Despite being polar opposites, we are able to connect them both with life-giving in biblical and theological analyses. Before dealing with detailed biblical texts on these themes, it is necessary to understand what ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics are since this is the hermeneutical tool in this chapter of my thesis. Therefore, the nature of ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics is examined.

4.1 Ecofeminist Biblical Hermeneutics

Ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics seek to articulate the oppression of nature and the oppression of women. This approach focuses on listening to the voices of those who have been ignored, in particular, as a result of dualistic hierarchies. It also helps us to recognise the intrinsic value of all beings and nature and their interconnectedness. Based on these values, ecofeminist theologians have drawn on a range of biblical texts, yet their specific biblical hermeneutics are not as well developed in comparison with those of their ecological and feminist counterparts. This section is not proposing a developed ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics. Instead, I borrow some approaches from ecological and feminist biblical hermeneutics because their values and pursuits are closely connected to ecofeminist theological perspectives and their approaches are reasonably well developed. Therefore, this section addresses some of these approaches and determines a hermeneutical structure which I use to examine John 4:1-42 and Genesis 6-9 in the following sections.

I introduce and employ four different hermeneutics which have been influenced by feminist and ecological hermeneutics in the reading of two stories. A hermeneutics of experience helps me to examine contexts; a hermeneutics of suspicion allows me to recognise the human-centred, male-centred, and kyriocentric (Lord/master-centred) interpretations of many theological traditions;¹⁸³ a hermeneutics of reconfiguration leads me to build an alternative way of thinking

¹⁸³ Fiorenza develops the term, 'kyriocentric/kyriocentrism' as a comprehensive expanded meaning of patriarchy; it embraces lord, slave master, father, and elite men centred. This term is useful to express the multiple structures of dominations. c.f. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992); and *Sharing Her Word*.

in Christian theology; and a hermeneutics of transformative action for change helps me to find practical approaches within contemporary societies. With each hermeneutics, I explore four principles: intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, and purpose, in both stories. Although these four principles are based on ecological justice, they make an important contribution to recovering the value of biblical texts.

4.1.1 Recovery and Resistance

Those adopting an ecofeminist biblical approach to hermeneutics, in the same way as ecological and feminist biblical hermeneutics, have attempted to reinterpret scriptures which have historically been interpreted by human-centred and dualistic patriarchal approaches. Two alternative approaches are proposed within the literature: recovery and resistance. Scholars who support the strategy of recovery (e.g. apologetic readers) try to find eco-friendly scriptures in order to defend the Christian tradition. They argue that “the Bible is not itself the problem, but the problem came through the acts of later interpreters, who obscured and distorted the positive meaning of the original.”¹⁸⁴ They believe that biblical texts reveal positive understandings of God’s creation, and therefore a number of problematic statements are caused by the misinterpretations of later interpreters. This approach has an advantage of recovering biblical authorities, yet it tends to select texts which contain the positive meanings and to dismiss a variety of understandings of the historical/traditional interpretations and contexts of readers and the biblical texts.

On the other hand, scholars, who support the strategy of resistance, critique and reject some biblical texts which devalue the earth and earth community. For them, it is important to see creation as kin.¹⁸⁵ They demonstrate that humanity and men are the superior ruler of the earth and women.¹⁸⁶ Feminist theologians and certain eco-theologians (e.g., those associated with the

¹⁸⁴ Kivatsi J. Kavusa, “Ecological Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Biblical Texts Yesterday, Today and Onwards: Critical Reflection and Assessment,” *Old Testament Essays* 32, no. 1 (2019): 239.

¹⁸⁵ Norman C. Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 4-5.

¹⁸⁶ Norman C. Habel, “Introducing the Earth Bible,” in *Readings from the perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 34.

Earth Bible Project) employ this reading of resistance. This approach focuses on critical analysis by using contemporary ethical standards.¹⁸⁷ It identifies passages which are influenced by hierarchical and patriarchal perspectives and helps us to be concerned about the earth as a subject. However, it looks too reliant on ethical principles rather than on biblical authority. These two contrasting strategies are useful to understand biblical texts, yet only focusing on classifications which either defend or reject the Christian tradition is to impose too great a dichotomy. It might be a hard task to be concerned about both approaches because recovery and resistance are at opposite ends of the spectrum.

Over the past 50 years, there are some biblical texts which have largely been interpreted in either a recovery or a resistance way. Most texts are hard to be classified simply into the two approaches. At first sight, John 4:1-42 is related to a reading of recovery, while Genesis 6-9 is connected with a reading of resistance. However, by reading carefully it becomes apparent that both scriptures need to be examined using both hermeneutical approaches, even though the weighting of each type is differently applied. Revisionist eco-theologians (who pursue an approach which is concerned not only about rediscovering, identifying and revising, but also about celebrating the ecological value in the Bible) attempt to pay attention to developing an ecological reclamation of texts.¹⁸⁸ They argue that both recovery and resistance are necessary to read the Bible: “The Bible needs to be read with both suspicion and sympathy; it requires the exercise of both resistance and recovery, depending, in part, on the particular text in view”.¹⁸⁹ I agree with this approach, yet I also affirm that readings based on recovery and resistance must be based on a reconstructive way of ecofeminist theology. This is how I demonstrate the compatible relationship between a tradition-centred and an earth-centred approach (section 2.1.1).

¹⁸⁷ Ivone Gebara, “Ecofeminism: An Ethics of Life,” in *Ecofeminism and Globalization: Exploring Culture, Context, and Religion*, ed. Heather Eaton and Lois Ann Lorentzen (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 173-74.

¹⁸⁸ Kavusa, “Ecological Hermeneutics,” 244.

¹⁸⁹ Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 13.

In order to apply this approach, I use some of the ‘six eco-justice principles’ of the Earth Bible Project: a) intrinsic worth; b) interconnectedness; c) voice; d) purpose; e) mutual custodianship; and f) resistance.¹⁹⁰ The Earth Bible Project is based on a resistance way, yet its principles can be regarded as standards which discern whether or not a text is close to recovery or resistance. These principles are: Simply stated, if a biblical text is concerned with these principles, the text needs to recover the ethical values. On the contrary, if it is against these principles, the text demonstrates a resistance. The six principles suggest practical standards that need to underpin ecological justice on earth.¹⁹¹ Although the ethical principles are not derived from biblical authorities, they are closely connected to ethics/virtues/values found in the Bible. Kavusa applies four eco-justice principles – intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, and purpose – to interpret meanings of water in the Old Testament.¹⁹² He does not mention why he chose these four principles for his research. Instead, he only articulates that “according to the Earth Bible Team, readers of the Bible may not find all these principles useful in reading a given biblical text afresh.”¹⁹³ The absence of mutual custodianship and resistance indicates that he does not attribute great importance to each of these. I agree with his point because a) the use of custodianship instead of stewardship cannot transform a fundamental worldview;¹⁹⁴ and b) resistance is already set as a reading strategy (see the previous paragraph). Therefore, in a similar way to Kavusa, I apply the four principles (intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, and purpose) which allow us to read the Bible using both a recovery and resistance strategy. Four principles pave the way for me to identify and interpret meanings of water in the following sections.

¹⁹⁰ Norman C. Habel, “Six Ecojustice principles,” in *Readings from the perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 24.

¹⁹¹ cf. Norman C. Habel, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” *Spiritual Horizons* 11, no. 11 (Fall 2016): 92-109.

¹⁹² Kivatsi J. Kavusa, *Water and Water-related Phenomena in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature: An Eco-Theological Exploration* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020), 6.

¹⁹³ Kavusa, *Water and Water-related Phenomena in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, 6.

¹⁹⁴ I do not use the principle of ‘mutual custodianship’ because the idea of custodianship allows us to fall relatively easily into a misunderstanding of a person as a guardian of, and over, other beings. Of course, ‘mutual custodianship’, which is further enhanced by using the word ‘mutual’ (and is therefore more appropriate than a similar term, ‘stewardship’) highlights partnership, but this is still based on anthropocentric perspectives. Cf. Christopher Lind, “Ecojustice: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?” (paper presented at the Synod of the Diocese of Niagara, Anglican Church of Canada, November 2007), 14, https://niagaraanglican.ca/climatejustice/docs/animating/LIND_NiagaraEcoJustice_v3web.pdf.

These four principles can be expanded to embrace the liberation of nature and women. First, Intrinsic value challenges us to focus on each living being on earth. Eaton observes that scholars, who advocate the principle of intrinsic worth, tend to overlook the importance of socio-political analysis.¹⁹⁵ However, for me, the emphasis of intrinsic value is on the basis of the relationship with a socio-political approach. In so doing I critique some interpretations which highlight the instrumental values of earth or of vulnerable living beings. Therefore, it is necessary to read the Bible carefully to establish whether the texts seek intrinsic value or not. Second, interconnectedness allows us to recognise interdependency. Interconnectedness often accepts unequal power relations as common sense so that it is important to analyse the power balance in the relationship.¹⁹⁶ This principle highlights the fact that hierarchical dualism should not co-exist with connectedness. Third, the principle of voice leads us to change the subject from people to earth, from social majorities to social minorities or vulnerable people. Most biblical texts focus on humanity, majorities, and men, but this principle values a diversity of beings. Fourth, the principle of purpose helps us to seek a sustainable life of all beings on earth. Traditional Christian cosmology, which is influenced by hierarchical and patriarchal perspectives, focuses on God's purpose or design which is for Christians rather than non-Christians together with all living beings, towards the afterlife and heaven rather than this earth, and the spiritual rather than material. That is why Eaton argues that "the great danger of this principle is its potential to function as a hegemonic metanarrative, and it is difficult, verging on impossible, to combine it with postmodernism".¹⁹⁷ However, I contend that if the principle of purpose is based on reconstructed Christian cosmology, which is developed by an earth-centred approach, it could be towards the liberation of women and nature. This principle helps us to be concerned with the sustainable earth on which our ancestors lived, we are living, and our offspring will be living.

The most important thing is that I contribute to finding a way, which supports not only tradition-centred but also earth-centred approaches. This does not mean that I fully accept both

¹⁹⁵ Heather Eaton, "Ecofeminist Contributions to an Ecojustice Hermeneutics," in *Readings from the perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 64.

¹⁹⁶ Eaton, "Ecofeminist Contributions to an Ecojustice Hermeneutics," 65.

¹⁹⁷ Eaton, "Ecofeminist Contributions to an Ecojustice Hermeneutics," 68.

approaches to read the Bible; rather I make a way which can re-read the Bible by using both the strategies of recovery and resistance and the reconstructive way of ecofeminist theology (chapter 3). In so doing, I reclaim Christian values within this earth community.

4.1.2 Spiral of Ongoing Interpretation

It is important to see the connection between texts, contexts, and histories. Conradie argues for a “spiral of ongoing interpretation” with these factors: 1) historical contexts of the text; 2) traditions of interpretation; 3) contemporary contexts of readers; and 4) a variety of interpretations through ages.¹⁹⁸ He establishes that heuristic or doctrinal keys “are not directly derived from either the Biblical texts or the contemporary world but are precisely the product of previous attempts to construct a relationship between text, tradition and context”.¹⁹⁹ Fiorenza describes four different poles: interpreter (reader/write), text(context/intertext), world (socio-political formations and institutions), and ideology (inscribed in language and signifying practices) to communicate with each other for a critical interpretation for liberation.²⁰⁰ As both theologians mention, biblical hermeneutics are co-related to texts, contexts, histories, traditions, ideologies and world. The spiral of ongoing interpretation helps us to understand the meanings of texts thoughtfully.

This approach leads us to be concerned about a variety of contexts. The understanding of contexts of texts, historical interpreters, and contemporary readers should be carefully addressed in ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics. According to Gutiérrez, a liberation theologian, texts are deeply related to recognising socio-political contexts, and particularly to poverty and violent oppression.²⁰¹ Fiorenza also points out that a critical interpretation for liberation starts from a reflection, which is influenced by our own experiences and socio-political contexts.²⁰² This

¹⁹⁸ Ernst M. Conradie, “Towards an Ecological Biblical Hermeneutics: A Review Essay on the Earth Bible Project,” *Scriptura* 85 (2004): 130.

¹⁹⁹ Ernst M. Conradie, “The Road Towards an Ecological Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics,” *Scriptura* 93 (2006): 306.

²⁰⁰ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998), 77.

²⁰¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans., and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973), xl.

²⁰² Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 77.

approach is close to a liberationist hermeneutic which is also concerned with contexts and particularly with marginalised groups. However, it is meaningful that feminist theologians are expanding marginalised groups to include gender issues, and moreover ecofeminist theologians include both nature and gender in marginalised groups. Both feminist and ecofeminist theologians are concerned about women's own experience as well. Farley clarifies, "feminist consciousness recognizes the importance of women's own experience as a way to understanding; it takes seriously the essential embodiment of human persons; it opens to an ecological view of the value of all of nature and the context of the whole of the universe; it affirms a mode of collaboration as the primary mode for human interaction."²⁰³ The understanding of a socio-political context, relating ecological and patriarchal oppression and our own experience in different situations, needs to be dealt with as the crucial factor for ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics.

Socio-political contexts are, furthermore, inextricable from postcolonial perspectives in the 21st century. Since postcolonial perspectives began to be considered in theology, readings from contexts have been more important and it has become imperative to ensure that texts are read, as far as possible, without the influence of any colonising voices. This is one way in which marginalised voices are recovered. For example, Asian feminist theologians aim to read the Bible from their own socio-political struggles, not from the influences of dominant Christian doctrines.²⁰⁴ A number of developing nations, non-Christian societies, and colonised countries have been affected by Western cultures and Christian traditions. This tendency oppresses their own cultures, traditions, and thoughts. Nilsen and Solevåg, furthermore, argue for 'ecolonialism', an ecological approach influenced by postcolonial biblical hermeneutics.²⁰⁵ Ecolonialism is an ecological approach added to the postcolonial view. It leads one to understand the specific contexts, particularly oppressed by the colonial structures. Nilsen and Solevåg suggest a broad view of ecological hermeneutics on the interdisciplinary framework. They apply four main pillars

²⁰³ Margaret A. Farley, "Feminist Consciousness and the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1985), 44.

²⁰⁴ Kwok Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), 56.

²⁰⁵ Tina Dykesteen Nilsen and Anna Rebecca Solevåg, "Expanding Ecological Hermeneutics: The Case for Ecolonialism," *JBL* 135, no. 4 (2016): 665.

of an Earth Charter: “1) respect and care for the community of life; 2) ecological integrity; 3) social and economic justice; 4) democracy, nonviolence, and peace”.²⁰⁶ It inspires an expanded integrative approach to ecological hermeneutics. In this sense, postcolonial criticism allows a diversity of contexts and an interconnectedness of global contexts to be seen, as well as a respect for people’s individual perspectives. Dube, a feminist theologian who researches within a postcolonial biblical study context, uses a term—interdependence—to “describe and to underline the interconnectedness of different histories, economic structures, and political structures as well as the relatedness of cultural texts, races, classes, and genders within specific and global contexts”.²⁰⁷ The norm of interdependence leads us to know how all beings in all contexts are closely connected. Thus, it is necessary to consider our own socio-political contexts and the recognition of diversity, interconnectedness and interdependence in the reading of the Bible. That is why I re-read two biblical stories in this chapter by looking at contexts as the first step of my reading (section 4.2.1 and 4.3.1).

This recognition draws us to focus on conscientisation. Fiorenza emphasises the need for conscientisation, “which makes us aware of how our experience is determined by and yet also differs from the cultural-religious standard of what is “normal” or “common sense””.²⁰⁸ Conscientisation enables people to see their specificity from within their own context. It is a crucial step towards reading the Bible in an emancipatory way. However, a significant amount of scholarly research in this area has mainly focused on humanity rather than on earth itself. Eaton highlights the importance of consciousness of earth. “Knowing the earth as part of a living universe broadens our consciousness and creates possibilities of new ways of knowing the earth, and in consequence, resisting its destruction”.²⁰⁹ In order to resist ecological destruction, it is necessary to have an emancipatory consciousness, particularly a consciousness of earth. This conscientisation of earth is a crucial beginning as we seek an emancipation of earth and all beings.

²⁰⁶ Nilsen and Solevåg, “Expanding Ecological Hermeneutics,” 674.

²⁰⁷ Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), 185.

²⁰⁸ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 244.

²⁰⁹ Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 6.

It helps us not only to read the Bible in diverse ways from the earth community but also to affirm the body and its relationship to nature.

4.1.3 Hermeneutical Models

Detailed types of hermeneutical approaches are necessary, many of which feminist theologians have taken and used in their own work. Over time, Fiorenza has developed different feminist hermeneutical models. For example, in 1995, she proposed four different models: a hermeneutics of suspicion, of proclamation, of remembrance, and of creative actualization.²¹⁰ A little later, she introduced seven models in detail: “a hermeneutics of experience, of domination, of suspicion, of critical evaluation, of memory and re-membering, of imagination, and of transformation”.²¹¹ Her hermeneutical models have been increasingly focused on concrete actions. In reality, the models appear to be directed towards action, which is the last model. On the other hand, some eco-theologians who are associated with the Earth Bible Project suggest three types which focus on resistance: suspicion, identification and retrieval.²¹² However, revisionist eco-theologians, mostly belonging to the Exeter Project, apply revision, reformation and reconfiguration in order to advocate both recovery and resistance.²¹³ Horrell, for example, seeks to configure “Christian doctrine, liturgy, and ethics”.²¹⁴ While the Earth Bible Project is mostly focused on ecological principles which support critical resistance, revisionists are concerned about not only a mode of resistance based on contemporary ethics, but also a mode of recovery which seeks ecological values from the Christian tradition.²¹⁵

Feminist and ecological approaches are based on critical analyses of traditional interpretations and a pursuit towards the liberation of women or nature. Both commonly value a hermeneutic

²¹⁰ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 15-22.

²¹¹ Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 106.

²¹² Norman C. Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 46, no. 2 (August 2012): 101-104.

²¹³ David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate, “Appeals to the Bible in Ecotheology and Environment Ethics: A Typology of Hermeneutical Stances,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 21, no. 2 (2008): 233.

²¹⁴ David G. Horrell, “Ecological Hermeneutics: Reflections on Methods and Prospects for the Future,” *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* (November 2014): 26, <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/16642>.

²¹⁵ Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, “Appeals to the Bible in Ecotheology and Environment Ethics,” 234.

of suspicion. (Even though revisionists do not directly use the term 'suspicion', they include the hermeneutic of suspicion in the step of revision.) Suspicion starts with doubt or lack of trust. It is very influenced by the reader's opinions about women or earth in their own context. This suspicion allows us to see problematic approaches of texts, which were written using an anthropocentric or patriarchal worldview. In that sense, suspicion is also an important step of ecofeminist theological hermeneutics. It leads us to recognise which text contains inherently anthropocentric, dualistic and patriarchal biases or has traditionally been influenced by the biases.

Those adopting a feminist hermeneutics approach pursue a greater degree of reconstruction in comparison with those engaged in ecological hermeneutics. Feminist theologians propose that some texts reveal a strongly patriarchal culture which deeply relates to their experience. They critique the biblical text itself and/or traditional interpretations of it. Then, they recall not only the struggles of the past but also voices from the Bible which were silenced by the biases. These approaches lead them to focus more on reconstruction. Feminist theologians, therefore, attempt to express a creative actualisation and to practice transformative actions relating to the liberation of women. Fiorenza describes, "whereas a feminist hermeneutics of remembrance is interested in historical-critical reconstruction, a feminist hermeneutics of creative actualization allows women to enter the biblical story with the help of historical imagination, artistic recreation, and liturgical ritualization".²¹⁶ This demonstrates that a historical-critical analysis and invitation to liberation are significant in the reconstruction of feminist hermeneutics. According to Fiorenza the most important thing is practical action: "The critical interpretative process or 'hermeneutical dance' has as its goal and climax a hermeneutics of transformation and action for change. ... Such work stands accountable to those wo/men who struggle at the bottom of the kyriarchal pyramid of discrimination and domination. It also seeks to articulate religious and biblical studies as a site of social, political, and religious transformation".²¹⁷ Therefore, in order to seek a transformed world, feminist theologians aim to understand the texts critically; this has a strong influence on

²¹⁶ Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, 20.

²¹⁷ Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 266.

androcentric interpretations and enables a reinterpretation of the Bible from a feminist perspective.

While feminist theologians focus on the liberation of women, most eco-theologians are concerned with empathy and identification with the earth. Here, it is important to recognise that “earth becomes a subject (with a voice in its own right)”.²¹⁸ The shift from a starting point where humanity is the subject and the earth humanity’s ‘object’ to a new starting point where the earth becomes the subject is very significant. Although some revisionists hold that the voice of earth cannot be separated from anthropomorphism, this approach still shows a huge transformation of the Christian tradition, which has been influenced by human-centeredness for a long time. Furthermore, it leads us to be concerned about the importance of the expression ‘with’ earth. Conradie clarifies, “this calls for a reflecting *with* Earth and not so much *about* the Earth, in the same way that feminist Biblical scholars would want to read the Bible in solidarity *with* oppressed women and not *for* them”.²¹⁹ Individuals often make use of the Bible for their own purposes. However, the use of ‘with’ instead of ‘for’ or ‘about’ describes the significance of empathy and identification with the earth very aptly.

Based on these perspectives, eco-theologians identify all beings on earth and listen to their voices, and acknowledge ourselves as part of the earth. “As we read the text we are now acutely conscious that we are Earth beings, that Earth is our habitat in the cosmos and that we are part of a community of kin called Earth”.²²⁰ This approach helps us to know our position on earth (an Earth being) and to seek to retrieve the voice of Earth. According to Habel, “Discerning Earth and members of the Earth community as subject with a voice is a key part of the retrieval process. ... Their voice needs to be heard. It is a voice that need not correspond to the languages of words we commonly associate with human voices”.²²¹ In ecological hermeneutics, it is important to recognise, first, the transformed subject (from a human to Earth); second, a variety of different

²¹⁸ Conradie, “Towards an Ecological Biblical Hermeneutics,” 127-28.

²¹⁹ Conradie, “Towards an Ecological Biblical Hermeneutics,” 128.

²²⁰ Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” 100.

²²¹ Habel, “Introducing ecological hermeneutics,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, 5.

Christian historical/traditional interpretations; and third, voices for retrieving intrinsic values of nature. This approach is of significant importance in ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics because the recognition of subjects—earth and all beings, a critical analysis of historical/traditional interpretations, and the retrieval of intrinsic values of nature and all beings – are necessary.

In short, first, a hermeneutics of experience leads us to listen to the experience of women and the voice of nature (water). In this step, conscientisation is necessary because of the need for the transformation of a subject: women and nature. Second, a hermeneutics of suspicion helps us to engage in a form of critical thinking. This approach reveals undiscovered meanings of texts which have been influenced by anthropocentric and patriarchal perspectives. It helps us to recognise which texts are problematic in the text itself, or the context of texts, or the context of readers. Third, a hermeneutics of reconfiguration leads us to revise some Christian doctrines, liturgies and ethics. This is an essential step because it helps us to see why Christian doctrines and liturgies should be rebuilt in the transformed perspective towards the liberation of women and nature. It often contains retrieval and identification in order to fulfil the four principles – intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, and purpose – towards the revised contemporary ethics. This approach is a theoretical process, but it is very related not only to the previous approaches – experience and suspicion— but also to the next approach. Fourth, a hermeneutics of transformative action for change leads us to act with the revised Christian doctrines, liturgies, and ethics. It is important to practise what we have realised and what we have to change in our lives. These four hermeneutics support a critical and hopeful reading of the Bible in the steps of contemporary ecofeminist theologians.²²² Through these steps, we focus not only on a critical analysis of the text itself, the context of the text and readers, and traditional historical interpretations, but also on a hopeful analysis which seeks intrinsic value and interconnectedness with all beings and nature. A spiral of ongoing interpretation using these four hermeneutics is used to examine texts on water. Consequently, this study is approached from ecofeminist theological perspectives (which were addressed in the previous chapter), informed by a

²²² Anne Elvey, “Ecofeminism and Biblical Interpretation,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, ed. Bron R. Taylor (Bristol, England: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), 532.

hermeneutics of experience, suspicion, reconfiguration, and transformative action for change using the principles of intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, and purpose.

4.2 The Story of a Samaritan Woman and Jesus (John 4:1-42)

This section examines John 4:1-42, which is a story of a Samaritan Woman and Jesus. This story is a significant scripture if we want to develop an ecofeminist theology of water. The reason is that the ecofeminist theological perspectives that I am developing allow the story to be read in a different way compared with traditional interpretations: it helps us to examine the relationship between women, water and the gospel; and it pursues intrinsic values and the interconnectedness of all beings on earth without any disparities.²²³ This story addresses the context in which the shortage of water and women's toil are examined. The issue of a water crisis and women's toil is not only found in the historical background, but also in the 21st century as I addressed in the previous chapter. There are a number of living beings who suffer from water shortage and drought. Some women are still struggling with their daily toil of drawing and transporting water.²²⁴ They have a responsibility to provide drinking water to their family. This linkage between the contexts allows us to understand the biblical texts from a sharing of experience. In this section, I look at this story by following the four different hermeneutics introduced above: experience, suspicion, reconfiguration and transformative action for change. The four principles – intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, and purpose — are used in each hermeneutics in different forms.

4.2.1 Using a Hermeneutics of Experience

A hermeneutics of experience is the first step of reading the Bible. This approach is basically influenced by feminist biblical hermeneutics. Feminist scholars have valued listening to the struggles of women who are dominated and exploited. They insist that the experience of women

²²³ Although my research focuses on ecofeminist theology, many of the approaches and arguments which I apply to women can also be applied to men and children, and indeed to all living beings.

²²⁴ Sida, "Gender Equality and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene," *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency* (Aug 2019): 2, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/brief_gender_equality_water_resources_sanitation_hygiene_w_ebb.pdf

takes priority; thus “they seek not only to articulate the experience of contemporary wo/men but also to search for the experience of biblical wo/men”.²²⁵ In ecofeminist theology, this approach is expanded to embrace the voice of earth. Listening to both the experience of women and the voice of water is necessary in order to read the story in all its fullness. It is difficult to find the voice of water. Yet, although this is confined to the imagination of humanity, we can discern its voices and messages through its overlap with the voice of the poor woman. This is because the poor and the fragility of the planet are intimately related.²²⁶ The focusing on women and water is a path towards conscientisation and practical actions. Although John 4:1-42 evokes a variety of experiences from different characters, I focus both on the Samaritan woman’s experience as well as the voice of water, both of which are nearly silenced and marginalised. In addition, the experience of contemporary readers is explored. The intention of this work is to heighten the respect for all types of different experiences and voices relating to text and readers.

This story describes the experience of the Samaritan woman who suffers from both physical and spiritual thirst. The woman needs drinking water to sustain her life and that of her family (although we do not know explicitly whether she has her own family or not). In order to provide appropriate drinking water, she walks a distance to collect water from a well.²²⁷ The experience of the shortage of water leads her to walk during the day time, she collects water, and helps others who also need drinking water like Jesus (John 4:7). The background – the time of day (about noon) – maximises a longing for material water. She does not hesitate to collect water regardless of the weather or other external conditions. In relation to the time, scholars have examined the status of the woman and those who are regarded as not self-respecting.²²⁸ The reason is that she dragged water during the hottest time of the day and she was alone. This was unusual behaviour in comparison to ordinary women. Kruse states that “Normally, women came to draw water in the morning or evening, the cooler parts of the day (cf. Gen. 24:11; 29:7). It is

²²⁵ Fiorenza, *Wisdom ways*, 243.

²²⁶ Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’ of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home*, no. 29.

²²⁷ The precise distance that woman walked is not provided in the biblical text. However, we can assume that she walked from her house to the well in order to get the water. There is no mention, either, of any animal, such as a donkey, which would be used to carry the heavy load.

²²⁸ Zenner, *Just Water*, 191-20.

also strange that she came alone. Both these things suggest that the woman was avoiding contact with other women”.²²⁹ Based on this approach, it is clear that the woman is an outsider, from a social minority, and on the margin of her society. This story presents the woman as an exemplar of the socially weak and alienated.

Spiritual and physical water are addressed in this story, yet the spiritual water of Jesus initially appears central in comparison with the drinking water of the woman. The gospel seems to place a higher value on the spiritual water, rendering it superior and relegating the drinking water as inferior. In this interpretation, water is largely classified into two, with the literal water seen as less vital than the spiritual water. However, as we delve deeper into the narrative and its interpretations by various scholars, a more interconnected view emerges. Spiritual water is undoubtedly essential in the Christian faith, but understanding its relationship with physical water is paramount. All forms of water, as depicted in this biblical story, have intrinsic value. The exchange at the well between Jesus and the Samaritan woman amplifies the life-giving water which quenches not only physical thirst but also spiritual thirst. Moore, in his critique, dismantles this seeming hierarchy, suggesting that living water and well water are intrinsically integrated.²³⁰ Marais provides further depth, developing a soteriological concept related to water: “The good news of the gospel is that the water of life is freely given by God, with nothing less than abundant life –or ecological and human flourishing –as its apparent intended focus”.²³¹ Her reading of the Samaritan woman’s story in John 4 underlines the holistic nature of water in the gospel, emphasising not only the divine generosity but also ecological abundance. In essence, while the initial impression may lean towards prioritising spiritual water, a thorough examination underscores the gospel’s emphasis on the intrinsic interconnectedness and interdependence of both spiritual and physical water.

²²⁹ Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 198.

²³⁰ Stephen D. Moore, “Are there impurities in the living water that the Johannine Jesus Dispenses? Deconstruction, Feminism, and the Samaritan woman,” *Biblical Interpretation* 1, no.2 (1993): 219-20.

²³¹ Marais, “#Rainmustfall,” 81.

As we have examined, this story addresses the relationship between women and water. Water is practically related to the life of living beings, particularly that of some women who are water-gatherers like the Samaritan woman. In the context of the text, most women are water-gatherers. The distance is usually too long from their houses to the well. This situation is connected with the contemporary contexts of some countries (section 3.1). Zenner ably describes the connection between the past and the present through the women's work. She indicates that there are specific burdens of women in relation to their labour: 1) "water is literally heavy and exacting to carry"; 2) "fresh water scarcity is a burden because it limits economic and educational opportunities for girls and women"; and 3) "there is the burden of embodied vulnerability linked to both age and sex".²³² Economically privileged people, who live in advanced infrastructures, struggle to sympathise with this statement. This is because, for them, water is unremarkable. Zenner insists, "invisibility of water is a mark of privilege, and it is linked to legacies of colonialism, racism, and economic oppression".²³³ Underprivileged people who cannot access running water and sanitation properly and women who do the gathering of water can identify easily with the Samaritan woman. Thus, the understanding of these texts depends on the context of individual readers whether they are exposed to a physical water crisis or not.

4.2.2 Using a Hermeneutics of Suspicion

A hermeneutics of suspicion requires us to examine the structures of domination. This story has been interpreted in a variety of anthropocentric, dualistic, and kyriocentric ways. These must be deconstructed and dismantled from the domination of these hermeneutical approaches that have held sway for so long. This approach helps us to find where common-sense reality (which is based on domination) is given and hidden. Fiorenza states that "a hermeneutics of suspicion is best understood as a deconstructive practice of inquiry that denaturalizes and demystifies linguistic-cultural practices of domination rather than as working away at the layers upon layers of cultural sediments that hide or repress a 'deeper truth'".²³⁴ Habel, in addition, indicates anthropocentric biases which are linked to the structures of domination: 1) "the hierarchy of

²³² Zenner previously wrote under the name of Christiana Z. Peppard. Zenner, *Just Water*, 202-03.

²³³ Zenner, *Just Water*, 198.

²³⁴ Fiorenza, *Wisdom ways*, 252.

things is God, human beings, and the rest”; and 2) “nature as object”.²³⁵ In this sense, it is necessary to reveal the dominant voice and anthropocentric, androcentric, and kyriocentric perspectives in the text or in historical interpretations of the text. This interpretative work allows us to find the intrinsic worth of all beings.

Interpretations of this story have been based on a variety of hierarchical dualisms and influenced by ‘centric’ perspectives such as anthropocentric, androcentric and kyriocentric ones. First, the text seems to indicate that the living water of Jesus is more valued than the well water of a Samaritan woman. In John 4:13-14, Jesus explicitly compares drinking water with living water. His imposing statement leads a number of scholars to interpret the water of the well in a spiritual rather than a physical way, and in so doing prioritises the former. Brown points out that “His [Jesus’] gifts are “real” gifts, that is, heavenly gifts: the real water of life, as contrasted with ordinary water”.²³⁶ This statement indicates a tension between spirit and matter (flesh). While Brown over-values the spiritual meanings of water from Jesus, Zenner describes the hierarchical dualisms of “matter/spirit, well water/living water, Samaritan woman/Jesus”.²³⁷ She critiques the tendency to value the spirit, living water and Jesus and to devalue matter, the well water and women. This dualistic tension in the gospel of John reflects a perception which is influenced by historical dualistic schemes in social contexts (such as Platonic dualism). During the period of the writers, dualistic thoughts (heaven/earth and mind/body) were prevalent, therefore scholars have examined the dualism and pursued the higher (valuable) one compared to the other. As Gosbell articulates “for many commentators of the fourth Gospel [the gospel of John], it does not merely present a dualistic approach to human experience but also promotes the experiences of the spirit as the only genuine and trustworthy ones”.²³⁸

²³⁵ Habel, “Introducing ecological hermeneutics,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, 4.

²³⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I-XII)*, vol. 29, *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), cxv.

²³⁷ Zenner, *Just Water*, 194.

²³⁸ Louise A. Gosbell, “11. Sensory Experience and the Gospel of John,” in *Grounded in the Body, in Time and Place, in Scripture*, ed. Jill Firth and Denise Cooper-Clarke (Eugene, Oregon: Wipe & Stock, 2021), 153.

Second, this story represents a tension between Samaritans and Jews. The two main characters – a Samaritan woman and Jesus — imply a possibility of racism and sexism which are significant issues in modern contemporary societies as well. The woman is regarded as a foreigner in comparison with a Jew. Some scholars point out that she is unnamed, unlike Jews; for example, in the story of Jesus and Nicodemus in the previous chapter (John 3:1-21), a male Jew is named Nicodemus.²³⁹ It is difficult to state conclusively that anonymous women generally are representative of racism because a number of men – both Jewish and ‘Gentile’ - are also anonymous in biblical texts.²⁴⁰ However, in the sequence of stories between John 3 and 4, it is enough to say that unnamed and named are an expression of racism as the use of extreme contrast allows us to understand that the gospel is available to everyone regardless of their nationality or race: the unnamed Samaritan woman realises the significance of the revelation communicated to her by Jesus, and therefore becomes a proclaimer of the gospel, while the named Jewish man, Nicodemus, cannot understand it.

This analysis is linked to the relationship between the Samaritan woman and Jesus. Jesus is also a Jew. John 4:9 reflects the tension between Jews and Samaritans, which have been characterised by animosity. According to the historical background, “Jewish men were not supposed to speak with Samaritan women (4:9, 27), and Jewish rabbis (4:31) were not supposed to speak in public with any kind of woman. Jesus breaches this double boundary by engaging the Samaritan woman in conversation”.²⁴¹ The boundaries between Jewish men and Samaritan women, and Jewish rabbis and women represent an extreme hierarchical dualism. It includes two discriminations: racism (Jew/Samaritan) and sexism (men/women). Furthermore, some scholars point to the possibility of sexual transgression on her part. Some theologians focused more on her impurity because she was living with “who-knows-which illicit partner”.²⁴² However, it is important to

²³⁹ Gail R. O’Day, “Gospel of John,” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, 4th ed, rev. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (London: SPCK, 2014), 759, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁴⁰ Carol L. Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross Shepard Kraemer, “Preface,” in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), xi.

²⁴¹ Moore, “Are there impurities in the living water that the Johannine Jesus Dispenses? Deconstruction, Feminism, and the Samaritan woman,” 210.

²⁴² Saint Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1-40*, I/12, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Edmund Hill and ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2009), 286.

highlight the role of the Samaritan woman who preaches the gospel to her town. The woman is changed because of the meeting with Jesus. This analysis focuses more on the transformation of the woman from a passive character to an enthusiastic one. The end of this story presents her as very confident in her life and her knowledge about the gospel. It can be said that she finds her intrinsic worth through the gospel.

Third, this story contains several controversial ironies. Jesus asks the Samaritan woman “Give me a drink” (4:7). According to the historical context, “a Jew should not consider drinking water from a Samaritan vessel (4:9)”.²⁴³ This means that Jesus is different from other Jews who tend to avoid using the same vessel as Samaritans. Jesus can be regarded as a reformer who breaks the traditional customs. He is not concerned about social boundaries; rather he engages in a discussion with a Samaritan woman in a public place – a well. On the other hand, Jesus still behaves in a kyriocentric way because he does not draw water himself and asks her to give him water. This seems to imply that drawing up water is regarded as women’s work. A third possible interpretation is that Jesus’s request is a normal one which is neither breaking any traditional customs, nor the kyriocentric influence. It could be seen as a polite request to her who routinely gets water from the well because he is only a visitor in this area. The scene – Jesus asking the woman for drinking water – can be interpreted in different ways depending on the readers’ perspectives.

4.2.3 Using a Hermeneutics of Reconfiguration

A hermeneutics of reconfiguration is based on revisionist readings of ecological theologians. As I have already mentioned in section 4.1.3, revisionists seek to reform and reconfigure theological reflections, rather than to choose one side – either defense or rejection – of established Christian traditions. For example, Horrell proposes that “God’s act of cosmic reconciliation in Christ should stand as a doctrinal lens at the centre of an ecologically reconfigured Pauline theology”.²⁴⁴ He attempts to do this by focusing on Christ who fulfils cosmic reconciliation. Following Horrell’s

²⁴³ O’Day, “Gospel of John,” 759.

²⁴⁴ David G. Horrell, *The Making of Christian Morality: Reading Paul in Ancient and Modern Contexts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 227.

lead, I pursue a similar reconfigured theological reflection on John 4:1-42 with ecofeminist theological perspectives in this section. This work leads us to recognise the interconnectedness of all beings on earth and to seek the liberation of women and nature.

First of all, it is necessary to think how we understand discrimination. As we have examined in section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, there are multiple layers of discrimination in this story. Traditionally, two contrasting interpretations have dominated scholars' approaches and conclusions, each emphasising the value of one or the other. However, modern contemporary scholars attempt to interpret the oppositional dualities in a comprehensive (interconnected) way. For example, Volf argues for the transformation from oppositional ones to non-oppositional ones:

“Duality between God and world is transformed into communion between God and Jesus' disciples. As a consequence, oppositional dualities within the creation are overcome too: enmity between men and women is overcome in a community of equality among them, ethnic divisions between Jews and Samaritans, between Jews and Greeks, are bridged in a single community that worships God “in spirit and truth” (4:23). John's accounts of creation and redemption together undercut dualistic modes of thought”.²⁴⁵

Volf's analysis is valuable as it helps us to focus on the deep level of meanings of the superficial dualities. The non-oppositional understanding is a path to overcome the dualistic approaches and to recognise what this story stresses in the expression of oppositional dualities. In addition, this approach ultimately dismantles the hierarchical dualisms that ecofeminist theological perspectives pursue.

This non-oppositional approach leads us to focus on Jesus' words and actions in this story. Jesus teaches us how we bring reconciliation in situations of prejudice. Here, he is not concerned with the prejudices of others; rather, he is concerned with the whole of society and in particular with social minorities. This is seen in this story in the following ways. (a) He asks the Samaritan woman in public (4:7) and (b) he breaks traditional customs which have caused hierarchical dualisms. In so doing, he brings about a reconciliation in the tensions between Jewish and Gentile Christians, between men and women, and between heaven and earth. Jesus becomes a mediator (or healer)

²⁴⁵ Miroslav Volf, “Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism,” in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Cambridge, UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2008), 24.

to mend the broken relationship between all living beings. In this story, he links drinking water and living water by drinking (receiving) and sharing (giving) water with the Samaritan woman. Cadwallader proposes that “‘spiritual’ is in fact *the proper handling of and attitude to the material* not its displacement”.²⁴⁶ The exchange of water between Jesus and the woman presents not only the continuity between physical and spiritual water, but also the importance of both. Furthermore, Cadwallader observes that scholars have mainly focused on the Samaritan woman as a person who has to fulfil the mission of Jesus. His own preference is to stress that “Jesus is placed into her territory (4:4) where thirst is a constant concern and that this is irrevocably foundational to the story”.²⁴⁷ He also links the thirst of Jesus in John 4:7 with Jesus’s cry of thirst in John 19:28. It is interesting that he is focused on Jesus’ thirst rather than the Samaritan’s transformed life after receiving the spiritual water. His work contributes to the importance of physical water in relation to the life of Jesus. However, there is no doubt that both physical and spiritual water are significantly addressed in this story.

This story indicates that water is life-giving and should be available to all living beings wherever they are. According to the historical geographical context, Sychar (ancient Shechem, modern Askar) where Jacob’s well is, there is a place where “the general experiences of the Earth and of Water is marked by conflict”.²⁴⁸ The region has complicated political and religious tensions which often result in social violence. In the context of this story, the site belonged to a Samaritan city, therefore religious separatism was significant; there was a high degree of animosity between Samaritans and Jews, and Jews had their own strong pride and disregard for Samaritans. In ancient societies, wells were regarded as a property right.²⁴⁹ This means that the well in Sychar was intended for Samaritans, and not for others. It seems that water was a material owned by the landlord (or local residents). However, the Samaritan woman does Jesus a favour: she gives him some water because he struggles with a physical thirst. Her favour involves that 1) water is an essential material for all; and 2) water must be shared with everybody. Her physical water

²⁴⁶ Alan Cadwallader, “‘Give the Girl a Drink’: Reading John 4 from a Dry, Parched Land,” in *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*, ed. Norman Habel and Peter Trudinger (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2011), 100.

²⁴⁷ Cadwallader, “‘Give the Girl a Drink’,” 100.

²⁴⁸ Cadwallader, “‘Give the Girl a Drink’,” 101-02.

²⁴⁹ Cadwallader, “‘Give the Girl a Drink’,” 104.

sustains Jesus' life. Then, Jesus gives spiritual water to the woman as a gift. The water leads her to live in spiritual fullness. Therefore, the Samaritan woman finally joins the precious work: she proclaims the gospel to other people. She meets Jesus in the battle of life, provides drinking water to Jesus (saving his physical life), listens to and questions Jesus, receives living water (saving her spiritual life) and spreads the gospel which fulfils both physical and spiritual life.

4.2.4 Using a Hermeneutics of Transformative Action for Change

A hermeneutics of Transformative Action for Change seeks to alter a number of dominated relationships, which have always existed. This approach is regarded as the goal and climax of feminist biblical hermeneutics. According to Fiorenza, the examination of our present experience is significant in order to pursue justice and peace in the future: "When seeking future vision and transformation, we can only extrapolate from present experience, which is always predetermined by past experience. Hence, we need to analyze the past and the present in order to articulate creative visions and transcending imaginations for a new humanity, global ecology, and religious community".²⁵⁰ It is difficult to fulfil the transformation fully on earth, yet the most important one is that we imagine the vision (purpose) which is not yet presented but will be soon. Therefore, this section examines what this story meant and means in the context of texts and readers as well as what the vision is in the context of the global water crisis.

In this story, the Samaritan woman and Jesus have traditionally been regarded as the core characters, yet here I attempt to see water as one of the three characters instead of two people.²⁵¹ This helps us avoid human-centred characters because it puts water (material) into the heart of this story in comparison to many traditional interpretations which normally focus on two characters, and in particular, on Jesus. As we have seen in the previous sections, water is regarded as an essential material to all living beings in both physical and spiritual ways. The continuity and connection between both can be described as a property of water: flowing (such

²⁵⁰ Fiorenza, *Wisdom ways*, 266.

²⁵¹ I am using the term 'character' which reference to water as it emphasises my contention that water has much in common with living beings, and in particular with life itself.

as water in rivers and seas). Being alive is in motion. However, it is not confined to physical water: spiritual water is also in motion because it is alive in the Spirit. Based on this characteristic, the continuity and connection support both physical and spiritual thirst. Although there are varying degrees of thirst, all living beings on earth struggle with both thirsts (Romans 8:22). The difference depends on how much we need both physical and spiritual water in a variety of contexts.

This story focuses on the significance of water for minorities, in particular, women's agonisingly hard lives and work. The scene in which the woman walked alone to draw out water from the well during a hot time of day exemplifies extreme discrimination. Her journey was difficult and lonely because there might be few shady places where she could shelter from the sun at mid-day, and she was carrying a water jar without company. The background of the scene maximises her hardship in her daily physical life and implies her spiritual thirst. The unnamed Samaritan woman can be regarded as a symbol of not only all Samaritans in the context of this text, but also of those who suffer from water scarcity or contamination in our contemporary societies. A well (water storage) is necessary to get drinking water for those who are unable to access sufficient fresh water for their everyday needs from their own place. In other words, the shortage of water has more affected vulnerable beings than privileged beings.

Furthermore, this story ultimately seeks reconciliation in broken and discriminated societies. How can we enable all the various conflicts and discriminations present on earth to be resolved? As I have mentioned in section 4.2.3, we can learn the wisdom from Jesus' words and actions. Jesus shows what we should pursue on earth in order to seek a restoration of harmony. His invitation is a blessing for all to join the work for reconciliation. The Samaritan woman, for example, becomes a messenger of blessing (physical and spiritual water) to others. What we have to remember here is that water gives abundant life to all in the past, the present, and the future. According to Daly-Denton, water should be regarded as the gift of God which leads me to "have a vision of our world as a disclosure of God through visible, audible, fragrant, tangible, edible and

potable signs”.²⁵² Furthermore, it is necessary to realise that our earth is currently facing not only an impending water crisis but also spiritual drought. Gebara interestingly titles her book, “Longing for Running Water”, and she writes of running water as being life itself which gives hope for all living beings: “To seek living waters is to prefigure our hope And the living water is life itself since its very beginning, since its primordial reality, since its origins still present in ourselves. To seek living waters is to seek an atmosphere that is propitious for life, and to respectfully permit the development of all forms of life”.²⁵³ Her expression contributes to the highlighting of the living waters themselves, rather than only using them as metaphors for life. As a deer longs for flowing water in Psalm 42 and runs towards the flowing water, it is important to seek and practise the coming of a heavenly world (peaceful world) on earth which can give life to all, in particular for underprivileged beings and minorities. We are called to be messengers in our contemporary contexts. Therefore, it is necessary to work to provide sufficient flowing water (both physical and spiritual water) for all living beings on earth.

In section 4.2, the meaning of the gospel working towards reconciliation while resisting the hierarchical dualisms between physical and spiritual water and between the Samaritan woman and Jesus is recovered. I have demonstrated that 1) water is not only a practical means of giving life, but also the signs of God’s blessing; 2) all living beings have their own intrinsic worth; 3) all are interconnected with the flowing of water in both physical and spiritual ways; 4) it is important to listen to all living beings in a variety of contexts. In particular, the cry of vulnerable beings and minorities should be explored; and 5) reconciliation is an essential purpose for all living beings. The most important to note is that the four biblical hermeneutics previously outlined and discussed in this chapter allow us to explore the experiences of the Samaritan woman and the voices of physical water, to ‘suspect’ (challenge) hierarchical dualistic thinking and colonial approaches, to reconfigure the words and actions of Jesus which act in favour of reconciliation in a variety of conflicts, and to practise valuable actions which support both physical and spiritual thirst of all living beings on earth.

²⁵² Margaret Daly-Denton, *John: An Earth Bible Commentary: Supposing Him to Be the Gardener* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 149.

²⁵³ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 215.

4.3 The Story of Noah's Flood (Genesis 6-9)

While I have focused on the relationship between water and women in the previous biblical stories, this story addresses meanings of water in terms of the recovery of the integrity of creation, which is one of the pursuits of an ecofeminist theology of water (section 3.4). This section explores a range of meanings of water in the story of Noah's flood within the framework of the Christian scriptures, emphasising an ecclesial reading that views the narrative as an integral part of the larger biblical and church tradition. The flood (water) is the key issue in this story. A number of scholars have allegorically interpreted the meanings of the flood; for example, the flood is a symbol of fire in the last judgement.²⁵⁴ On the other hand, some scholars have attempted to prove that the flood actually happened in real history by using archaeology and science.²⁵⁵ However, in this section, I am not attempting to prove whether this story is truly historical or a myth; rather, I am focusing on the meanings of water (the flood) in the contexts of the texts and readers. In addition, I want to see this story as one whole (something that Wenham also argues in favour of²⁵⁶), which is the final form of the text, rather than consider its original sources. This is because a number of biblical scholars have researched this story seeing it as originating from two different narratives – the Jehovist (JE) and Priestly versions. Thus, this section focuses on this story as is, not dealing with the historical-critical controversy. By using ecofeminist theological perspectives, this section addresses meanings of water in the interconnected and interdependent ways with four different hermeneutics of 1) experience; 2) suspicion; 3) reconfiguration; and 4) transformative action for change (section 4.1.3). As I have used four principles in section 4.1, this section also employs the same principles: a) intrinsic worth, b) interconnectedness, c) voice, and d) purpose. There is one outstanding difference between the previous story and this one. While I have examined a number of ecofeminist theologians' reflections, the flood narrative broadly looks at non-ecofeminist theologians' reflections because

²⁵⁴ Norman Cohn, *Noah's Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1996), 23.

²⁵⁵ cf. J. David Pleins, *When the Great Abyss opened: Classic and Contemporary Readings of Noah's Flood* (New York: Oxford University press, 2003).

²⁵⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. XXVIII, Fasc. 3 (Jul 1978): 338.

it has not been considered in as much as depth or detail by ecofeminist theologians in comparison to the story of the Samaritan woman and Jesus.

4.3.1 Using a Hermeneutics of Experience

The flood in this story can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Some people often regard the flood as evil because it is extremely destructive. Yet, the flood itself is not evil; this story clearly points out that human wickedness is evil and causes the flood which has an immense power to destroy this earth (Genesis 6:11-13). Scholars have linked the flood with sin and judgement. Ellsworth states that the rain (which becomes the flood) implies both judgement and testing: 1) “the rain was judgement on the sins of the world”; and 2) “it was a time of testing for those on the ark because after continuous days of rain, they surely must have wondered if it would ever end”.²⁵⁷ It is interesting that he is concerned with not only one side of living beings who are not chosen to enter the ark, but also the living beings who are chosen to enter the ark.

However, the flood is not only related to the destruction, sin, judgement or testing on earth. Some scholars interpret it as a symbol of cleansing which can be related to baptism; for example, Oestigaard uses the term “the ultimate baptism” to refer to the flood.²⁵⁸ For him the flood story describes how the land had been steadily healed after the flood, and finally, how all living beings in Noah’s ark went out from it and lived on earth. This sequence of events has been similarly explored by other scholars and it is found that the flood story is interpreted as communicating theological concepts such as (God’s) blessing, gift, grace and even baptism. For example, Bauckham states that “to read the flood narrative with sensitivity to its original import is to acquire a renewed sense of this world in which we live as God's gift to us. As we see its destruction withheld only by God's patience and mercy, we find the world we take for granted become once again the world continually granted to us by God's grace”.²⁵⁹ His analysis allows me to know how big God’s grace is, the fact that it is ongoing (hence it is not stopped or a temporary phenomenon).

²⁵⁷ J. Ellsworth Kalas, *Genesis: Immersion Bible Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 34.

²⁵⁸ Oestigaard, *Water, Christianity and the Rise of Capitalism*, 2396.

²⁵⁹ Richard J. Bauckham, “The Genesis Flood and the Nuclear Holocaust: A Hermeneutical Reflection,” *Churchman* 99, no. 2 (1985): 154.

God's enormous grace is referred to as a reconciliation on earth; this is shown by the rainbow (covenant) in Genesis 9.

These interpretations suggest that this narrative focuses on the experiences and emotions of God as narrated in scripture rather than those of living beings on earth. According to Genesis 6:6, "the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart". When God created humankind on the sixth day of creation, (s)he stated "it is very good" (Genesis 1:31). However, the experience of how evil humankind is makes God feel sorry about God's creation of humanity; therefore, God finally decides to destroy this earth. That is, the destructive water represents and demonstrates God's grief. On the other hand, God recognises the innocent person – Noah – who is regarded as a second Adam; the man who is characterised by complete obedience to God.²⁶⁰ Here this fact seems to represent God's joy, and hope. God promises Noah that God will save this earth including his own family and all the living beings who are chosen by Noah. In addition, God affirms the intrinsic worth of all beings: "Be fruitful and multiply on the earth" (Genesis 8:17). God as the source of life is concerned with all forms of life (without making a distinction between humanity and non-human beings). However, ironically the voice of living beings is silenced and marginalised in this story. It seems that God is in the centre of this earth or above all living beings, so the words of God are highlighted and then the flooding takes place. These ironies are addressed in the next section in detail with a hermeneutics of suspicion.

4.3.2 Using a Hermeneutics of Suspicion

This story clearly shows that water has two contrasting properties: to destroy life and to bring new life. Water destroys "the wickedness of humankind" which grieves God (6:5). On the other hand, water brings new life for innocent living beings who live according to God's word; for example, Noah "who was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God" (6:9). Thus, some scholars focus on the response to the words of God: disobedience and obedience. They make a simple connection between disobedience and sin, and between obedience and blessing. This analysis is valuable because living beings' responses are emphasised,

²⁶⁰ John MacArthur, *Genesis 1-11: Creation, Sin, and the Nature of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 93.

yet it is easy to fall into a dualistic way of thinking. This is in clear opposition to the principles and pursuit of ecofeminist theological perspectives which are committed to an anti-dualistic approach to understanding these texts. Section 4.2, which is concerned with the connection between physical and spiritual water, not the hierarchical dualism (spiritual water is more valuable than physical water), comes to mind once again.

This story also contains a comparison between the physical and spiritual meanings of water. The flood represents not only an enormous amount of physical water and death but also sin such as the wickedness of humankind and disobedience to God's words and finally death. The rainbow communicates reconciliation in both physical and spiritual ways: a beautiful continuous spectrum of colours which is based on the relationship between the angle of light and airborne water, and a spiritual covenant between God and all living beings. That is, the different forms of water – flood (rain) and rainbow (airborne water) – present both physical and spiritual meanings. However, most scholars mainly focus on the connection between physical death and the sin of humankind, and between the physical salvific sign and the spiritual covenant.²⁶¹ This understanding has been used to focus on a form of spiritual meaning in Noah's flood story rather than on the meanings of physical water itself. In other words, it seems that this story begins with the disastrous issue of physical water, yet the spiritual meanings are ultimately highlighted. Although it is important to understand the symbolic meanings of texts, readers are invited to see the continuity and connection of physical water between flood and rainbow. If the spiritual meanings of this story alone are highlighted, it tends to undervalue the meanings of interconnected physical water. For example, Babbitt suggests that we should stand in the middle of the different forms of water: "We are living between the flood and the rainbow – between the threats to creation on the one side and God's covenant to protect life on the other".²⁶² His analysis is valuable because this is concerned with both sides between different forms of water and between the physical and spiritual approaches. It is necessary to recognise all different

²⁶¹ Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), 98.

²⁶² Bruce Babbitt, "Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Our Covenant to Protect the Whole of Creation," *Animal Law* 2, no. 1 (1996): 8.

aspects of the different forms of water in order to pursue the four principles introduced previously: intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice and purpose. It is clear that the rains (the flood) are not the end of this earth; after them, the new earth started. While most theologians start from a concern with spiritual meanings of the story of the flood, I begin from the interconnected understanding of water circulation. This leads me to see the interrelationship between spiritual meanings of water such as the relationship between creation and salvation as well. In short, in the Christian tradition, the recognition of both is necessary rather than the selective focus on either the flood or the rainbow, and the physical or the spiritual.

On the other hand, as I have mentioned in 4.3.1, the focus on God's understanding of the nature and condition of human beings is problematic when considered against the fact that the living beings in the flood story are silenced and their voices are never heard. This story mainly explores the thoughts, actions, and emotions of God, yet there are few detailed examinations of living beings, human obedience or disobedience to God, and clean or unclean animals. Something to notice here is that 1) God is centred on the earth and above all on living beings; and 2) living beings are strongly classified by dualistic approaches. Although this centredness and these dualisms seem to emphasise the presence of God, obedience to the word of God, and cleanness, they ultimately contribute to creating a distinction between God and living beings and between sin and purity. In theological terms, this approach is based on a Theo-centric perspective which pursues the conservation of God's creation. This is seen in the work of Hoffman and Sandelands who argue for a theocentric environmentalism: "We must protect nature for a reason greater than our own – namely, that God wants and expects us to do so".²⁶³ Their insistence is very focused on God on the basis of a threefold distinction: God, humanity and nature. They outline a Theo-centric metaphysics: God is above man (subject) and nature.²⁶⁴ This approach easily overlooks the interconnected relationship between God, humanity and all living beings on earth. Unfortunately, the interpretation of this story has been strongly influenced by this approach;

²⁶³ Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands, "Getting Right with Nature: Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism, and Theocentrism," *Organization & Environment* 18 no. 2 (June 2005): 159.

²⁶⁴ Hoffman and Sandelands, "Getting Right with Nature," 150.

therefore, it is necessary to re-read it from ecofeminist theological perspectives. This is addressed with a hermeneutics of reconfiguration in the next section.

4.3.3 Using a Hermeneutics of Reconfiguration

This story deals with important Christian doctrines – sin and salvation –, yet their interpretations rely on the perspective of individual readers. Some scholars, for example, confine them only to humanity or attempt to connect them with the soteriological work of Jesus in the New Testament,²⁶⁵ in which case the question arises of what the specific range of sin and salvation is. Although there are a lot of different perspectives, I explore the question by using ecofeminist theological perspectives in the relationship with a global water crisis context. The perspectives contribute to the reconstruction of the traditional understanding of Christian doctrines.

This story refers to the flood as a consequence of human actions. In the narrative, God is sorry to have made all living beings because “the earth was filled with violence” (Genesis 6:11). According to Horrell, “It is clear that, for the narrator, human wickedness remains at the centre of the picture”.²⁶⁶ In order to clarify the meaning of “human wickedness”, it is necessary to recognise what the violence is and how humans are understood as evil in this story. The Jewish Publication Society considers it to be lawlessness.²⁶⁷ Horrell examines this story with other texts which are related to the curse on the ground.²⁶⁸ The disobedience of Adam and Eve causes the first curse on the ground (Genesis 3:17). Genesis gradually describes how human violence arose from Cain’s murder (4:10), from Lameh’s command (4:23-24), from sexual immorality (6:2), and from evil thoughts and minds (6:5). These are different features of violence, but they have certain things in common: Using the principles which were established earlier in this chapter, four conclusions can be drawn, as follows: first, human beings overlook the intrinsic worth of other living beings; second, they devalue the interconnectedness between God, all living beings, and the earth; third, they do not listen to other voices or even to God’s commandment; and fourth, they are not

²⁶⁵ Cohn, *Noah’s Flood*, 26.

²⁶⁶ Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 42.

²⁶⁷ Tsumura, “A Biblical Theology of Water,” 176.

²⁶⁸ Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 40.

concerned with the purpose of God's creation. They do not seek the fruitful life of all beings, and the range of human violence (sin) has expanded to include our greed to destroy this earth in this 21st century.

The recovery of this earth is the ultimate salvation in this story. God creates this earth and also Adam who is the first human on earth. The term Adam – *Adamah* (ground) – allows me to realise the interconnectedness between the ground (earth) and humanity.²⁶⁹ God's creation desires that all creatures without any disparity live on the ground. God purifies this earth and allows living beings to live continuously on it. Noah's family and the selected living beings in the ark share their lives with the purified earth. It can be said that the flood is not only a disaster because a number of living beings died, but also it is a blessing that earth is cleansed like the original creation. This cleanliness indicates that water plays an important role in God's creation. St. Augustine states "That it rained for forty days and forty nights; as the sacrament of heavenly baptism washes away all the guilt of the sins against the ten commandments throughout all the four quarters of the world (four times ten is forty), whether that guilt has been contracted in the day of prosperity or in the night of adversity".²⁷⁰ He links the raining with baptism; I address this connection in detail in the next chapter.

Furthermore, some scholars link Noah's survival with the resurrection of Jesus. Justin Martyr (CE 100-165) connects the wood of the ark and the cross of Jesus in terms of the salvation of all living beings.²⁷¹ Although he is not an ecofeminist theologian, his analysis helps me to see salvation in a broad way: it should be not only on this ground (earth) but also something spiritual through faith in Jesus Christ. The cleansed earth seeks new life for all living beings. The most important thing is that this story asserts that God's covenant is for all living beings, not only for humanity. In other words, this highlights the intrinsic worth, voice and purpose of all living beings (together with their interconnectedness) and between them, earth, and God. Babbitt argues that "We are

²⁶⁹ Case-Winters, *Reconstructing a Christian Theology of Nature*, 120.

²⁷⁰ Saint Augustine, "No. 17," *Contra Faustum, Book XII*, trans. Richard Stothert and ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140612.htm>.

²⁷¹ St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, vol. 3, *Selections from the Fathers of the Church*, trans. Thomas B. Falls and ed. Michael Slusser (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 207.

thus instructed that this everlasting covenant was made to protect the whole of creation, not for the exclusive use and disposition of mankind, but for the purposes of the Creator”.²⁷² It is important to recognise God’s purposes and to respect all diversity on earth. The practical analysis is addressed in the next section with a hermeneutics of transformative action for change.

4.3.4 Using a Hermeneutics of Transformative Action for Change

The most important lesson in this story is to recognise the destructive power of water (the flood) and to remember God’s blessing which gives life to all living beings and supports them to live in peace. This story highlights the fact that all beings are fragile and vulnerable; no living beings can live without God’s mercy, and in particular cannot live within the flood (chaos). It is necessary to fear it because the destructive power of nature is uncontrollable and unpredictable. Sometimes, people understand ecological disaster as God’s punishment. However, it is easy to fall into a trap of hierarchical dualism (sin and punishment versus purity and blessing) with this interpretation. It can be described that ecological disasters are closely influenced by human-centred actions. For example, the abuse of water, gender inequality, and the indifference to the earth and other living beings are the specific human violence in this contemporary society. In this way, readers are able to focus on humanity and on the majority of people rather than on all living beings and earth and minorities and vulnerable living beings.

Then, how can human beings overcome human-centred thoughts? I suggest three transformative actions for change derived from insights into this story. First, it is necessary to recognise how powerful ecological disasters are. This story deals with a disastrous flood. I want to focus more on the link between human violence and ecological disasters. As I have argued in 4.3.3, the understanding of human violence needs to expand to incorporate the abuse of water in the global water crisis. It is important to recognise that the abuse of water is an act of human violence. A number of people regard water as a commodity in the current capitalist society. This creates an illusion about water; human beings can buy as much water as they want, anytime and anywhere (if they have money) because there is plenty of water on earth. This perspective is fundamentally

²⁷² Babbitt, “Between the Flood and the Rainbow,” 5.

based on a dualistic epistemology: water as object in comparison with humanity as subject. In addition, it is a result of the 'not realising' or indifference to the fact that humanity is part of earth and that all living beings are interconnected and interdependent both with each other and with the earth. From this human-centeredness arises a variety of types of violence meted out to the earth; ultimately, it destroys the ecosystem. If humans abuse water or use it for profit, water cannot bring life to all living beings in an equal way.

Second, it is necessary to recognise the blessing of a life-giving God. This story indicates how gracious God's blessing is. The rainbow is a memento which refers to the covenant between God and all living beings on earth. God does not completely erase this earth but instead breathes new life into the purified earth. This means the flood does not only destroy lives in terms of water circulation. When it recedes, life starts again. Therefore, a bird finds trees and not all life is destroyed (Genesis 1-11). Clines highlights the blessings of God by proposing three themes: first, a sin-speech-mitigation-punishment theme; second, a spread of sin, a spread of grace theme; and third, a creation-uncreation-recreation theme.²⁷³ All three themes commonly focus on the blessings, yet the first two are still influenced by a dualistic structure: the sin of humanity and the grace of God. However, it is interesting that the third theme is a way that is able to avoid this dualistic approach and which stresses three different types of creation. This expression is echoed, to an extent, by Hart Winter who also emphasises that "The flood describes God's "un-creation" and "re-creation" of the world".²⁷⁴ In order to seek an anti-dualistic perspective, I agree with the use of the terms "uncreation" and "recreation". This approach also contributes to the highlighting of the gradual process of creation: the continuity and connection between sin and salvation. In so doing, this approach allows us to see both sides of and ultimately seek a world in which all living beings support their own intrinsic worth, the interconnectedness among themselves, a variety of voices without disparities, and the purpose of this earth – living together.

²⁷³ David, J.A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 66-84.

²⁷⁴ Hart Winter, "Just Water," 75.

Third, it is necessary to remember the interconnection between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water. In this flood story, the power of physical water to bring about an ecological disaster is highlighted by recognising the spiritual meanings of water – “uncreation” and the results of sin. In addition, the life-giving water in water circulation emphasises the blessings of the life-giving God. I argue that the interconnected understanding of water allows us to consider what the individual and structural sins are in this glocal water crisis era and to seek the integrity of creation. However, this insistence does not mean that I prioritise the spiritual meanings of water over and above Christian doctrines such as sin and salvation. It is important to recognise the meanings in an equal way, so that meanings of physical water must be highlighted.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined two stories on water: the Samaritan woman and Jesus (John 4:1-42), and Noah’s flood (Genesis 6-9). Although these stories deal with different contexts of water – the former is related to the shortage of water and the latter is about the flood — there is an important common approach I have set out to challenge in my study of these passages. Commentators and biblical scholars have spiritualised both stories, rather than being concerned with both meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water. This is the theological issue that I have dealt with in this chapter; because both meanings are closely interconnected and cannot be separated. Therefore, I have addressed this issue through ecofeminist theological perspectives which pursue the integrity of creation, and interconnectedness, as well as interdependency.

In order to advocate ecofeminist theological perspectives, I have first examined ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics, which seek: 1) both recovery and resistance in a reconstructive way; and 2) a spiral of ongoing interpretation. The hermeneutics enable me to recognise these facts: First, I disclose the importance of the meanings of physical water such as well water, flood (rain water), and rainbow (airborne water). Second, I find the voices of vulnerable beings such as a woman and non-Jew in John 4:1-42. Third, I identify the intrinsic worth and purpose of living beings and

the interconnectedness in the relationship between God, living beings, and the earth (and in particular, water). On the other hand, I have resisted anthropocentric, androcentric, and kyriocentric perspectives in both stories (section 4.2.2 and 4.3.2). I critique the interpretations of John 4:1-42 which primarily emphasise the spiritual meaning of water from Jesus as being more valuable than the physical water from the Samaritan woman. In Genesis 6-9, the spiritual meaning of the flood has been mainly emphasised over and above meanings of physical water and sin and salvation are very separated. In addition, it is hard to find voices from living beings, because the story is very focused on God's words and God's emotion; therefore, I resist a kyriocentric approach to this story. These analyses have been influenced by the spiral of ongoing interpretations. I have used four factors which are introduced by Conradie – historical contexts of the text, traditions of interpretation, contemporary contexts of readers, and a variety of interpretations through the ages (section 4.1.2). The most important learning in this chapter is that the physical and spiritual meanings of water are deeply interconnected. The continuity and connection between them are further explored in the next chapter, which focuses on baptism – a significant sacrament for Christians.

Chapter 5 Water in the Sacrament of Baptism

This chapter explores an account of water in the sacrament of baptism, which is a significant part of the Christian tradition. It is based on a range of ecofeminist theological perspectives which pursue a network of relationships and correlations called inter-relatedness. In the previous chapter, I argued that ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics allowed me to recognise the interconnectedness between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water in two specific biblical stories. Based on the same methodological step, this chapter explores this further, and addresses the relationship between creation and salvation through the theological act of Christian baptism. The reason is that the sacrament of baptism is a mediator not only between creation and salvation, but also between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water. This study applies ecofeminist theological perspectives since these enable us to see the continuity and connectedness of these theological beliefs such as creation and salvation, the integrity of creation, and the emphasis on visible baptismal water in contrast to how they have been integrated into and expounded within traditional Christian theology.

I am concerned with the fact that water is not only a very important substance on earth but is also more than a substance. In order to demonstrate this fact, in this chapter, I consider the significant Christian (sacramental) tradition of baptism since it is necessary to reinterpret the sacrament of baptism in ecofeminist theological perspectives which pursue the liberation of women and nature. Revisiting the sacrament of baptism from these perspectives can raise concerns. For example, ecofeminist theologians have not yet dedicated significant attention to this work; something evidenced by the paucity of resources available. Thus, one might question whether it is possible to fill a gap in scholarship through ecofeminist theological perspectives. The emphasis on both creation and salvation and the baptismal water enables me to reinterpret the sacrament of baptism. In particular, I associate physical water with creation. This detailed argument is explored in three dimensions: 1) the close relationship between caring for creation and the liberation of marginalised living beings; 2) the conversion from power-oppression to mutual respect; and 3) the relationship between different images of God and between creation

and salvation (re-creation). These ecofeminist theological points contribute to a re-visiting of the meanings of baptism.

5.1 The Sacrament of Baptism

The sacrament of baptism (henceforth 'baptism') is an important Christian tradition. Most churches commonly believe that baptism is an initiatory ritual for being a Christian, yet it is attributed a slightly different position and meaning in church denominations worldwide. The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church include baptism as one of seven sacraments. They believe that in order to be saved, baptism is necessary. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament".²⁷⁵ Stamenkovic has researched a variety of resources on Orthodox baptism: "Without baptism, there is no salvation. Baptism is, therefore, the precondition for our salvation".²⁷⁶ That is, both churches have a clearly different understanding of baptism in comparison with many other Christian denominations which proclaim that baptism is a sign and symbol of salvation rather than something necessary for salvation.

On the other hand, each denomination has a slightly different understanding of baptism – for example, Calvinist or Reformed protestant churches have a lower view of the sacraments than some parts of the Lutheran tradition.²⁷⁷ However, this section does not deal with the detailed differences between denominations. Rather, here, I address the commonalities shared by protestant churches in their understandings and practices of baptism. I consider one major difference between them which is represented by the use of the term 'ordinance' by some denominations, as distinct from 'sacrament' in others. Protestant churches mainly focus on individual faith in baptism in comparison with Catholic and Orthodox churches which are more

²⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1993, sec. 1257, accessed 20 June 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P3M.HTM.

²⁷⁶ Ivica Stamenkovic, "Orthodox Baptism and Biblical Salvation," *Berean Beacon Ministries*, 19 June 2015, <https://thetruthaboutcatholicism.com/orthodox-articles/2015/6/19/orthodox-baptism-and-biblical-salvation>.

²⁷⁷ Bodo Nischan, "The Exorcism Controversy and Baptism in the Late Reformation," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 47-48.

concerned with transitions into a community. Most protestant churches consider baptism as one of only two sacraments,²⁷⁸ while some other protestant churches such as Anabaptists, Baptists, Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Mennonites, and Pentecostals view it as an “ordinance”, which emphasises an obedience to God as a daily practice: “Ordinance language emphasizes discipleship while sacramental language emphasizes divine action. As ordinances, baptism, the Lord’s Supper and assembly are communal moments that mark the journey of discipleship. As sacraments, they are moments of divine encounter through which we are moved along the path of discipleship towards entire sanctification”.²⁷⁹ The term ‘ordinance’ indicates that they do not regard baptism as a supernatural work or a requirement for salvation. This does not mean that baptism does not have such an important significance as a sufficient and essential means of salvation. Barth argues that “Baptism is not a means of the divine work and revelation of salvation. It is neither a causative nor a cognitive *medium salutis*. It is a genuine human answer to the divine work and word of revelation”.²⁸⁰ Consequently, baptism becomes a visible confession, which connects all church members, all different ages from the point of baptism to the very end of this world, and all contexts in which baptism is exercised.

Although the position of baptism and the way in which it is understood is different among churches,²⁸¹ it is clear that baptism has been regarded as an essential ritual in most churches. In my presbyterian background, baptism is a sign and symbol of grace; however, whether baptism

²⁷⁸ Protestant churches believe that two sacraments – baptism and eucharist – are significant in liturgy as signs of salvation. Most of them still use the term ‘sacrament’; this is because sacraments embrace all salvific activities of Jesus in a variety of contexts which transcend the ages. Wainwright states that “What have come to be called the ‘sacraments’ place the saving activity of Jesus within the broad *cultural* context of the whole of humanity. Thus, baptism takes up the universal practical and symbolic significance of water as the medium of washing, an instrument of death and new life: baptism is the sign of participation in the redemption wrought by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Mark 10.38f; Luke 12.50; Rom.6; Col. 2.12; Tit. 3.5-7)”. cf. Geoffrey Wainwright, “The Continuing Tradition of the Church,” in *The Study of Liturgy*, rev. ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold SJ and Paul Bradshaw (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 549.

²⁷⁹ John Mark Hicks, “Ordinance or Sacrament: Both/And Rather Than Either/Or,” *Leaven* 22, no. 4 (2014): 207.

²⁸⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, The Foundation of the Christian Life Baptism*, rev. ed. and trans. G.W. Bromiley, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 156.

²⁸¹ The Quaker movement teaches that “they believe in and practice baptism as a spiritual reality, but that they do not use water or ritual to effect or symbolize that reality”. This results in an emphasis on the spiritual baptism of Jesus rather than on the water baptism of John. However, as I prioritise the interconnection between spiritual baptism and water baptism, I argue that the Quakers’ belief tends to apply a dualistic approach by focusing on spiritual baptism. Howard R. Macy, “Baptism and Quakers,” in *Baptism: Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. Gordon L. Heath and James D. Dvorak (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 157.

is a requirement for salvation or a symbol, the most important fact is that baptism is regarded as a significant ritual and uses water to recognise that Christians are involved in the Christian community. This embraces soteriological meanings.

The Roman Catholic Church asserts that

“Holy baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons [sic] of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: “Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.””²⁸²

On the other hand, the WCC, which represents a broad ecumenical perspective embracing various denominations within the Christian tradition, states in the ‘Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM)’ document

“Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptized with Christ and with his people. The New Testament scriptures and the liturgy of the Church unfold the meaning of baptism in various images which express the riches of Christ and the gifts of his salvation. These images are sometimes linked with the symbolic uses of water in the Old Testament. Baptism is participation in Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–5; Col. 2:12); a washing away of sin (I Cor. 6:11); a new birth (John3:5); an enlightenment by Christ (Eph. 5:14); a re-clothing in Christ (Gal. 3:27); a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from the flood (I Peter 3:20–21); an exodus from bondage (I Cor. 10:1–2) and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal. 3:27-28; I Cor. 12:13). The images are many but the reality is one.”²⁸³

The BEM document, formulated by the WCC, isn’t exclusive to Protestant views but rather encapsulates a consensus across various Christian traditions. This ecumenical perspective provides a comprehensive overview of baptism that allows for an exploration of its various interpretations. In analysing the Roman Catholic Church’s position alongside the BEM document it becomes clear that: a) While the Roman Catholic Church sees baptism as foundational for salvation, the BEM document presents it as a sign of new life; b) The Roman Catholic perspective

²⁸² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sec. 1213, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P3G.HTM.

²⁸³ World Council of Churches, “Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry,” *Faith and Order Paper* No. 111 (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 1, https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/FO1982_111_en.pdf.

underscores the mission in relation to Christ and the Church, while the BEM document stresses the relationship between Christ and Christ's followers; c) The Roman Catholic assertion does not define water in detail, but the BEM document elaborates on both its symbolic ('washing away') and physical ('the flood') significances.

There is no doubt that baptismal water is an essential initiatory ritual for churches. This indicates that the Christian community is bound together. Although churches have slightly different positions or practices relating to baptismal water, this ritual allows Christians to bind together as one family. Another way of thinking about this is that the difference between churches' and denominations' positions on the role and interpretation of baptism provides a rich variety of meanings. This leads me to realise the importance of both catholicity and specificity. Churches have several different methods of baptism which use water in different ways: such as total or partial immersion which symbolises both death and rebirth (Romans 6:3-4), affusion which pours out the holy spirit (Romans 5:5), and sprinkling water which highlights cleansing (Ezekiel 36:25). These different practices stress different meanings of baptism, yet the most important thing is that all baptism uses water to cleanse and as a gate into a new life (life-giving lives) with Jesus. The same material – water – and the fundamental meanings of baptismal water represent catholicity and a variety of practical differences of baptism support specificity.

In the practice of baptism, specificity is mostly used to highlight something. For example, some churches practise full bodily immersion, whereas others simply anoint the person being baptised with water on her/his forehead. According to Te Rire and Taylor, "Entering the waters is a way of being, a becoming immersed in an interconnected journey that weaves connections: neither dependent nor independent, but interdependent".²⁸⁴ They have also argued for connections between different methods, but highlight immersion as a special ritual. Immersion in baptism tends to show interconnection and interdependence more than others; this is because the ritual enables us to experience the physical water over our whole body. This moment might be very

²⁸⁴ Hone Te Rire and Steve Taylor, "Children of the Waters: Whirlpools, Waiora, Baptism and Missio Dei," *Mission Studies* 37 (2020): 9.

special for the living being who is baptised by immersion. There is no denying that physical water in baptism is well displayed in immersion. However, this does not mean that immersion is the best symbol which allows us to realise interconnection and interdependence. A variety of methods is equally important in the understanding of the connection between earthly water and God's presence. Although in the 21st century the symbolic ritual is being simplified in some churches, the meaning of baptism is maintained in the wide diversity of methods used. When Christians are concerned with diversity and specificity, the catholicity between all churches can be more developed or specifically organised. Thus, the most significant thing is to value both catholicity and specificity in an overall understanding of baptism.

However, it is true that soteriological understandings of baptism have been over-emphasised by many theologians regardless of their denominations. Hart, for example, suggests a variety of soteriological understandings of baptism in four biblical passages: 1) Jesus' crucifixion is a baptism (Mark 10:38); 2) baptism is to join the salvific time of Jesus (Romans 6:3); 3) baptism means saving from death (1 Peter 3:20-21); and 4) baptism is a (re)birth through water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8).²⁸⁵ On the other hand, Luther uses the image of flood in a baptismal prayer.²⁸⁶ For him, the flood of baptism is basically different from Noah's flood in Gen 6-9; the prayer describes God's mercy which submerges this whole world, and does not relate to God's grief. The prayer emphasises the blessings of God and cleanliness of this earth. Dodge argues that "Water becomes symbolic of the death/life reality inherent in Christian Baptism".²⁸⁷ She lists the symbols in relation to death: 1) "dying with Jesus in his crucifixion"; 2) "dying to a way of life that diminishes the good news Jesus shared"; and 3) "dying to the isolation that fractures the well-being of the Christian community".²⁸⁸ She also points out that "it awakens the Christian to the possibilities of a life lived in faith, hope and love in a community of believers who honour that

²⁸⁵ Hart, *Sacramental Commons*, 88.

²⁸⁶ Martin Luther, "The Order of Baptism 1523," in *Works of Martin Luther: With Introductions and Notes*, ed. The Philadelphia Edition (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), 198.

²⁸⁷ Mary Dodge, "All Water is Holy: Ecological Catechesis For Baptism" (PhD diss., St. Thomas University, 2015), 114, ProQuest (3737385).

²⁸⁸ Dodge, "All Water is Holy," 114.

death and resurrection are the promises of the sacrament”.²⁸⁹ Her argument indicates that the water of baptism implies both destructive power and is something that gives the new life.

These understandings of baptism are faced with the challenge that the restoration of the integrity of creation and of all living beings should be highlighted in an interconnected way. I do not argue that the integrity of creation is more important than the soteriological meaning in baptism. Rather, I affirm that the revisiting of baptism on the basis of ecofeminist theological perspectives allows us to overcome the limitations of a focus on the salvation of humanity as well as to be concerned about all living beings and the inter-relationship between creation and salvation. By stressing the importance of baptismal water (meanings of physical water), I critique the fact that spiritual meanings of water in baptism are more emphasised. Therefore, in the next section, the significance of the inter-relationship of ecofeminist theological perspectives in the understanding of baptism is addressed as a matter of importance.

5.2 The Inter-relationship of Ecofeminist Theological Perspectives

Ecofeminist theology is fundamentally based on interdependence and interconnectedness. This allows me to see the inter-relationship in relationships which has previously been interpreted in dualistic terms; for example, the relationship between creation and salvation, between creation and humanity, and between women and men. Ecofeminist theology not only critiques anthropocentric and dualistic approaches but also supports the interconnectedness among the variety of relationships as outlined in the three groups above. It helps me to understand how much the interconnected way of thinking is important in order to seek the interrelationship between creation and salvation as well as the meanings of baptismal water along with spiritual meanings of water. Therefore, in this section, these characteristics of ecofeminist theology are addressed in terms of a) the relationship between creation and salvation, and b) baptism.

²⁸⁹ Dodge, “All Water is Holy,” 115.

5.2.1 Creation and Salvation

Creation and salvation are deeply interconnected. In regards to inter-relationality, there are three important points of concern. First of all, it is necessary to connect caring for creation with the liberation of oppressed beings. McFague regards nature as “the new poor”.²⁹⁰ Her interpretation of ‘nature’ allows me to expand the spectrum of ‘poor’ which has traditionally been used to focus on humanity. This understanding is extremely important in enabling me to recognise the value of water as well. Water can be viewed as one of the new ‘poor’, and as something that is interconnected with contemporary societies. Water is a weak, vulnerable and limited material, not a limitless affluent material. Typically, Christians have mainly focused on salvation which prioritises the afterlife rather than life on this earth where a variety of living beings live and where their bodies exist. This causes an indifference towards poor, marginalised beings, and this earth. However, ecofeminist theologians argue for the recognition of embodied, dependent, and interconnected relationships and their salvation. They value the present living space which is filled with matter/material itself. They focus on the present, immanent God on earth, and physical bodies. Gebara highlights “an everyday salvation” which occurs in our daily life on earth.²⁹¹ She is also concerned with the continuity of salvation in daily life which is not one event for the afterlife: “this salvation is not a state one attains once and for all. It is there like a glass of water that quenches thirst for the moment, but thirst comes again, sometimes stronger than before”.²⁹² This analysis of salvation is related to creation. Creation is not simply one event at the beginning of this earth. Creation is continually presented in our daily life and also it will be in the future.

Second, it is necessary to discard the structure of power-oppression and to form relationships which support mutual respect. This point has been well developed by ecofeminist (ecological) theologians. Ruether recognises that oppressive systems such as patriarchy and hierarchy not only destroy God’s creation but also resist salvation.²⁹³ She critiques the dualistic thinking of good

²⁹⁰ McFague, *The Body of God*, 166.

²⁹¹ Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 22.

²⁹² Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 123.

²⁹³ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 256.

and evil between spirit (men) and body (women). This analysis sees not only the oppressive systems as sinful but also the inter-relationship between creation and salvation. In addition, McFague proposes a “subject-subjects” model instead of a “subject-object” which is a typical model of the relationship between humanity, earth and God.²⁹⁴ This ultimately contributes to respect and interest in others (objects) by regarding them as subjects. For example, humanity tends to regard water as an object. This allows water to be treated in an oppressive way in which it is viewed as an object. In reality, water must be recognised as a subject. Kim, furthermore, suggests mutual-subjectivity instead of subject-subjects. This is because mutual subjectivity dismantles the fixed relationship between subject and object (and subject and subjects) and supports the dynamic complexity of the relationship; it is flexible and interrelated constantly.²⁹⁵ Although it is important to respect all relationships as subjects (something argued by McFague), the understanding of mutual subjectivity is more theologically appropriate in the diverse and complex earth. The reason is that the concept of mutual subjectivity is able 1) to pursue inter-relationship 2) to critique the current oppressive structures which generally treat water as an object; and 3) to recognise the importance of water in God’s creation and salvation.

Gebara focuses on the interrelationship between all living beings on earth. She points out that salvation is an interrelationship between others and oneself: “We are food and drink for one another. We are one another’s body and blood. We are one another’s salvation”.²⁹⁶ It is important to discard an anthropocentric understanding of salvation, as can be seen in Gebara’s proposal of “a more biocentric understanding of salvation”.²⁹⁷ These understandings indicate that salvation means re-creation, or the recovery of creation after the destruction of life. She, further, attempts to recover the meaning of Trinity by emphasising intercommunication and interrelationship, in comparison with traditional Christian theology which describes the Trinity as a superior and transcendental being in contradistinction to this earth (humanity).²⁹⁸ She

²⁹⁴ Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How we should love nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 7-8.

²⁹⁵ Jean Hee Kim, “Creation, Life, and Woman: The Cosmocentric View of Creation for Ecofeminist Theology,” *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 23, no. 1 (2002): 164.

²⁹⁶ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, ix.

²⁹⁷ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 183.

²⁹⁸ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 152.

proposes five reflections to reconstruct Trinitarian meanings: “the Trinity in the cosmos; the Trinity on earth; the Trinity in relationships among peoples and cultures; the Trinity in human relationships; and the Trinity in every person”.²⁹⁹ Her suggestion allows me to focus on a variety of relationships which go beyond dualistic traditional meanings and pursue the interconnectedness and interrelationship in ecofeminist theology.

Third, it is necessary to recognise the transcendent and immanent God in creation and salvation (re-creation). A number of theologians have focused on God’s actions rather than on creation itself. For example, Augustine describes the separation between God and creation.³⁰⁰ His comparison contrasts finite creation and the infinity of God. In a similar way, most traditional theologians are concerned with God rather than creation itself. They begin with the description of creation and then conclude with who God is in relation to creation.³⁰¹ It seems like creation is used to emphasise the Almighty nature of God. Santmire names this approach as a “spiritual motif” that “nature tends always to be interpreted or validated (if it is validated) finally in terms of spirit”.³⁰² This tends to advocate the transcendence of God rather than God’s immanent characteristics. Therefore, this understanding is critiqued by ecofeminist theologians. Ruether stresses the Trinitarian God of life who is named ‘Sophia’: “The Trinitarian dynamic of life is both creational and salvational; it both creates new life and seeks to correct distorted relations and re-establish life-giving, loving relationality. The name of the Trinitarian God as sustaining, redeeming matrix of cosmic, planetary, social and personal life is Sophia: Holy Wisdom”.³⁰³ The emphasis on the interrelated image of God is developed by Johnson who uses the term, “the Trinity as Spirit-Sophia, Jesus-Sophia, and Mother-Sophia”.³⁰⁴ By using the feminine word to express God instead of the masculine term, these approaches have begun to overcome

²⁹⁹ Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 155.

³⁰⁰ Saint Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*. Vol. 84, *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Roland J. Teske (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 146.

³⁰¹ Tyler R. Wittman, *God and Creation in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 15.

³⁰² Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1985), 9.

³⁰³ Ruether, “Ecofeminism,” 31.

³⁰⁴ Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), xxii.

traditional dualistic approaches in the understanding of God. In addition, Ruether's insistence on the trinitarian Sophia unites creation and salvation in universal harmony. On the other hand, McFague attempts to link material/body to God (the Spirit). She uses a metaphor of the body of God which supports the holiness of creation. She combines both immanence and transcendence in the model of the body of God which means God exists in this material world.³⁰⁵ She stresses the salvation of all creation. The body of God describes the intimate relationship between God and this creation.³⁰⁶ This understanding is deeply related to altering our understanding of God and moving from seeing God in transcendent terms to immanent; this is because she highlights the embodiment and interrelationship on ecological praxis.

Consequently, although creation and salvation can be examined separately one from the other, which often results in a greater emphasis on salvation, it is necessary to hold both creation and salvation together. Over the past 40 to 50 years ecofeminist theologies (as well as eco-theologians) have highlighted the interrelationship between them and have also critiqued anthropocentric and androcentric views of traditional Christian analyses on the sacrament of baptism.³⁰⁷ In addition, they value cosmological salvation which is for all creatures on this earth and not confined to human beings. This approach critiques those who understand salvation as if it were in a separate box relating to the eternal world. In short, salvation is a recovery of creation. It is impossible to separate salvation from creation. Creation and salvation are not only for humanity but also all creatures on earth. It is important to realise that humanity is a part of the whole creation; therefore, the dualistic, hierarchical, and kyriarchal approaches have to be removed. It can be said that creation is the place where God's salvation is fulfilled and salvation is ultimately to give happiness to all creatures and bodies. In short, creation and salvation are strongly related to each other. This fact is a basis for understanding baptism through ecofeminist theological perspectives. Therefore, the next section uses these perspectives to demonstrate the significance of revisiting baptism, and in particular, the interconnection between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water in baptism.

³⁰⁵ McFague, *The Body of God*, 20.

³⁰⁶ McFague, *The Body of God*, 144.

³⁰⁷ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 30.

5.2.2 Baptism

How can ecofeminist theological perspectives interact with an analysis of baptism? First of all, these perspectives lead me to re-read a number of biblical texts which have typically been interpreted as a presentation of the meaning, or meanings, of baptism. This is a way of understanding the importance of the interconnection between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water in baptism. The Bible talks about different practices of baptism, from its initiatory historical perspective to its practice. Here I examine two specific biblical texts through ecofeminist theological perspectives in order to highlight the significance of inter-relationality: 1) “And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him” (Matthew 3:16); and 2) “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The first text describes Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, and it opens the door for the presence of the Holy Spirit. This shows the combination of water and spirit in baptism. Water presents the coming of the Spirit and the dynamic of being alive. This baptism of the Son of God – Jesus – demonstrates the significance of baptism with water and Spirit. There is no disconnection between water baptism and spirit baptism. This text shows that baptism is the continuity and connection between the flowing of physical water and the Holy Spirit. The second text describes firstly the inter-relationality between different characteristics of God: the father, the son, and the holy spirit. Baptism is also inextricably linked to being a Christian and is the precondition for learning what the life of discipleship to Jesus is. An understanding of Jesus’ teaching enables Christians to live a genuinely Christian life in all its abundance in this water crisis era. It can be expanded to understand the value of water, in particular, the baptismal water’s significance in the meeting between the Holy Spirit and physical water. Dodge, a Catholic theologian, points out that all water should be valued in the same ways as baptismal water

because all water is holy water intrinsically.³⁰⁸ Consequently, my thesis aims to develop a strand of traditional Christian thought on baptismal water and to help develop a theology of water.

Second, these perspectives support the valuing of meanings of physical water as much as spiritual meanings of water on baptism. In the important ceremony for Christians, water is used as an essential ingredient that allows the relationship between God and all living beings, and between spiritual and physical domains, to be restored. Water is deeply related to the spirit of God (Genesis 1:2). Water (or 'river') flows into a variety of places in order to sustain life fruitfully (Genesis 2:10-14). Water has been used to cleanse; or alternatively, sometimes it represents the punishment of sin and salvation (Genesis 7). There are a number of biblical texts which describe death or life by either physical or spiritual water, yet baptism presents the meeting point between physical water and spiritual meanings of water. Christians experience the invisible Holy Spirit by using physical water in baptism. A baptised person is henceforth involved in a Christian community where both physical and spiritual meanings are given a significant role and purpose. Thus, baptism can be regarded as a response to God's invitation which calls living beings to participate in Jesus' life-giving mission. This fact leads them to value both meanings of water in their faith life. Although most Christians tend to focus more on the presence of the Holy Spirit than on physical water, this research places both as equally important. Therefore, in this section, I present water in baptism as not only a physical material but also as a spiritual resource. As these perspectives are based on non-hierarchical and anti-dualistic views of ecofeminist theology, this fact allows for a recognition of how all living beings make relationships within this earth which extend far beyond loving nature as an end in itself. While Christians have traditionally given more value to the invisible Holy Spirit in terms of faith in God, ecofeminist theologians break the bias and highlight the material. They emphasise the immanent God who is present with us on earth. This is linked to the meanings of physical water on baptism. This is the important topic in this chapter; therefore, it is examined in the next section 'Baptismal Water' in detail.

³⁰⁸ Dodge, "All Water is Holy," v.

Third, these perspectives allow me to recognise the interconnections between sin/death and cleansing/rebirth in baptism. These used to be regarded as contrasting poles, which resulted in the former being rejected or erased and the latter being pursued. It is necessary to recognise both equally in order to understand baptism in an interconnected way. The reason is that both are inextricably connected. Cleansing and rebirth begin from the recognition of sin and death (including individual and social sins). Thus, the following questions are useful to re-examine baptism: 1) Which sins do we commit in our daily life in the global water crisis era? and 2) What are the meanings of cleansing/rebirth in practical and spiritual ways? These questions lead Christians not only to reflect on themselves but also to pursue new life. Furthermore, baptism is found in both life-giving and self-giving actions. The gift of life is regarded as self-giving in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus demonstrated through his death that life is to give or share myself with other living beings. The visible self-giving is connected to the visible sacraments. White's statement on the functions of the sacraments enables us to examine and better understand self-giving: 1) "God acts in the sacraments"; 2) "God acts in the sacraments in self-giving"; 3) "through the sacraments, God's self-giving occurs as love made visible"; and 4) "God's self-giving as love is made visible through relationships of love within the community".³⁰⁹ His analyses are focused on Christological points – particularly, Jesus' characteristic of self-giving. Self-giving is the most important thing in the outworking of life, love, and peace on earth. Fundamentally, inter-relationality demonstrates that all subjects are treated as objects on the basis of co-existence. This means that sometimes one side gives life to the other, or both sides share life with each other. In this variety of relationships, all ultimately pursue the giving of life, which enables all living beings to be saved. Baptism is the gate that allows Christians to pursue this giving of life and then facilitates the giving of self to other living beings on the basis of interconnectedness.

This understanding allows me to realise that even though Christians normally regard baptism as one special event, it should not be confined to a good memory or a grateful moment. Baptism should be remembered constantly in living beings' daily lives. This is linked to the fact that water

³⁰⁹ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed., rev., and expanded. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 196-98.

has a high sacramental significance in a Christian's subsequent everyday life; a significance which is interpreted at both a spiritual and a physical level. This understanding is also connected to the continuity between creation and salvation. As salvation is regarded as re-creation, creation and salvation are deeply interconnected and have had an ongoing role in the life of Christian people, so baptism constantly affects our daily life and connects us with Christian communities and also the earth community to act in a life-giving or self-giving way. It is necessary to think about the relationship with sin/death in our life. Sin is apart from God's vision; indifference to other living beings on earth and the falling into despair. All humanity has sin/death, even baptised people continually commit sin and experience death and are ego-centric. For example, water should be considered as a natural substance for the common good, not a commodity. However, for people, water has frequently been understood as a commodity; this approach can be understood as a sin in the global water crisis era. Humanity easily tends to forget the love of God's blessing, cleansing, and rebirth, and to make a distinction or bias which is in direct contrast with life-giving salvation. This tendency describes the fact that baptism is dynamic, not static. Therefore, it is difficult to understand baptism as a precondition of salvation.

In short, baptism as a sacrament represents the love of God towards our living beings and earth. Baptism does not only show the love of God but also praises the gift of God. Water is a gift that all living beings need in order to survive. While bread and wine, which are important resources for the sacrament of the eucharist, are generally for eating and drinking, water is not just a material for drinking; it is used for cooking, growing, cleaning, travelling, and so on. This means that water is not just water, but also a basic constituent of food, and an interconnector between a variety of things. Water is also related to weather, and climate, over which – until recently – humans had little control. Of course, scientists have developed processes by which water can be made; they have already found and developed it in several different ways, but essentially the atoms which are used to make water cannot be invented by scientific technologies. In other words, water is a natural part of creation and not something made by human endeavours. Water is fundamentally a gift, not a product, like baptism.

5.3 Baptismal Water

Water and baptism are inextricably connected. Visibly, water is the common element of baptism in different denominations; some churches also use oil or light in baptism, but other churches only use water. Water in baptism has been used to represent both death (cleansing) and resurrection (renewal) both of which are deeply connected to creation and salvation (1 Peter 3:21). Scholars have been interested in the relationship between water and baptism. However, most of them attempt to find more fruitful meanings of baptism by looking at the spiritual meanings of water, rather than focusing on the water of baptism itself. This demonstrates that there are a number of statements and arguments about the meanings of water which ultimately highlight baptism. At this point, an important question is raised: Is water necessary in baptism? There are a number of materials on earth, yet only water has been used in baptism. Why are other materials not used instead of water? The Christian tradition has affirmed the necessity of water in baptism. The analyses are addressed in this section, yet the characteristics of water are examined in detail in order to discern the meanings of water itself in baptism.

This section focuses on 1) the characteristics of water in baptism which have been addressed in this chapter, and 2) the relationship between meanings of physical water, such as those associated with childbirth, and spiritual meanings of water. Although this study mainly employs ecofeminist theological perspectives, other resources from a variety of perspectives are explored in order to critique and discern the meanings of baptismal water. I critique traditional Christian thinking which values spiritual water more than visible water. In addition, I seek the value of physical water and inter-relationality; these are addressed in the sub-sections below which are necessary to examine a) which characteristics in baptismal water helps me to understand baptism, and b) how much baptismal water is important not only in Christianity but also in contemporary societies.

5.3.1 Visible Water in Baptism

According to a number of texts in the Bible, the grace of God is regarded as an invisible presence. However, some sacraments, including baptism, enable Christians to see this grace in a visible way.

McBrien asserts that “A sacramental perspective is one that ‘sees’ the divine in the human, the infinite in the finite, the spiritual in the material, the transcendent in the immanent, the eternal in the historical”.³¹⁰ The interpretation from a contrasting way to a containing way emphasises the verb, ‘see’. God’s presence has been revealed in a variety of ways, and in particular through sacraments. Elements (objects) have been regarded as an important part of Christian sacraments. For example, Augustine states that “The word is added to the element, and there results the Sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word”.³¹¹ The element enables Christians to see the invisible words with their own eyes in the realities that surround them. White adds that “in sacraments words become part of an action using an object such as bread, wine, oil, and water”.³¹² Objects within the sacraments have a significant role in fulfilling the words which are used as they take place. According to him, “The sacraments call us to ‘O taste and see’ (Ps. 34:8), to touch, to hear, even to smell ‘that the Lord is good.’ In them, the physical becomes a vehicle of the spiritual as the sign-act causes us to experience what it represents”.³¹³ Sacraments stress experiences through the physical. The most significant thing is to recognise that Christians can see the presence of God through physical things.

Luther specifically distinguishes baptismal water from plain water: “It is not the water that produces these effects, but the Word of God connected with the water, and our faith which relies on the Word of God connected with the water. For without the Word of God the water is merely water and no Baptism. But when connected with the Word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit”.³¹⁴ This means that the quality of baptismal water is a result of God’s word; if God’s word is not present, it is just plain water. Furthermore, Tillich echoes my previous question of whether water is a necessary element

³¹⁰ Richard P. McBrien, “Roman Catholicism [First Edition],” in *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (MI: Thomson Gale, 2005), 7881.

³¹¹ Saint Augustine, “Tractate 80 (John 15:1-3),” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, trans. John Gibb, first series, vol. 7, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1701080.htm>.

³¹² White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 175.

³¹³ White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 176.

³¹⁴ Martin Luther, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 349.

in baptism or not. He raises three theological issues relating to Luther's statement:³¹⁵ 1) the meaning of "simply water"; 2) the reason that water is used in baptism; and 3) the relationship between "Word of God" and water.³¹⁶ Tillich argues that if we are only concerned with the image of dying and purification in the baptismal water, water can be replaced with other things such as "passing through fire, going down into a cave".³¹⁷ However, he adds even more images; he emphasises a ritualistic approach which reveals that water and baptism are related by God's command. At this point, the relationship between water and baptism is arbitrary in terms of the symbolic-metaphoric and ritualistic approach. Tillich states that "a special character or quality, a power of its own, is attributed to water. By virtue of this natural power, water is suited to become the bearer of a sacral power and thus also to become a sacramental element".³¹⁸ Here he highlights the special character of water which links to the importance of the relationship between water and baptism; it is not merely arbitrary. In short, Tillich attempts to find the meaning of water by taking a realistic approach, unlike Luther who puts greater value on the words of God. According to Tillich, when physical water is connected to the salvation of Jesus, the sacral power of water is maximised. Therefore, it can be deduced that Tillich leads us to value physical water in the understanding of baptism, yet his approach is still based on the dualistic perspective between physical and spiritual water in baptism. This approach pursues the spiritual meanings of water in baptism rather than dealing with both the physical and spiritual.

However, here the question of whether all waters can be sacramental or not must be faced. Catholic theologians such as Dodge have highlighted the sacramental nature of water.³¹⁹ Gregg who is a protestant theologian contends that the term 'sacrament' tends to disproportionately confine the means of grace uniquely to believers. For him, 'sacraments' highlight a special status of the chosen living beings: Christians are regarded as chosen among other living beings. He then

³¹⁵ In order to understand Tillich's points, it is important to look at Luther's statement first. Fundamentally, Luther follows Augustine's statement; Luther and Augustine value the words of God in baptismal water. Luther then parallels Tillich's theological issues with three different reflections: 1) symbolic-metaphorical; 2) ritualistic; and 3) realistic approaches.

³¹⁶ Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, ed. James Luther Adams (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 95.

³¹⁷ Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, 95.

³¹⁸ Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, 96.

³¹⁹ Dodge, "All Water is Holy," 133-36.

suggests that baptism is for "the full marks of its life", not only for the chosen living beings; "the church is *a community of sacrament* and not a community which possesses sacraments".³²⁰ This is linked to an argument of Greggs who is concerned with the relationship between the church and the world: "Water binds the church and the world together. Water expresses something of the expansive and boundary-crossing nature of the catholicity of the church".³²¹ Water is used as a material for the catholicity of baptism in all churches. This means that the dynamic interaction between creation and salvation should take place with reference to water: water has a salvific aspect and a creaturely aspect, and both are present in baptism. Water in baptism draws upon ordinary uses and meanings of water, and yet also symbolises the soteriological destiny of all living beings.

It is commonly known that "Water is earth's lifeblood".³²² For example, Stewart mentions that "water calls forth our sustained attention to the ecological marvels of water – in order to appreciate the very real physical blessings that water provides to the earth, and also because we find in water flowing over the landscape deep and scripturally resonant images of the overflowing blessings of God".³²³ From this, Christians can understand that in their daily lives, water is regarded as a life-giving and life-sustaining substance for this earth, one that can be called a 'blessing'. According to Robinson, "Baptism in water, water drawn from the earth's lifeblood, connects us intimately to the material elements upon which humans and all living beings depend for survival".³²⁴ Greggs highlights the essential characteristics of water as an ordinary materiality in our daily life; "for drinking, washing, cooking, and cleaning".³²⁵ These statements enable me to recognise the visible value of baptismal water which sustains lives. However, this value is not confined to this earth. It is expanded to recognise the metaphorical meaning in spiritual ways.

³²⁰ Tom Greggs, *Dogmatic Ecclesiology: Volume 1: The Priestly Catholicity of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 149.

³²¹ Greggs, *Dogmatic Ecclesiology*, 200.

³²² Hart, *Sacramental Commons*, 79.

³²³ Benjamin M. Stewart, "Water in Worship: The Ecology of Baptism," *Christian Century* 128, no. 3 (February, 2011): 22.

³²⁴ Timothy H. Robinson, "Sanctified Waters: Toward a Baptismal Ethic of Creation Care," *Leaven* 21, no. 3 (2013): 165, <http://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol21/iss3/10>.

³²⁵ Greggs, *Dogmatic Ecclesiology*, 198.

In relation to ecofeminist theology, life-giving is connected with procreation. Water in the mother's womb protects the new life and leads a child to live in this world. This water demonstrates the degree to which water is significant in the birth of living beings. Some ecofeminist theologians have highlighted the female's uniqueness because of this giving birth; hence they link women to nature.³²⁶ I do not advocate that women are closer to nature than men. Yet, the special relationship between woman (female) and water must be recognised. Water conveys life to nature and living beings. It helps lift living beings out of thirst; therefore, living beings sustain their lives. Females have the capacity to have a baby and to support this new life. In particular, amniotic fluid, one type of water in the mother's womb, helps to protect the developing baby, and to move and grow in the womb. This shows that water is alive, moving, and flowing in different forms. In short, it can be seen that both water and women have properties to support living beings.

There are commonalities between water in baptism and water in childbirth. Both are able to bring new life. Both types of water highlight similar characteristics of water. Both are related to (re)birth and mainly have a role as a messenger. The image of maintaining the baby's body heat is connected to a hope and wish that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God's kingdom, which is non-hierarchical and non-patriarchal, must be lived out by baptised living beings on earth. Here, the functions of water in childbirth allows me to understand the practical role of water and further emphasise the importance of water in baptism. The functions are related to protection by providing space, and by conveying a similar temperature between a mother and her baby, and helping a baby to practise breathing. This protection can be understood as the life-giving love of mothers which is connected to the life-giving gift from Jesus Christ. Mothers offer a space for a baby and are the conduit for a variety of nutrients including water; this is a natural sacrificial gift. By applying this image, baptismal water can be regarded as a special gift which allows believers to experience God's visible presence through physical water and to experience new life in a spiritual way, which saves their lives and also leads them to seek the integrity of creation.

³²⁶ Heather Eaton, "Women, Nature, Earth," in *Religion, Ecology and Gender: East-West Perspectives*, eds. Sigurd Bergmann and Yong-Bock Kim (Münster-Hamburg-Berlin-Wien-London-Zürich: LIT, 2009), 9.

Consequently, this image of water in childbirth contributes to the understanding of baptismal water in terms of the emphasis on the life-giving water which ultimately supports the liberation of women and nature.

Baptismal water embraces the understanding of water in childbirth. This is because baptismal water includes all the different types of relationships such as between physical and physical, between spiritual and spiritual, and between physical and spiritual. All living beings on earth are dependent on water and are interconnected with each other. In addition, visible water in baptism represents the interconnectedness between diverse churches which regard baptism as a common ritual. These facts are ultimately connected to an ecofeminist theology of water, which is the main theme of my thesis. However, baptismal water needs a more expanded understanding than the understanding of water in childbirth because baptismal water embraces both physical and spiritual meanings. In other words, baptismal water is interpreted in the relationship between the physical and spiritual rather than between different physical living beings. Hence, water in childbirth outwardly presents a different function in comparison with baptismal water.

Water in baptism highlights the role of cleansing and rebirth. Baptismal water seeks to cleanse sins which are a deviation from life-giving. This is a broad understanding, unlike traditional Christian theology which is mainly focused on sins and salvation through Jesus Christ in a narrow sense. If I apply ecofeminist theological perspectives in this understanding, dualistic, hierarchical, and patriarchal approaches are treated as a broad type of sin; this is because these approaches cause unequal divisions based on power or indifference to minorities and vulnerabilities. Baptismal water not only pursues a culture of life but also critiques a culture of death.³²⁷ This means that water in baptism should be understood more widely than just in terms of sin and death. This analysis allows me to see how much baptismal water can be interconnected to the

³²⁷ cf. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [Encyclical Letter on the Value and inviolability of Human Life], sec. 28, accessed 20 June, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html.

life-giving. Like a life-giving water from mother to a baby, baptismal water offers life-giving water to Christians who confess their sins and believe in God.

Here, it is necessary to address these two specific characteristics in baptismal water: cleansing and rebirth. Baptismal water has a cleansing function. Water is generally used to cleanse and purify something; this characteristic is applied in both physical and spiritual ways. For example, McAnally identifies these characteristics as important factors within baptism: “cleaning, purifying, transforming, and generating”.³²⁸ In addition, she highlights the fact that “water acts as a symbol of the purification of the soul”.³²⁹ She connects the purification between the physical and spiritual by applying symbolic meanings of water. Just as baptism is regarded as a means of cleansing, baptismal water symbolises the purification of sins. Hence it is clear that baptism confirms the person being baptised as a disciple of Jesus Christ through the purification of a variety of sins including structural sins. However, baptismal water symbolises not only the purification but also rebirth. Baptismal water represents rebirth. Jesus’ salvific love cleanses sin and brings reconciliation (Romans 8:22-23). The relationship with life is an important part of baptism. Water itself not only gives life to living beings, but also transmits life and supports all living beings to live by flowing. At this point, baptismal water is regarded as the grace of God who saves lives. The grace of God leads to being reborn and living fruitfully on earth. Just as baptismal water is reborn because the water cleanses the sinful mind, sinful human activities, and the sinful world and then fills these with life-giving thoughts and actions in all places. The flow of life-giving water from high places to low places symbolises life-giving from fruitful places to a place where a life-giving gift is needed. In other words, water is a mediator which transmits life to all living beings/places. Chamberlain states that “For Christians, the primary ritual is baptism: the death of the old and the rebirth of the new in the waters. No other medium so powerfully conveys the meaning of baptism as birth to a new life”.³³⁰ It is true that water as a medium brings a new life for all living beings. It connects to our birth and also rebirth in baptism.

³²⁸ McAnally, *Loving Water Across Religions*, 75.

³²⁹ McAnally, *Loving Water Across Religions*, 55.

³³⁰ Chamberlain, *Troubled Waters*, 168.

5.3.2 Inter-relationality in Baptism

Inter-relationality is also one of the important characteristics in an understanding of baptismal water. Visible baptismal water is related to understanding the presence of the invisible God. They are not separated or disconnected one from the other. Therefore, I have mentioned the importance of inter-relationality of ecofeminist theological perspectives in this chapter, yet that is not enough to explore the characteristic of inter-relationality in the understanding of baptismal water. For this reason, this section focuses on the inter-relationality of it in a variety of ways: from theoretical analyses to practical approaches. Robinson notes that “baptismal eco-ethics” highlights both material and symbolic meanings of water in baptism.³³¹ This begins with an understanding of the link between water and the Spirit (Genesis 1:2). However, spiritual meanings of baptismal water tend to be more emphasised than both meanings together. Some scholars disvalue the role of physical water in baptism. For example, Barth divides baptism into two different categories: 1) baptism with the Holy Spirit (Spirit baptism) and 2) baptism with water (water baptism). He affirms that water baptism is a precursor of Spirit baptism; this means the ultimate goal of water baptism is Spirit baptism. Spirit baptism is related to a divine change while water baptism is regarded as the faithful human response. For him, water baptism is a human action rather than divine action and is ethical, not sacramental. Water has only a functional meaning in baptism. He thinks water baptism is non-sacramental, only Spirit baptism is sacramental. Therefore, it is clearly recognised that he values Spirit baptism more than water baptism and for him baptism is transcendent, not immanent because it results in a divine change through Jesus Christ. This analysis allows me to see the importance of Spirit baptism through water baptism, yet it is hard to assert that water baptism is imperative for Spirit baptism.

Then, how can a dualistic approach to baptismal water be overcome? Hunsinger emphasises the importance of seeing the relationship of “unity-in-distinction”.³³² He argues that “the relationship between the *water* of water baptism and the *Spirit* of Spirit baptism is one of mutual coinherence. The Spirit is *in and with* the water and the water is *in and with* the Spirit in a

³³¹ Robinson, “Sanctified Waters,” 163-64.

³³² George Hunsinger, “Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 3 (November 2000): 248.

distinctive form of mutual indwelling and accompaniment”.³³³ He points out that there is a mutual connection between water baptism and spirit baptism and highlights their interconnectedness by affirming the unity of both waters, but he still makes a distinction between them: “It [Water Baptism] mediates and fulfills Spirit baptism in a secondary and dependent way as well as also in a completely non-synergistic way”.³³⁴ However, ecofeminist theological perspectives offer a robust way of combating this distinction. For example, McFague suggests “in touch” vision, which is “a relational, embodied, responsive paying attention to the others in their particularity and difference”.³³⁵ Her “in touch” vision’s emphasis on the visible relationship leads me to acknowledge the understanding of interconnectedness between water baptism and Spirit baptism.

The “in touch” vision can be employed to reinterpret baptismal water. For example, Rasmussen states that, “water births, it cleanses and purifies, it heals, it revives, it transports, it rains down and wells up. ... The waters of life. Maybe, just maybe, all waters are sacramental”.³³⁶ He proposes a variety of water’s visible roles and links these to the invisible spiritual roles in sacrament. He does not mention that his approach is a kind of “in touch” vision; he might not know the word as well. However, his approach is to value the particularity of water’s characteristics which is the significant role of the vision. By using this approach, he clearly points to the essential connection between lives and water. In addition, he observes that people treat water as a commodity and emphasises a sacramental sense of water: “when water is a market commodity in a plastic bottle piled on supermarket shelves, it is no longer sacramental. This loss of sacred meaning in turn affects our moral sense: It’s “just water””.³³⁷ He points out that water is more than the use of it in marketing. He also draws a reinterpretation of ‘I and Thou relationship’ from Martin Buber: “water is a ‘thou’ and not *only* an ‘it’”.³³⁸ Water is more than “it”, an object of marketing or humanity. He highlights the intrinsic value of water through this ‘I

³³³ Hunsinger, “Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness,” 257.

³³⁴ Hunsinger, “Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness,” 257.

³³⁵ McFague, *Super, Natural Christians*, 94.

³³⁶ Larry L. Rasmussen, “The Baptized Life,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34, no. 4 (August 2007): 247.

³³⁷ Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth-honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 282.

³³⁸ Rasmussen, *Earth-honoring Faith*, 282.

and Thou relationship' with water. Consequently, he uncovers the link between the two forms of water by focusing on sacramental characteristics in the physical water. This approach contributes to connecting a variety of characteristics of water baptism to sacramental features of Spirit baptism.

Furthermore, Hart attempts to incorporate both meanings of water at the same time: "Water is simultaneously a material good and a spiritual good when people encounter the providential presence of the creating Spirit as they drink the water that sustains their life. Living water should be water for life: literally, as it nourishes and cleanses physically; figuratively, as it flows over the body in rituals signifying spiritual cleansing and life in the Spirit".³³⁹ Hart's insistence allows me to recognise the connection and continuity between the physical and spiritual meanings of baptismal water by focusing on the common understanding of water of life. This point is of particular relevance to my thesis; that is, I avoid being concerned with spiritual meanings of water only or more than water baptism or meanings of physical water.

5.3.3 New Interpretations of Baptism

There are no self-baptised people; baptism is always from someone to someone. Based on these interdependencies and interconnections, it is possible to see that baptism has largely three meanings: 1) to be born again in the life-giving spirit; 2) to participate in Jesus' life-giving mission; and 3) to seek an 'Earth-honouring Christian faith'. I examine each of these in turn. First, baptism is to be born again in the Spirit. A biblical text from Galatians, ("It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (2:20)) highlights the fact that individuals should die and be born again in the Spirit. This is a significant statement in relation to baptism because it can reinterpret baptism in order to highlight the value of life. Death to self indicates that the identification of our human-centred mind/thoughts/actions is paramount. This helps Christians to move from life-killing cultures to life-saving cultures that the Spirit calls us to participate in

³³⁹ Hart, *Sacramental Commons*, 79.

through the body of the living Christ. Through baptism, Christians confirm that each individual is one being within the church and the earthly community.

Second, baptism is a significant entry point for those choosing to participate in Jesus' life-giving mission. Stewart articulates that "Baptism into Christ has always been an entrance into water (just as our death in Christ, the completion of our baptism, will be an entrance into the earth, the depths, where we are held both in Christ and in the earth)".³⁴⁰ This statement focuses on water which is a visible confirmation that Christians belong to the body of Christ and are part of his community. Greggs states, "Water baptism is a subjective sign of the believers' objective reality in Christ, active through the work of the Spirit".³⁴¹ He attempts to link water baptism with a subjective sign; faith in Christ is invisible, but baptism allows me to see faith visibly. In other words, to receive water baptism is to participate in Jesus' mission which gives life to all living beings and to the earth in non-hierarchical, non-patriarchal, and anti-dualistic ways. This leads me to recognise that water and baptism are essential because both sustain our healthy life.

Third, 'Earth-honouring Christian faith' is required for a baptised life.³⁴² Dodge values the importance of "the mutual relationship between the sacrament of Baptism and the preservation of the Earth's water".³⁴³ She emphasises the intrinsic worth of water in baptism. She states that "It [the water of baptism] offers a sign that, through baptism, people enter into an Earth-honoring Christian faith. It signifies that the earth-human community is inextricably connected because water is the substance that sustains every member".³⁴⁴ It is interesting that she talks about an 'Earth-honouring Christian faith', which highlights the need to respect God's creation, in relation to baptism. This view is significant because it does not only focus on the soteriological meanings through baptism. This faith, furthermore, highlights that God is both transcendent and immanent; not only is God beyond this world, but God also dwells in creation. McAnally proposes that baptism establishes a sacramental consciousness which highlights the materiality of water and

³⁴⁰ Stewart, "Water in Worship," 22.

³⁴¹ Greggs, *Dogmatic Ecclesiology*, 148.

³⁴² Rasmussen, "The Baptized Life," 246.

³⁴³ Dodge, "All Water is Holy," v.

³⁴⁴ Dodge, "All Water is Holy," 8.

its intrinsic value, in so doing it leads believers to care for water and for all living beings. She argues that it is necessary to recognise baptism in order to “have a deeper communion with water and all beings”.³⁴⁵ Baptism raises the consciousness of physical water. In baptism, it is important to recognise the sacred character of water. According to McNally, “by seeing the fundamental importance of water within Christianity, we can see the fundamental importance of water in our larger Earth community”.³⁴⁶ Consequently, baptismal water allows Christians to be more concerned with all living beings and this earth. Te Rire and Taylor argue that “because of our baptism, creation care and attention to global warming become an ecumenical participation in mission”.³⁴⁷ Their argument contributes to recognising not only the interdependence through baptism but also our mission in contemporary societies. At this point, baptism is the most important ritual in Christianity in order to value the interdependent relationship and our identity and mission as Christians in the 21st century. Water in baptism leads believers to be concerned with a) the role of physical water in baptism, and b) the relationship between the water crisis and baptismal water.

It is necessary to think what type of water is used for baptism. Should it be in fresh water such as water from a river or is salt water and sea baptism equally valid? According to some traditions, baptism should take place in running water (rivers, streams, and springs), not stagnant water (pools and cisterns).³⁴⁸ The use of running water is connected to the fact that baptism is part of flowing water. As the water crisis becomes an increasingly serious global issue, baptismal water offers a connection to current water issues. The relationship between polluted or privatised water and baptismal water is examined. Hart links baptismal water with the polluted and privatised in contemporary societies: “Earth's waters have become less sacramental, less a revelatory sign of the Spirit's presence and creativity, and more detrimental, more signs of human ignorance, carelessness, indifference, and greed”.³⁴⁹ Water privatisation is against the character

³⁴⁵ McNally, *Loving Water Across Religions*, 76.

³⁴⁶ McNally, *Loving Water Across Religions*, 48.

³⁴⁷ Te Rire and Taylor, “Children of the Waters,” 25.

³⁴⁸ Ben J. de Klerk, “Baptism and the pollution of Africa's water,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (2014): 7, <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/2620>.

³⁴⁹ Hart, *Sacramental Commons*, 91.

of baptismal life-giving. Berry mentions that “If the water is polluted, it can neither be drunk nor used for baptism, for it no longer bears the symbolism of life but of death”.³⁵⁰ This understanding contributes to concern about water pollution and privatisation in relation to baptism. Water sustains our life and in baptism water symbolises living water that God created, but if this baptismal water is polluted, how can I represent the fundamental meanings of water? At this point, it is necessary to recognise our vocation from God with respect to water in the 21st century by preserving clean water which physically saves living beings and sustains this earth as well as by regarding baptism as a confession of our new life in this era of spiritual drought.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have re-visited baptism using ecofeminist theological perspectives on the basis of my methodology (chapter 2). By examining traditional Christian sources such as biblical texts and Christian doctrines (creation and salvation), I argue that a reconstructive way of ecofeminist theological perspectives is necessary to re-understand baptism. This analysis allows me to realise the number of interconnections that exist between the physical water and spiritual meanings of water in baptism and how creation and salvation are interrelated in the consideration of baptism. According to traditional Christian theologies, physical water is treated as only a gate or precondition in order to highlight the spiritual meanings of water in baptism, which have been explored by many traditional scholars with an interest in baptism in a variety of ways based on biblical texts and different theological backgrounds. However, this research is a new trial which uses inter-relationality in ecofeminist theological perspectives.

I have demonstrated that there is a clear difference between churches regarding the relationship between baptism and salvation. Churches use water in different forms in the baptismal ceremony highlighting slightly different understandings of the baptismal water. However, all churches are interconnected because of their use of water itself in baptism and their pursuit of life-giving via baptism. In the understanding of life-giving, some churches or some people are more concerned

³⁵⁰ Thomas Berry, “Wonderworld as Wasteworld: The Earth in Deficit,” *CrossCurrents* 35, no. 4 (Winter 1985-6): 414.

about spiritual salvation. However, based on ecofeminist theological perspectives, it is necessary to focus on the life-giving gift in both physical and spiritual ways. The relationship between them is not separated; this is interdependent, interconnected and interrelated like the relationship between creation and salvation. All living beings on earth are interdependent; therefore, hierarchical or dualistic approaches between living beings or between humanity and nature should be eliminated. Rather, interconnectedness and inter-relatedness between them should be revealed and emphasised. These are also represented by the relationship between the greed of humanity and the destruction of nature (e.g., the pollution of water and the water shortage crisis). Sins contribute to the discontinuity and conflicts in this earth community and devalue God's grace (blessings). Therefore, it is important to consider the interdependent, interconnected and interrelated dimensions.

De Klerk argues that meanings of baptismal water – the ecological value of water in baptism – could combat the water pollution. He suggests five applications of baptism: Being a) “equipped to witness”, b) “equipped to care with a new heart”, c) “equipped to serve the whole life”, d) “equipped to include the conservation of water as part of the comprehensive testimony”, and e) “equipped to change perceptions on value of water”.³⁵¹ These points make a valuable contribution to my argument since I focus on inter-relatedness. Caring and serving are based on the change of perceptions and understanding of water. If water is regarded as a material which saves all living beings and this earth physically and spiritually, water pollution cannot exist anymore. However, the change of perceptions cannot bring the difference; both theory and practice are consistently present and should be interrelated and complement each other.

The most important idea that needs to be learnt from the interdependent, interconnected, and interrelated analyses is that they are based on a respect for difference. For example, the recognition of different understandings of baptism between churches helps us to think about the relationship between creation, salvation and baptism. In addition, a strong connection between

³⁵¹ De Klerk, “Baptism and the pollution of Africa's water,” 6.

baptismal water and spiritual water is demonstrated as an indirect consequence of the comparison between water in childbirth and water in baptism. This means that baptismal water cannot be interpreted as only for physical life or spiritual life separately. Ecofeminist theological perspectives, which pursue interconnectedness and are concerned with the co-relationship between God, human and nature, develop an understanding of baptism. It is also important to remember that the life-giving gift every moment should be valued because most living beings are not self-sufficient. Interconnection truly means interdependency with each other. For example, living beings cannot live without potable water and a stable environment.

By examining several characteristics of baptismal water, I have argued that the reason that water is used in baptism is that it emphasises: firstly, physical water, and secondly, inter-relationality. For this, on the basis of a tradition-centred approach of ecofeminist theology, I have used ecofeminist theological sources and in particular, traditional theological sources that focus on baptism. This research contributes to the critique of the limited understanding of baptism, the pursuit of a reconstructive understanding of baptism based on the earth-centred approach of ecofeminist theology, and the connection of some arguments of traditional scholars to ecofeminist theological perspectives in terms of the fundamental similarities or commonalities. Baptismal water has been regarded as a source which highlights the spiritual meanings of baptism, yet I have argued that meanings of physical water are equally important. In other words, employing ecofeminist theological perspectives contributes to an understanding of baptismal water in the continuity and connection between the physical and spiritual. This argument is closely related to that in chapter 4, which addresses the same issue by examining two biblical texts. The theological analysis and traditions of the sacrament are meaningful; that is why this chapter enables the re-evaluation and re-visiting of our understanding of the Christian traditions – sacraments – in anti-dualistic ways of thinking.

This chapter enables the development of a greater understanding of the continuity between the physical water and spiritual meanings of water and the inter-relationality between God, humanity and all living beings, and nature, all of which are important in Christian theology. This

point is explored further in relation to ecumenical bodies and churches in the next chapter. In this water crisis era, churches are also interested in this water crisis, and work for water justice issues. How do we move from the liturgical rite of baptism to everyday and mundane water practices and justice? How can Christians work together for water justice in their respective contexts? These questions are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Glocal Church Praxis on Water Justice

This chapter addresses the importance of ecofeminist theological perspectives for Christians who engage in practical responses in a glocal water crisis era. Based on the fifth step in my methodology (section 2.1.3), I apply the ‘Practice’ in a praxis cycle and the ‘Act’ method of the Pastoral Cycle. That is, my research is further developed through practical analyses which I develop in this chapter, critiquing this against the previous two chapters which present a theoretical analysis of an ecofeminist theology of water. This chapter explores what water justice is in the context of a variety of denominations and church discussions. By comparing practices between a non-religious organisation such as the United Nations (UN) and a religious foundation such as the WCC, the significant role of Christians in water justice is addressed. In addition, some statements of the WCC and the EWN (*Ecumenical Water Network*, which is a representative ecumenical network working for water justice in the WCC) is examined to know what they have done and what they need to improve in relation to water justice by using ecofeminist theological perspectives.³⁵² This research allows me to develop an ecofeminist theology of water in relation to ecumenical movements. Furthermore, theological and practical responses of Korean churches are also considered. This is an important step in terms of focusing on contexts; this closely connects to chapter 1 which deals with the contexts of glocal water crisis issues. Listening to the context contributes to giving us more specific and practical responses. In addition, as I have already mentioned in the previous chapters, ecofeminist theologies (e.g. ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics) highlight an understanding of specific contexts. Hence, this chapter suggests how to apply anti-dualistic, non-hierarchical, and non-patriarchal perspectives and inter-relationality in terms of practical responses of Christians towards water justice on both global and local stages.

6.1 Water Justice and the Church

Practical responses of Christians are mostly undertaken by Christian gatherings or communities, which are normally called ‘church’. Church is not only a building where Christians worship God, but also a gathering of those who believe in God and follow Jesus’ teaching. Churches have a

³⁵² “What we do,” Ecumenical Water Network, accessed 12 August, 2021, <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/ecumenical-water-network>.

responsibility to be interested in social issues, in particular, ecological issues on earth. As far as possible, churches should offer suggestions or practical responses with a view to overcoming the current water injustice issues because earth is our home and water is essential for all living beings and earth. However, many churches (in South Korea) tend to be only focused on spiritual salvation and are not familiar with cosmological salvation.³⁵³ They pursue spiritual blessings for the afterlife; they are more concerned with spiritual meanings of water than they are with physical water on earth. This tendency disvalues the current social, political, and ecological issues on earth; hence, the water crisis has been treated as an indifferent issue for these Christians. This situation has already been explored in chapter 1 in relation to a specific context – South Korea – and the other previous chapters with critical theological analyses. Therefore, this section focuses on what water justice is and how water justice should be addressed by Christians. These ultimately present the importance of physical water, and furthermore the inter-relationship between spiritual meanings of water and meanings of physical water based on ecofeminist theological perspectives. While water justice can be interpreted in a variety of ways, here I address this issue by using crucial resources articulated both by the UN which actively pursues international peace, as well as in formal ecumenical declarations and positions. This is because churches seek a common concern for water justice with the UN, an international organisation where global and local issues are discussed and solutions are found together. Hence, statements from the UN and theological resources on the relationship between water justice and the church are examined in this section.

6.1.1 Water Justice

In order to understand what water justice is, it is important to realise that water has been misused and mistreated. The voice of suffering from water injustice has been addressed in sections 1.1 and 1.2. Therefore, I do not want to repeat this in this section. Instead, a summary of the water injustice situation is addressed. As I have explored in section 1.1, the global water crisis is a severe issue. Vulnerable living beings are profoundly influenced by it. Water should flow

³⁵³ Kim and Yun, “A Critical Discourse Analysis on Differences of Opinion among Protestant Groups Surrounding the Four Major Rivers Project,” 182.

everywhere and be distributed to all living beings and earth equitably, yet accessing fresh water is not guaranteed; water justice seems like a kind of ideal pursuit. The goal of water justice is for water to be distributed throughout the world in an equal and sustainable way. It is a part of social and environmental justice which pursues both equality between all living beings and the sustainability of earth's resources. However, the unequal water distribution evident throughout the earth reveals little evidence of water justice either in global or local contexts.

International organisations have been concerned about this issue and have proposed ways of working together for water justice. For the first time, the UN focuses on the relationship between human rights and water. This has been adopted later than other issues such as human rights to “food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services”, which were adopted in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.³⁵⁴ In the 2010 UN resolution, water has been regarded as an important issue in relation to human rights all over the world.³⁵⁵ The statement, “The human right to water and sanitation”, which was released on 28 July 2010 allows me to recognise water as a human right rather than just as a commodity: “*Acknowledging* the importance of equitable access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as an integral component of the realization of all human rights”.³⁵⁶ This contributes to a focus on the equity of all human beings in their access to and use of fresh water. However, there has been a huge debate focusing on whether this approach is too focused on humanity rather than on all living beings and earth. If water is regarded as only a human right, this view tends to overlook the rest of living beings. Therefore, people and organisations have focused on achieving a good balance between the efficiency and interconnectedness (togetherness) of all living beings on earth.

Water justice has been regarded as a significant issue and one which is articulated and explored in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a practical action towards water justice in

³⁵⁴ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, article 25.; cf. Catarina De Albuquerque, “Access to drinking water and sanitation is a fundamental human right,” *iD4D*, 22 May, 2018, updated on 17 June 2021, <https://ideas4development.org/en/right-water-fundamental-human-right/>.

³⁵⁵ UN General Assembly, *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 28 July 2010*, A/RES/64/292 (3 August 2010), available from <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/64/292>.

³⁵⁶ UN General Assembly, *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 28 July 2010*, 2.

contemporary societies.³⁵⁷ SDG 6 describes the goal of water justice, stating that it “seeks to ensure safe drinking water and sanitation for all, focusing on the sustainable management of water resources, wastewater and ecosystems”.³⁵⁸ This goal largely represents two important factors – human rights in regards to water supply and sustainable developments which can save both humanity and this earth. The UN’s ambition is that these eight targets will be achieved by 2030. This clearly shows what water justice is and how humanity should work together towards the goal³⁵⁹:

1. By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
2. By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.
3. By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping, and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.
4. By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
5. By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.
6. By 2030, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers, and lakes.
 - 6.A. By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programs, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling, and reuse technologies.
 - 6.B. Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

These targets seek shared solutions when posited against the cycle of water injustice. It is possible to make a connection between the description of the Water Justice Hub (section 1.1)

³⁵⁷ Here, “development” means fostering and nurturing, not progress. cf. Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 112.

³⁵⁸ “Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation (SDG 6),” United Nations, accessed August 18, 2021, <https://www.sdg6data.org>.

³⁵⁹ “Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all,” United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, accessed August 18, 2021, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>.

and these UN water targets. These targets help a) to ensure sufficient water is available regardless of (social, economic and cultural) barriers; b) to protect clean water and to supply fresh water in sustainable ways; c) to be concerned about vulnerable people; and d) to find new knowledge in order to overcome situations of injustice. The most significant fact in these targets is a consideration of water-related ecosystems; they are not only focused on human rights. This expands the idea of sharing from human-centred to all living beings and on earth.

With these targets, the clearest way towards achieving water justice is to resolve water injustice in all its forms, yet it is hard to bring this about in current social systems which are deeply focused on goods, humanity and economic development.³⁶⁰ For example, free markets attempt to give easy access to water, yet it is not enough to universalise the water crisis issues that need to be solved. The market can provide private properties and profits for human dignity if it is concerned with justice. However, without a concern for justice, the market uses humanity as a means of profit. If water is regarded as only a commodity, it is easy to exploit water for economic profits and to break the harmony with others. This perspective causes extended oppressions “which enrich a minority of the global population while creating the illusion of white supremacy which confuses unearned riches from natural resources with advanced civilization”.³⁶¹ Then, can water justice be fulfilled if water is free of charge and people do not have to pay for it? Is eliminating a financial cost of water to all users a way of moving towards a greater degree of universal water justice? I am not arguing that water should be free for all. However, better ways of living together with the limited resources on earth are a more appropriate focus. Iyer proposes three elements that contribute to this endeavour: limits, justice and harmony.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ In order to provide fresh water to a variety of places, technologies are useful. They help living beings to get fresh water more efficiently and conveniently than before. However, it is not a perfect solution for the water crisis. It introduces additional side-effects or problems on earth such as water pollution, land loss, and destruction in the ecosystem. This means that technological threats often cause water injustice despite the most earnest efforts of those involved.

³⁶¹ Miguel A. De La Torre, “Chapter One: Water—A Living Spirit,” in *Gonna Trouble The Water: Ecojustice, Water, and Environmental Racism*, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2021), 6.

³⁶² Ramaswamy R. Iyer, *Towards Water Wisdom: Limits, Justice, Harmony* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2007), 9.

'Limits' on water-use are necessary for ensuring equitable sharing ('justice') and for avoiding conflicts with others and with nature ('harmony'), 'justice' means justice to other users of the resource, to those whose lives and livelihoods are likely to be disrupted by our plans, to other forms of life, and to future generations (that harks back to 'limits' and forward to 'harmony'); and 'harmony' means harmony with fellow human beings within and beyond political borders and with nature (that refers us back to 'limits' and 'justice').

His analysis helps me to understand each of the three terms in an interconnected way. He contributes to seeing 'justice' in the relationship between water shortage and a living togetherness on earth. Each living being and nature needs a sufficient water supply. When the supply is enough to provide for all, this earth can fulfil water justice and bring peace to the world. However, the understandings of water justice and their resulting practical actions still focus on individuals and on humanity, rather than on all creatures on this earth. The fundamental reason why we pursue limits, justice and harmony is to avoid conflicts with others, nature, and future generations. It is not based on the fact that harmony is taken for granted because humanity is a part of earth. Hence, it is imperative to transform the consciousness from human-centred to earth-centred.

Furthermore, water justice should be based on the recognition that water is a blessing in terms of giving life ("life-giving") to all. The most important thing is to be focused on the sharing of life rather than on the sharing of resources in order to achieve this peace for all. If humanity focuses on developing a *modus operandi* of establishing life-giving support to all living beings, the sharing of resources follows naturally; this is because the seeking of life includes resources (materials which are needed to save lives). This approach enables living beings to remain alive and to support each other both in the present and for future generations. While global social organisations such as the UN and Water Justice Hub are focused on social equality and governance in this current capitalist system, Christian reflection is able to offer the fundamental consciousness which leads people to pursue water justice. Ecofeminist theology involves the transformation of awareness regarding the sacred nature of creation and the liberation of bodies. Therefore, in the next section, I demonstrate the necessity and characteristics of the transformed awareness by examining Christian sources.

6.1.2 Water Justice and Christians

Water is a vital resource for all beings, yet it is not supplied to all equally. This water justice should be addressed in the 21st century as a matter of urgency among Christians as well. While the UN and each government of different countries have a responsibility to promote safe and fresh water to all inhabitants, churches have a responsibility to understand why water justice should be addressed as a vital matter in relation to the Christian faith. Kim and Gorsboth mention, “One important contribution of churches and their partners can be to underline ethical aspects and the spiritual, cultural, and social meaning of water, which goes beyond the understanding of water as a mere resource, a commodity, or a service”.³⁶³ Churches and Christian faith require caring for this earth which is regarded as God’s creation for them. Based on the belief of creation and salvation, Christians are reminded of their identities and responsibilities on earth. A variety of bodies (organisations) and churches have a similar concern and approach to water: it is important to facilitate the ability of freshwater to flow everywhere without any disparities. All reject the notion of water as only a commodity.

However, there is a specific difference between non-Christian organisations and churches. While churches value a reflection based on the Christian faith, non-Christians might not understand this exercise in theological reflection. Faithful theological reflection is enormously important for Christians and churches in order for them to believe in God as the creator and to practise eco-friendly actions in this glocal water crisis era. Although both criticise the view that water is simply a commodity, their approach stems from different causes of concern. While international organisations such as the UN and the Water Justice Hub focus on human rights and ecological concerns, churches are concerned with the importance of faith in creation – respecting all intrinsic values because all living beings and resources belong to God’s creation and seeking the care for the creation. However, in reality, these different positions between non-Christian organisations and churches are not vastly different and do not suggest a major division between Christians and non-Christians; rather, they help Christians to find their own identity based on Christian faith.

³⁶³ Kim and Gorsboth, “Introduction,” xv.

In order to articulate the specific understanding of some Christians, I examine some ecumenical documents (statements) in relation to water justice which support not only the value of water in creation but also seek a working together between global and ecumenical bodies. Although there are a lot of different churches with slightly different theological backgrounds, the common concern for water justice can help them to connect the diverse churches and to find a role and responsibility of Christians. As a result, the following important questions are addressed in this section:

- Why should ecumenical networks be concerned about water justice?
- How might they work together for water justice?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to look at what a Christian community (church) is. The term for church in Greek is *ekkleṣia*; this is regarded as the metaphor of the *oikos*.³⁶⁴ Specifically, the *oikos* indicates God's household.³⁶⁵ This image of 'home' which is a comfortable place where we live is distinctly different from the image of a 'hotel' which uses resources or others as materials or objects.³⁶⁶ In addition, other terms such as "economics", "ecology", and "ecumenicity" all have *oikos* at their root.³⁶⁷ It is possible that the image of 'home' employs these three different terms in the relationship with the earth community. *Oikos* values a relationship which enables all living beings to live together. It does not communicate a hierarchical, classical, or rarefied approach. Rather, it is deeply related to the characteristics of ecofeminist theological perspectives which pursue interdependency and interrelationship between all kinds of different presences and this earth. In this sense, *oikos* can be understood to represent three important principles: a) interrelationship: church importantly addresses the relationship between God, humanity and nature. In the Christian tradition, the relationship between God and humanity is

³⁶⁴ Korinna Zamfir, "Is the *ekkleṣia* a Household (of God)? Reassessing the Notion of οἶκος θεοῦ in 1 Tim 3.15," *New Testament Studies* 60, no. 4 (2014): 511-12.

³⁶⁵ In his second encyclical Pope Francis calls *oikos* "common home" in *Laudato Si* (Praise Be to You).

³⁶⁶ It is interesting that McFague makes a comparison between viewing this world as a home and as a hotel. She comments that Western people, who have a "Kleenex perspective", waste a variety of resources without concern for this earth. However, these people cannot be only confined to Western people; all people who are unconcerned about this earth and regard resources as disposable products cause serious ecological crises and climate change. cf. McFague, *A new climate for Theology*, 53.

³⁶⁷ McFague, *Life abundant*, 100.

mostly emphasised, yet *oikos* highlights the inter-relationship between nature and humanity and between God and nature in terms of God's household; b) diversity: all God's creatures have different and special identities and characteristics. This diversity should be respected because the unique attributes of each and every living being are endowed by God. Just as one church embraces diversity, so a group of churches represent and live out a greater degree of diversity; and c) communication: in these diverse and interconnected relationships, communication is the most important principle. This creates and maintains an overall balance of diversity in the general fabric of life. All living beings live together on earth which is the creation of God. For this, it is necessary to be concerned about horizontal coexistence.

These three principles of *oikos* lead me not only to recognise the interconnectedness, fruitfulness, and happiness on earth, but also to understand the significance of economics which are an essential element of life on earth. In order to pursue both justice and sustainability, it is necessary to examine the economics which are important for abundant life rather than just money or development. McFague insists that "This abundant life uses the template of an ecological economic worldview in which individuals live in community on a sustainable earth and with the just distribution of necessities for all".³⁶⁸ She calls this paradigm 'ecological economics' which pursues the well-being of a community: "It is a vision of the world opposed to an individualistic, merit-centred view of human life with insiders and outsiders, haves and have-nots. It is just as clearly on the side of a community-oriented, egalitarian view of human life, inclusive of all living beings".³⁶⁹ Her point (which values not only the interdependency of all living beings but also the realisation of how ecology is closely related to economics) is important in relation to the role of church communities and how they address this issue.

McFague outlines her understanding of ecological economics in two ways.³⁷⁰ First, this approach is able to help churches to recognise their current tendencies which are far from life-giving missions. She makes three important points: a) Christians tend not to be concerned with

³⁶⁸ McFague, *Life abundant*, 179.

³⁶⁹ McFague, *Life abundant*, 172-73.

³⁷⁰ McFague, *Life abundant*, 99-100.

ecological issues, with economics, or with the relationship between ecology and economics; for them, it is enough to deal with religious or spiritual matters. In this context, the 'good news' (or Gospel) has addressed human suffering more than it has the suffering of all living beings and the whole happiness of creatures; b) current economics in many parts of the world still focus on humanity, the rich, and men (generally, and historically, not including women). A number of Christians have used water by weighted perspectives such as human-centredness and male-centeredness. The majority of churches still have unequal relationships which are caused by the presence of power such as between men and women and between humanity and water (nature); and c) they do not recognise the limited water resources. Some Christians think that water is resilient in terms of God's fruitfulness. These viewpoints discount the equal relationship that should exist between all living beings and they are ultimately the cause of water injustice (ecological injustice). Therefore, these situations should be re-examined through critical analyses in order to seek the transformation of churches in a way that promotes water justice.

Second, ecological economics helps churches to realise the "*individual-in-community*".³⁷¹ This is a significant awareness in order to respect (and indeed to love) all living beings and natural resources on earth. a) This recognises that the global community has played a crucial role in destroying nature. If all living beings and nature achieve a peaceful coexistence, the water crisis will gradually be alleviated. b) This helps Christians to understand that water is not entirely resilient or able to survive the onslaught of attacks typical of occurrences in the 21st century. c) This leads Christians to be carefully concerned with the distribution of water which is one aspect of pursuing justice. If the paradigm changes from androcentric and anthropocentric to ecological and life-focused, an adequate supply of fresh water can flow and be distributed to all living beings as well as to this earth. This finally enables Christians to envisage a sustainable earth. In this sense, ecological economics are important in order to fulfil the goal of water justice and furthermore the pursuit of cosmological salvation.

³⁷¹ McFague, *Life abundant*, 109.

Santmire suggests that Christian communities can function as ‘martyr churches’ which witness the love of Jesus on the cross and the power of resurrection.³⁷² He further addresses the roles of churches as martyr churches in an ecological era. His insistence allows me to think about how to care for nature and live together with all living beings on the basis of Christian ethics. He focuses on listening to a variety of voices (the groaning) of nature and of living beings as well as on acting to be their voice. In his book *Nature Reborn*, he mentions that it is necessary to listen to the groaning of some children who suffer from polluted water:³⁷³

We Christians will be a voice for the voiceless, for the sake of all the creatures of nature who have no voice in human affairs. We will listen to the plaintive cries of the great whales and hear the groaning of the rain forests, and we will be their advocates in the village square and in the courts of power, by the grace of God. All the more so we will hear the bitter wailing of the little children who live on the trash mountains of this world and who wear clothes that have been washed in streams overflowing with heinous poisons and who sometimes drink those very waters.

As in Santmire’s argument, the voice of vulnerable living beings should be carefully listened to, and in particular within churches. *Oikos* are called to listen to the voices of the groans which are caused by the water crisis, to seek and practise water justice both for all individual living beings and for this earth. This is connected to McFague’s understanding of ecological economics. There are two common factors: a) it is important to strive to be concerned with ecological economies and *shalom* for all living beings in God’s creation even though there is unequal distribution of water which is accompanied by significant discouragement and b) an understanding of water in the relationship with God and humanity is required; this regards water as God’s gift which supports all life. This approach can be adopted by developing an understanding of theology which is concerned about this earth. This enables churches to seek water justice throughout the world and to care for this earth and for vulnerable living beings. Of course, living together with all other human beings on earth is not straightforward; some experience it as suffering or sacrifice, yet this way is the only way of abundant life even though it is hard to practise.

³⁷² Santmire, *Nature Reborn*, 119.

³⁷³ Santmire, *Nature Reborn*, 119-20.

Like Santmire, most eco-theologians deal with water justice, regarding the poor or disadvantaged people. They attempt to articulate the current glocal water issue with scientific analysis, and political or social aspects. However, women's special part in suffering related to the water crisis and their resourcefulness in seeking the solution to the crisis was rarely counted in mainstream eco-theology. Ecofeminist theologians focus on the women who suffer because of contaminated water or lack of access to water in developing nations. They are concerned about the relationality of all creation and various stories related to water and women, which support the principle of equality and participation for water justice. This is characteristic of Zenner and Hart Winter who have researched water, theology, and women. They have several things in common. Both are Catholic theologians, researching water, using the term of 'just water' in their titles, and are concerned about the commodification of water. However, their approaches have some differences.

Zenner examines the glocal water crisis through interdisciplinary analysis. She illuminates three fundamental truths: a) water is universal, b) there is no substitute for fresh water, and c) water is manifest in particular contexts.³⁷⁴ She stresses the cooperation of all beings to solve the water crisis as water is essential to all life. At the same time, she points out that all solutions are based on each particular context so that there is no universal solution. Zenner focuses on the poor who are more influenced by the glocal water crisis. She connects with the theological insights, "marginality", from liberation theology, eco-theology, feminist theology and Catholic teaching. She delineates the historical stream of Catholic teaching which has been more open to the ethical issues, from the poor (liberation theology) to the inorganic materials (water ethics). Her approach leads to being concerned about the multivalent perceptions and a variety of water issues from the margin. Her contribution is to prove that Catholic theology is already becoming more integrated into social ethics and communicates more with glocal issues, particularly the poor, women and water justice.

³⁷⁴ Zenner, *Just Water*, 209.

In the same year as Zenner first published her book, Hart Winter presented her dissertation, *Just Water: A Feminist Catholic Response to the Commodification of Water*.³⁷⁵ Hart Winter focuses more on the commodification of water and feminist perspectives based on a cosmocentric view – nature as a partner and an integral part of creation —, unlike Zenner who researches interdisciplinary expositions on water. Based on her experience in Africa, she is interested in women who are living in developing nations when she describes the relationship between women and nature. She shares her deep concerns about women’s health and safety risks and the lack of education, caused by water responsibilities. She proposes a contextual methodology for the response to the commodification of water. On the one hand, she strongly critiques the commodity view of water which values water only for its profit margin. On the other hand, she focuses on the unique encounter of water and women. Women suffer from contaminated water or inaccessible water. This poor surrounding can cause serious disease. She describes that women are the most vulnerable group against water injustice. She also compares the different perspectives on water between the market mechanism and ecofeminism: “instead of allowing a market mechanism to regulate the scarcity of water, the ecofeminist view understands the various values attributed to water and affirms that water cannot be limited to an economic market to determine its worth”.³⁷⁶ It values the view of ecofeminism that leads to finding the intrinsic worth of water.

In short, first, churches should critically appraise their current situation of churches with reference to this earth. Second, churches should live out their faith and ‘walk in the way of the cross’ (Matthew 16:24). In this sense, it is important to recognise that water is limited in *oikos* and these should be shared equally when working towards a situation of water justice. The mission of churches in this 21st century is to pursue this; thus, the good news should embrace all principles such as interrelationship, diversity, and communication. These help me to focus on cosmological salvation, which seeks shalom (peace) for all creatures and this earth rather than personal salvation focusing on humanity. Many churches still ignore this different understanding

³⁷⁵ In fact, Zenner’s book, *Just water*, was published in 2014 and then revised in 2018.

³⁷⁶ Hart Winter, “Just Water,” 195.

of salvation compared to a traditional understanding which is overly focused on humanity, individual beings and the redemption of souls. All churches are ecological and should be involved in economics.³⁷⁷ This can be achieved not only by listening to our contexts and the “groaning” of water and living beings who suffer from water injustice, but also by working towards cosmological salvation which is deeply related to the fact that water continually flows throughout nature and is indispensable to all living beings’ well-being. These analyses are applied to ecumenical movements in the next section. This research is helpful to understand how ecumenical movements work for water justice and what the influence on local churches might be.

6.2 Ecumenical Movement for Water Justice

The practical role of churches in relation to water justice is described in ecumenical movements. The term ‘ecumenical’, which derives from *oikoumene* in Greek, represents three different characteristics which are closely linked to three principles of *oikos* outlined in the previous section: a) unity: all churches believe in one gospel of Jesus Christ; b) diversity: there is a variety of denominations (churches) based on different contexts, histories, doctrines, members and so on; and c) togetherness: these various churches work together for God’s mission on earth.³⁷⁸ These three characteristics of ‘ecumenical’ allow Christians to be concerned about the water crisis which is a severe issue in the 21st century and to work together for water justice in order to fulfil God’s mission which pursues peace on earth. Ecumenical movements are interested in the diverse responses of different denominations and churches; therefore, this approach leads Christians to gather a variety of stories globally.

I affirm that it is possible to divide people living in this world into two main groups in respect of their use of water and their view of water justice: 1) The first group is seriously concerned about water injustices such as water shortages, floods and water pollution. Some of them have experienced suffering from water injustice in their daily lives. 2) The second group is not

³⁷⁷ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, 32.

³⁷⁸ cf. “New Delhi Statement on Unity,” 31 December 1961, World Council of Churches, at: <https://archived.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/1961-new-delhi/new-delhi-statement-on-unity>.

concerned about these crucial “glocal” water issues, no matter where they live. Rather, they focus on their own comfort, wealth and affluent lives and maintain an indifferent attitude towards this issue. Ecumenical statements deal with both contrasting groups when exploring the establishment of a glocal approach.³⁷⁹ These listen to a variety of stories from local areas and support vulnerable living beings. On the other hand, they critique human beings as highlighted in point 2 (above). Those different aspects are addressed in ecumenical organisations, which are concerned with social justice based on Christian faith, such as the WCC. The WCC has released some statements on water justice and has established the EWN in order to work for water justice. Therefore, this section examines ecumenical documents (statements) and activities from the WCC and the EWN. This research helps Christians to realise how they have worked for water justice as well as to develop ways in which all churches can work together for water justice on the glocal stage. On the basis of ecofeminist theological perspectives, these statements and activities are analysed. These analyses allow a way of identifying and developing the current framework.

6.2.1 The WCC and the EWN, and Water Justice

The WCC is an ecumenical fellowship of 349 member churches which profess a common faith (“The Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour”) and which work together in response to a common calling (“to the glory of one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit”).³⁸⁰ In order to fulfil this common calling, the WCC has worked for a variety of social justice matters based on the Christian faith. Water justice has been regarded as one of the significant tasks all over the world. There were some statements which mentioned the value of water in the 20th century, yet the “Statement on Water for Life” in the WCC 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2006 has become a remarkable statement which leads ecumenical churches and partners to recognise water for life. This statement has six noticeable messages.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ “The Living Planet: Seeking a Just and Sustainable Global Community,” 08 September 2022, World Council of Churches, 1-2, at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/ADOPTED-PIC01.2rev-The-Living-Planet-Seeking-a-Just-and-Sustainable-Global-Community.pdf>.

³⁸⁰ “What is the World Council of Churches?,” World Council of Churches, accessed 22 August, 2021, <https://www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc>.

³⁸¹ “5. Statement on water for life,” 23 February 2006, World Council of Churches, at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/5-statement-on-water-for-life>.

1. Water is a symbol of life. The Bible affirms water as the cradle of life, an expression of God's grace in perpetuity for the whole of creation (Gen 2:5ff). It is a basic condition for all life on Earth (Gen 1:2ff.) and is to be preserved and shared for the benefit of all creatures and the wider creation. Water is the source of health and well-being and requires responsible action from us human beings, as partners and priests of Creation (Rom 8:19 ff., Rev 22). As churches, we are called to participate in the mission of God to bring about a new creation where life in abundance is assured to all (John 10:10; Amos 5:24). It is therefore right to speak out and to act when the life-giving water is pervasively and systematically under threat.
2. Access to freshwater supplies is becoming an urgent matter across the planet. The survival of 1.2 billion people is currently in jeopardy due to lack of adequate water and sanitation. Unequal access to water causes conflicts between and among people, communities, regions and nations. Biodiversity is also threatened by the depletion and pollution of fresh water resources or through impacts of large dams, large scale mining and hot cultures (irrigation) whose construction often involves the forced displacement of people and disruption of the ecosystem. The integrity and balance of the ecosystem is crucial for the access to water. Forests build an indispensable part in the ecosystem of water and must be protected. The crisis is aggravated by climate change and further deepened by strong economic interests. Water is increasingly treated as a commercial good, subject to market conditions.
3. Scarcity of water is also a growing source of conflict. Agreements concerning international watercourses and river basins need to be more concrete, setting out measures to enforce treaties made and incorporating detailed conflict resolution mechanisms in case disputes erupt.
4. Both locally and internationally there are positive and creative responses to raise the profile of Christian witness to water issues.
5. Churches in Brazil and in Switzerland, for instance, have made a Joint Ecumenical Declaration on Water as a Human Right and a Common Public Good - by itself an excellent example for ecumenical co-operation. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew states that water can never be regarded or treated as private property or become the means and end of individual interest. He underlines that indifference towards the vitality of water constitutes both a blasphemy to God the Creator and a crime against humanity. Churches in various countries and their specialised ministries have joined together in the Ecumenical Water Network in working for the provision of freshwater and adequate sanitation and advocating for the right to water. Access to water is indeed a basic human right. The United Nations has called for an International Decade for Action, Water for Life, 2005 to 2015.
6. It is essential for churches and Christian agencies to work together and to seek co-operation with other partners, including other faith traditions and NGOs, and particularly those organizations that work with vulnerable and marginalized populations who hold similar ethical convictions. It is necessary to engage in debate and action on water policies, including dialogue with governments and multilateral or corporate institutions. This is

essential to promote the significance of the right to water and to point to alternative ways of living, which are more respectful of ecological processes and more sustainable in the longer term.

First, this statement represents the close relationship with the UN. This has been influenced by the UN's International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015.³⁸² The WCC has joined the project "by exploring and highlighting the ethical and spiritual dimension of the water crisis".³⁸³ Beginning with this statement, the WCC has continually noted statements and actions of the UN. This statement can be regarded as a starting point of the relationship between the UN and the WCC in regard to the seeking of water justice. In other words, this represents the fact that Christians have a common responsibility with all earth dwellers, who should be concerned about water injustice issues on earth. Second, this statement highlights most of the noteworthy views on water justice of the WCC. The statement addresses four pressing issues that we should be concerned about: a) "ecological threat"; b) "production and consumption lifestyles"; c) "water should be treated as a special good and a human right rather than as a commodity or commercial product"; and d) "commercialization".³⁸⁴ These issues embrace the current water crisis contexts which most affect vulnerable living beings and provide a critique of the prevalent mindset in the capitalist economic system. Third, the most important fact is that the statement saw the emergence of the EWN in 2006. It formally invites ecumenical churches and partners to join the EWN which has dealt with responsible actions on water justice. The EWN's current aim and activities enable Christians a) to exchange news regarding water or water justice between churches (e.g., global updates and regional updates in the EWN newsletter), b) to recognise how ecumenical churches understand water and water justice, c) to unpack an example of the ecumenical churches' practical responses and d) to offer some suggestions for developing a network of bodies working towards water justice.

³⁸² cf. "WHY a "Water for life' Decade?," International Decade for Action 'WATER FOR LIFE' 2005-2015, accessed 28 August, 2021, <https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/background.shtml>.

³⁸³ World Council of Churches, "5. Statement on water for life."

³⁸⁴ Justice, Peace, Creation Team of the World Council of Churches, *Water of Life: An invitation to participate in the Ecumenical Water Network* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2006), 33-34, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/water-of-life06.pdf>.

Since issuing this statement, the WCC (including the EWN) has steadily encouraged ecumenical churches to be concerned about the global water crisis, to strengthen the theological foundations (through reflection), and to act in a variety of programmes which seek water justice. The EWN of the WCC is a representative Christian network that advocates water justice. This is based on the Christian ecumenical movement, so diverse contexts, cultures, and churches are emphasised in the forming of a Christian witness. This characteristic encourages churches to conform to the common Christian faith and to work towards water justice in terms of God's mission – caring for this earth – in a variety of places both globally and locally. The most significant thing for Christians is to believe in God's creation and to value life-giving water as a common resource for all living beings: "As churches we are called to serve and be examples in the way we use and share water. We are called to stand with the most vulnerable as they defend their rights to life, health, and livelihoods in situations marked by scarcity, conflict, occupation and discrimination (Isaiah 1.17, Amos 5.24). We must remember that water is a blessing to be treasured, to be shared with all people and creation, to be protected for future generations".³⁸⁵ This mainly focuses on the fact that water is a symbol of life. This articulates two things: first, it values the life-giving water in relation to God's creation; and second, it highlights the responsibility (mission) of churches towards future generations (the furthering of a new creation). In other words, this presents the importance of water of life not only in God's creation but also for a new creation which has been promised by Jesus Christ. These two important points allow me to connect creation and new creation in the commonality which pursues abundant life. This is also the way to reveal that this current world is broken and suffering in comparison to God's creation described in Genesis 1 and 2. These understandings contribute to the realisation of the extension to which water justice is crucially linked to Christians living a faithful life.

The EWN has proposed a water justice framework which contributes to the development of specific principles towards water justice. These principles highlight the meanings of water in the

³⁸⁵ "Statement on the Right to Water and Sanitation," 22 February 2011, World Council of Churches, at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-right-to-water-and-sanitation>.

Bible and Christian theology as well as the importance of a physical water supply to all living beings. These specific principles are as follows:³⁸⁶

Principle 1: ethical management

Water justice requires ethical management of water.

Principle 2: intergenerational equality

Water justice requires that we manage water as a gift from God to be available for life-sustaining purposes to the current and all future generations.

We must not deplete groundwater reserves, we must protect the sustained availability of surface water, and we must not destroy the ability to use ground or surface water by polluting it.

Principle 3: protect biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems

Water justice requires responsible human action to preserve biodiversity and to maintain ecological integrity and resilience of aquatic ecosystems.

Principle 4: assure universal access to water and sanitation

Water justice requires universal access to safe water and adequate sanitation. Efforts to provide such access should give preference to the poor and marginalised.

Principle 5: assure access to water by smallholders

Water justice requires that water be available for use by subsistence and smallholder farmers, herders and fishers.

Principle 6: assure availability of water for priority uses

Water justice requires that three uses of water take precedence: household uses; agricultural use by smallholder farmers, herders and fishers; and use to maintain aquatic ecosystem integrity and resilience.

Principle 7: democratic water governance

Water justice requires democratic governance of water.

Principle 8: water is a common good

Water justice requires that water be considered a common good. No compensable private rights in water should be created.

Principle 9: prevent economic exploitation of water

Water justice requires that use of water for commercial purposes be strictly regulated. Economic exploitation of water is unethical.

³⁸⁶ Smith, "14. Developing an Ecumenical Framework for Water Justice," 247-52.

Principle 10: water stewardship responsibilities.

Water justice requires that water users fulfil their profound stewardship responsibilities towards water.

These ten principles can be classified into three groups relating to their (slightly) different emphases: group a) principles 2, 8; group b) principles 3, 7, 9, 10; and group c) principles 1, 4, 5, 6. Principles 2 and 8 represent a foundational understanding of water. These indicate that water (as a gift of God and a common good) has to be available for all living beings throughout the whole of time. Based on this, the EWN recommends specific ways of using and caring for water as much as possible. Four principles (3, 7, 9, 10) are based on a rejection of a neoclassical economic framework, which mainly pursues economic efficiency. These warn about the exploitative approach, which disrupts the cycle of water and causes waste, pollution and unpredictable disasters in many parts of the world. In addition, they highlight the necessity of practices such as 'democratic water governance' and 'water stewardship responsibilities', which enable sustainable management with care for water and biodiversity on earth. Based on this understanding, four further principles (1, 4, 5, 6) highlight the significance of ethical management. They focus on how important universal access to all living beings and all places is. They raise the profile of this earth in which humanity, all living beings, and nature live together without a subject-object perspective or an exploitative attitude. In addition, these critically point out that marginalised living beings are increasingly suffering from current unethical situations. They allow Christians to realise a) that water for life is deeply related to ethical approaches and b) the importance of ordinary steps which value marginalised places, local areas, small holders, and private uses.

The main points of these ten principles are not significantly different to the opinions or arguments from earlier statements of the WCC and the EWN. I have already mentioned that the previous statements addressed the value of water both through biblical foundations and ethical approaches. However, there are three significant meanings of these 10 principles: These a) continually highlight what the Christian mission towards water justice is in contemporary societies; b) consider the deep relationship between awareness and practical actions and c)

suggest specific practical ways of how to incorporate water justice into everyday life on the basis of biblical and theological understandings. Therefore, these ten principles help ecumenical churches to work for water justice consistently and to find more detailed practical measures from the Christian faith and thinking in order to enable fresh water to flow everywhere throughout all ages.

6.2.2 The WCC and the EWN, and Ecofeminist Theological Perspectives

Ecumenical churches have been invited a) to recognise how much our societies are broken and b) to participate in the togetherness for water justice. Although there are various ways of exploring these invitations from ecumenical churches through a variety of perspectives (e.g. ecological perspectives), here I attempt to examine the link between those invitations and ecofeminist theological perspectives which value the voices of weakness, nature, and vulnerable living beings (and in particular, women who suffer from a patriarchal system), rather than centredness, majorities, humanity (as distinct from nature), and the people who tend to rule over nature and other living beings.

First of all, churches are called to listen to the groanings of living beings, nature, and water in the brokenness of society in the water crisis era. Based on ecofeminist theological perspectives, this calling is one of the most important in terms of the value of stories or voices from marginalised living beings or the groaning places. According to a Faith and Order Study Document of the WCC in 2005, violence and poverty are a part of brokenness in societies.³⁸⁷ These two contemporary challenges and the water crisis are inextricably linked and should be considered together. Water-related violence is mostly caused by water scarcity and climate change. Contamination, the shortage of water and unpredictable extreme weather such as floods and droughts bring about suffering to all who face these disasters. They affect vulnerable living beings such as women and children; a) suffering living beings who live in extremely dry areas and must carry water for their survival, and b) a number of indigenous communities and climate refugees who live in a place

³⁸⁷ World Council of Churches, “17. Christian Perspectives on theological Anthropology: Faith and Order Study Document, Geneva, 2005,” in *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*, ed. Mélisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 150-51.

where sea levels are visibly rising and floods occur, hence residents lose their homes and have to find a new place to live.³⁸⁸ This fact causes poverty and economic polarisation to worsen. Poverty is influenced by the class system which is based on an unequal power distribution; women, children, indigenous people, and climate refugees particularly suffer from this situation. In addition, both violence and poverty are not confined to only human beings: “Violence does not only affect inter-human relations but also the life of creation”.³⁸⁹ The same applies to poverty. Although the Faith and Order Study Document does not specifically mention ecological poverty, poverty is expanded to all living beings and resources through different names such as shortage or absence.³⁹⁰ The calling articulated above is highly significant because it enables us to listen carefully to a variety of voices (and in particular, to groanings).

Second, churches are called to practise life-giving actions in the era of water crisis. The WCC has suggested these specific actions: a) placing water issues on the agenda of the churches; b) supporting community-based initiatives; c) addressing trade and privatisation concerns; d) advocating sufficient support to and funding of water projects; and e) participating on the basis of the fundamental convictions.³⁹¹ These actions are fundamentally based on the idea of sharing, which implies interconnectedness and interdependence. They are focused on the sharing of both the physical resources (such as information, financial support, fresh water) and the moral foundations (such as an ethical and spiritual understanding of – a seeking of – water justice). Both types of sharing are equally important and interrelated with each other; this is deeply related to ecofeminist theological perspectives which highlight that all creation and living beings are interrelated. Just as chapters 4 and 5 addressed the continuity between spiritual meanings of water and meanings of physical water and between creation and salvation, so the sharing of water resources and ethical and religious understandings of water justice should be emphasised together; these are not separated and disconnected. This approach finally contributes to caring for this earth – Christians are able to regard this as one step for a life-giving mission.

³⁸⁸ “Creation Justice Now! Climate Action and Water for Life,” 8 September 2022, World Council of Churches, 1-2.

³⁸⁹ World Council of Churches, “36. Care for God’s Creation: A Dangerously Neglected Theme,” in *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*, ed. Mélisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 263.

³⁹⁰ World Council of Churches, “17. Christian Perspectives on theological Anthropology,” 150-51.

³⁹¹ Justice, Peace, Creation Team of the World Council of Churches, “Water of Life,” 56-57.

In addition, these practical actions of the WCC have been influenced by the UN's projects. In other words, the UN and the WCC are closely linked and cooperate together towards water justice. The WCC stresses that churches should promote blue communities and Goal 6 of the SDGs in order to support human rights in relation to water.³⁹² According to the introduction of itself published on the EWN website, the EWN is a leading faith factor which contributes towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 of the UN.³⁹³ These indicate how close the UN and the WCC are as well as the significance of collaboration between non-religious organisations and faith-based organisations. Some 'fundamentalist' Christians tend to regard faith-based organisations as being more valuable than non-religious organisations; because they like to focus on religious responses and prioritise these. However, on the basis of ecofeminist theological perspectives, which is based on denying the dualistic and hierarchical approaches, both are equally important. It is necessary to consider the interconnectedness between them rather than to make one more valuable than the other. In order to seek water justice for every living being everywhere, working together is continually demanded of all organisations and partners.

Third, churches are called not only to identify and affirm human rights but also to work towards peace on earth. The WCC report 'An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace' in 2011 classifies 6 signposts that indicate the way of Just Peace: 'Just Peace and caring for creation' is one of them.³⁹⁴ Caring for creation is also an important pursuit of ecofeminist theological perspectives which seek the liberation of both women and nature. Based on Christian faith, this approach enables Christians to recognise the relationship between sharing of resources equitably and Just Peace. This

³⁹² Norman Tendis, eds., *Roadmap for Congregations, Communities, and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice* (World Council of Churches, 2019), 7, https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/Roadmap%20Magazine_5.pdf.

³⁹³ Ecumenical Water Network, "What we do."

³⁹⁴ World Council of Churches, "32. An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace: Central Committee in Preparation for the international Ecumenical Peace Convocation, Kingston, 2011," in *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*, ed. Mélisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 244.

statement mainly uses the term 'creation', yet this can be replaced by water; the quote below is my adapted version of it with the focus on water instead of on creation.³⁹⁵

God made all things good and has contrasted humankind with the responsibility to care for 'water'. The exploitation of the natural world and the misuse of its finite resources disclose a pattern of violence that often benefits some people at the expense of many. We know that 'water' groans to be set free, not least from the abusive actions of humans. As people of faith, we acknowledge our guilt for the damage we have done to 'water' and all living things, through action and our inaction. The vision of Just Peace is much more than the restoration of right relationships in community; it also compels human beings to care for the earth as our home. We must trust in God's promise and strive for an equitable and just sharing of 'water'.

As water is a part of creation, this revised statement allows me to understand the original statement in a more specific way regarding water. This statement leads me to realise the mission of churches in relation to the seeking of water justice: a) listening to the groan of water and of living beings, b) a concern for water justice, c) the restoration of a variety of life-giving relationships with others, d) a care for water, and e) sharing water equally. These five missions are significant in order to pursue water justice, although certain similarities between them and earlier statements on water justice must also be recognised. It is also hard to find a unique practical mission from the WCC which differs from the ethical approaches of non-Christian organisations or foundations. Clearly, it is not necessary to propose a unique mission which differs significantly from others simply because of the desire to be different; doing so might result in disparity and discontinuity between faith-based organisations and non-religious organisations.

However, if Christians choose to think differently, a unique mission on water justice for ecumenical organisations is necessary. This can be developed in order to build a Christian identity more firmly rather than to make a disparity with non-religious foundations. My research – the reinterpretation of biblical texts in chapter 4 and the sacrament of baptism in chapter 5 with ecofeminist theological perspectives – becomes one of the exemplars for that. The ecofeminist theological approaches lead Christians to realise that a) faith which focuses more on spiritual

³⁹⁵ WCC, "32. An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace," 244.

salvation allows churches to be separate from both this earth and from non-Christians, b) the Christian resources have been misinterpreted by some Christians who have been influenced by an anti-ecological and human-centric worldview, and c) they describe cosmological salvation (life-giving), not human-centeredness (personal) salvation. Jesus' teaching seeks cosmological salvation (which focuses on living together with all creatures on earth) and emphasises that faith in God cannot be separated from caring for this earth. This analysis is clearly presented by the sacrament of baptism in chapter 5. It is necessary to believe that Christian eschatology seeks restoration, not annihilation. Christians are called to view this future in an earth-affirming rather than earth-denying way. This is a means of keeping their hope in God. Stewart states, "Flowing water has also served as a *theological* sign of God's renewal of the church and the world".³⁹⁶ He contributes to a recognition that water justice is one of the features of the earth-affirming abundance of life of God's creation. This approach is fundamentally linked to two remarkable characteristics of the EWN: one is the unique foundation which consists of responses of the Christian faith to the water crisis, and the other values inter-faith dialogue on water justice. These characteristics allow ecumenical churches to recognise not only uniqueness but also universalism on earth. In other words, water justice leads all living beings and communities (regardless of religious differences) to assemble and work together. This also connects with other ecumenical and non-religious international organisations which advocate water justice as well.

6.3 Water Justice and Churches in South Korea

Ecumenical movements value intercultural dialogue, communication between different churches and denominations, and social justice issues for all, particularly vulnerable people and minorities. Ecumenical churches have been concerned about water justice issues as one of a number of significant practical issues in the 21st century. This movement is able to connect with ecofeminist theological perspectives in terms of respecting a) inter-relationality in diversity and b) liberatory discourse. Although denominations and churches are often separated one from another (this tendency can be referred to as diversity), ecological justice (including water justice) enables all

³⁹⁶ Benjamin M. Stewart, "The Stream, the Flood, the Spring: The Liturgical Role of Flowing Waters in Eco-Reformation," in *Eco-Reformation: Grace and Hope for a Planet in Peril*, ed. Lisa E. Dahill and James B. Martin-Schramm (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 160.

to connect and work together. In other words, water justice issues can be a mediator between different churches and denominations, in addition to all living beings without any distinctions due to cultural and religious backgrounds. In this sense, I want to address how this approach could be fulfilled in a specific context – South Korea. This is connected to sections 1.1 and 1.2 where I address water injustice issues in the national context. This research contributes to the search for a practical understanding of an ecofeminist theology of water.

Based on the water injustice and a variety of discriminations in South Korea outlined in section 1.2, Korean churches are called to overcome the disconnection between Church denominations. They currently seldom communicate and share theological reflections because there are too many differences and gaps. However, water is addressed in all theologies even though the approaches to water are different among churches. Many Christians in South Korea tend to be more focused on a spiritual understanding of water rather than on water justice or the importance of fresh water (physical water).³⁹⁷ If theologies respect diverse aspects of water (in particular, they accept the continuity between physical water and spiritual meanings of water), a variety of churches can participate in ecological actions towards life-giving lives. The greatest emphasis of this approach is that diverse groups which have their own identities work together for one goal – water justice – which is one of the most significant global issues.

For this, first of all, I suggest that churches should be concerned with the important concept of ecofeminist theological perspectives – inter-relationship. Christians are called to profess water as life in the inter-relationship between creation and salvation. In God’s creation, water is the important resource among a variety of elements on earth. Water is used as a salvific symbol in the sacrament of baptism (chapter 5). This water is not only confined to spiritual meanings; as I have highlighted throughout my thesis, physical water should be addressed like the spiritual meanings of water in Christianity, in particular, for the mission on earth. While non-religious organisations mainly focus on a visible interrelationship such as a relationship between people

³⁹⁷ Kim and Yun, “A Critical Discourse Analysis on Differences of Opinion among Protestant Groups Surrounding the Four Major Rivers Project,” 182-83.

and nature, Christians are called to address a variety of inter-relationships, which are related not only to visible relationships but also transcendent relationships. Their approach pursues the importance of the continuity between the invisible and visible, and even beyond visible relationships; for example, they are concerned with the relationship between the invisible God and visible creation (Colossians 1:15-17). Christians should remember the interrelationship between God's own presence (in the Holy Trinity), between all living beings and also between "the creation of the universe and the salvation of all things".³⁹⁸ This approach also allows Christians to continually recognise the interconnected relationship between men and women, between God's creation and humanity, and specifically between the material and spiritual worlds which can refer to the relationship between the physical and spiritual meanings of water. Ultimately, this demonstrates that interrelationship implies interdependency and continuity, not disparity or discontinuity.

Second, churches are called to understand the extent of human weakness and how humanity is a part of all living beings and this earth. This means that it is necessary to realise how much they have been influenced by dualistic, hierarchical, and patriarchal worldviews. Sustainability boundaries imply the need for a limitation of humanity's activities. It is necessary to recognise how much water people need to live. Chang connects the necessity of sustainability boundaries to the biblical story of the fruit of the tree of knowledge (of good and of evil): He proposes the question, "where are you? (Genesis 3:9)", is a request made when the Lord stands in the place of humans, not invading the place of nature.³⁹⁹ It is important to eliminate human-centredness and greed.

Third, churches are called to seek a 'water-conscious mission'. The WCC has advocated a "creation-conscious mission" which has 10 specific characteristics that help Christians to

³⁹⁸ WCC, "36. Care for God's Creation," 261.

³⁹⁹ Chang, "Let the River flow to the sea," 108.

recognise what to seek and how to practise the mission in daily life.⁴⁰⁰ Based on Christian faith, seeking water justice is regarded as one of the specific missions in our contemporary societies. In a specific way, the ‘creation-conscious mission’ can be adapted to become a ‘water-conscious mission’ which focuses on water injustice and seeks missions for water justice. Similarly, as seen previously, I replace the term ‘creation’ with ‘water’ in the WCC’s *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace*. This approach helps churches to focus more on water-consciousness in this water crisis era. In addition, this suggests a way that highlights ecological sensitivity which embraces a concern for water and an awareness of water. For this mission, three practical actions are necessary.

A) Listening to a variety of voices

It is necessary to listen carefully to a variety of voices from different regional areas and countries. Even though ecofeminist theological perspectives value the voices of local and marginalised living beings, it is widely recognised that their primary focus is on the majority of living beings and glocal responses. Therefore, regular and ongoing communication with local churches in a variety of areas should be of crucial importance and something that churches focus on. For example, the WCC and the EWN have programmes such as newsletters and the Seven Weeks for Water campaign.⁴⁰¹ Through these communication mechanisms they share issues that are arising in different areas of the world, yet they mostly focus on case studies from places in which the water crisis is extremely severe. The case studies are significant and important. However, other voices which have been less influenced by the water crisis are also needed. Both bodies should represent the current situations of some churches, which are located in places where water resources are plentiful, whether or not they have tried to engage with and ameliorate the water

⁴⁰⁰ The 10 characteristics are: “1) a creation-consciousness is grounded in the belief in the Holy Trinity; 2) creation-conscious mission points to God creating and re-creating all things in Jesus Christ; 3) Creation-conscious mission is the call to fellow-humans to enter into a genuine relationship with god with each other and the whole creation; 4) creation-conscious mission proclaims the hope for the new creation; 5) creation-conscious mission applies discernment to the process of transformation; 6) creation-conscious mission seeks social and economic justice in harmony with the created order; 7) creation-conscious mission requires a responsible and sustainable life style; 8) creation-conscious mission rejects the use of violence; it seeks peace a reconciliation; 9) creation-conscious mission begins in the heart; and 10) creation-conscious mission is inspired by worship based on the early Christian integration of the spiritual and material world”. See WCC, “36. Care for God’s Creation,” 261-63.

⁴⁰¹ “Newsletter,” Ecumenical Water Network, accessed 12 August, 2021, <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/ecumenical-water-network#newsletter>; “Seven Weeks of Water,” Ecumenical Water Network, accessed 13 August, 2021, <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/ecumenical-water-network#seven-weeks-for-water>.

crisis. In this way, churches are helped to reflect on their lack of awareness about water justice as well as to work for water justice “at the grassroots”.⁴⁰²

B) Education for Water Justice

In order to encourage churches to participate in the work for water justice, education for water justice is important. Some institutes and organisations have worked hard for ecological justice, so they continue to focus on caring for this earth. For example, the Salim Christian Environment Education Centre in South Korea has made a number of educational programs which explore the glocal ecological crisis and encourage Christians to be concerned about this earth.⁴⁰³ The Korea Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity has activated a ‘green church’ campaign which encourages churches to work for ecological justice together, prioritising actions.⁴⁰⁴ However, both education centres have not yet developed specific programmes for water justice. If they communicate with the EWN, more glocal issues can actively be addressed. Although many ecumenical movements pursue “a mutual respect of all churches”, gaps between global ecumenical organisations, national ecumenical bodies and local churches have always existed. Hence, communicating and sharing between them is always a challenging issue.⁴⁰⁵ The establishment of an education department in each local religiously-boundaried area can be a solution; therefore, churches are able to communicate about glocal water issues and to work for water justice together.

C) Renewed biblical and theological reflection

It is vital that the current ecumenical statements and activities are revised by engaging in renewed biblical and theological reflection in relation to water and water justice. While the WCC and the EWN have published interpretations of biblical texts and theological responses regarding

⁴⁰² Maike Gorsboth, “Foreword,” in *Ripples in the Water: Success Stories of Churches Striving for Water Justice*, ed. Susan Kim and Maike Gorsboth (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015), vii.

⁴⁰³ “함께살림! 기독교환경교육센터 살림” [Together Salim! Christian Environment Education Centre Salim], Salim Christian Environment Education Centre 기독교환경교육센터 살림, accessed 21 September, 2021, <https://blog.daum.net/eochrist/>.

⁴⁰⁴ “녹색교회 사업” [Business of Green Church], Korea Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity 기독교환경운동연대, accessed 21 September, 2021, <https://greenchrist.org/greenchurch/>.

⁴⁰⁵ Adrian Ignat, “Mission and Ecumenism of the local Church,” *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 10, no. 3 (2019): 81.

water in which they emphasise the value of water, this research should be pursued because there are a number of biblical texts and sacraments which have the potential of being reinterpreted using a water conscious perspective. Biblical interpretations which have been influenced by contexts and views of readers are not set in stone. This means that an interpretation depends considerably on its perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to have a 'right' perspective which can be applied to reading biblical and theological resources. Throughout my thesis, I suggest that ecofeminist theological perspectives contribute to their reinterpretation because the perspectives pursue non-hierarchical and non-patriarchal analyses, which should be stressed in this water crisis era.

D) Reinterpretation of Stewardship towards Water Justice

Previously, I have rejected stewardship on the basis that it is hard to separate from the human-centred approach (chapter 3). However, if it is possible to reconstruct the meaning of anti-dualistic and non-hierarchical perspectives, the reinterpreted stewardship could be useful in a pursuit of water justice. Bader-Saye contributes to reinterpreting the theology of stewardship in the water crisis era.⁴⁰⁶ He argues that stewarding could not be confined to the utility of water in the relationship with the creator because it is for the glory of God. In order to steward water for creation itself, he urges scholars to understand that water is for sustaining all ecosystems, not only for human projects. His work leads his readers to think about the living beings who are suffering or will suffer from water poverty. He also emphasises *prudent* stewardship for water management and distribution because of the potential drawbacks of some models of stewardship. In fact, the stewardship metaphor can distort the relationship between humanity and creation by stressing the economic role of steward. The steward metaphor is prone to ignoring the interdependence of the natural world. Therefore, Bader-Saye suggests a reinterpreted stewardship metaphor which could avoid the dangerous outcome.

“We can speak of water management as the particular task of using human wit to create and tend a limited water economy to serve the goods of human flourishing while also

⁴⁰⁶ Scott Bader-Saye, “Stewarding Water in the Great Economy,” *Anglican Theological Review* 100, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 32-33.

leaving unmanaged significant portions of the water supply necessary to provide for various ecosystems that exceed our comprehension".⁴⁰⁷

The wise reinterpretation of stewardship can preserve the proper function of stewardship emphasising human responsibility for creation. The perspective is similar to the argument of Zenner in *Just Water*. Zenner insists that "humans must adopt a stance of stewardship (or protection and wise use) of fresh water resources, rather than exploitation".⁴⁰⁸ McDonagh expands God's calling to the protection of water.⁴⁰⁹ He emphasises God's calling that every human has a responsibility to care about God's creation and the poor of the world. Hence, it is important to revisit the meanings of stewardship towards water justice in this water crisis era.

Consequently, churches need to focus on a variety of voices from local areas and churches, from vulnerable living beings and from nature, and to share them and act for water justice with ecumenical churches in a glocal way. In order to do this, it is necessary for local churches and individual denominational bodies to communicate profoundly with each other. This lies, of course, at the foundation of the relationship between ecumenical bodies. It is a way in which the interconnectedness and interdependence between churches and denominational, regional, and global organisations are respected.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed two significant things: first, what water justice is in relation to Christian faith or theological understanding; and second, ecumenical practical responses by examining a variety of statements; in particular, the WCC's and the EWN's work for water justice. Based on ecofeminist theological perspectives, interconnectedness and interrelationship between water justice issues and Christian responses on a glocal stage have been highlighted. It is clear that the concern about water injustice is closely connected to the need for solidarity with a) vulnerable living beings such as the poor, women, and children, b) those who live in low-lying

⁴⁰⁷ Bader-Saye, "Stewarding Water in the Great Economy," 39.

⁴⁰⁸ Zenner, *Just Water*, 75.

⁴⁰⁹ McDonagh, *Dying for Water*, 13.

regions which are particularly vulnerable to flooding or in hot or dry regions where a number of living beings suffer from a shortage of water, and c) non-human communities. Supporting these three particular groups should not involve a focus on distinctions or disparities between them, rather it should focus on their common interests. This allows all people to sustain their lives and live together on earth. Furthermore, this is the way to accomplish the Lord's prayer: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10)".

This chapter emphasises the crucial life-giving characteristic of water. Flowing water enables living beings to live, and this earth to be fruitful. If water cannot flow or be a supply, no one can live. In this sense, water justice means that fresh water (life-giving water) flows to all living beings and nature everywhere. The seeking of water justice helps us to recognise the link between water and life and to practise life-giving lives. This means that both awareness and practice are intrinsically interconnected with each other. The awareness of life-giving water leads us to critique the fundamental causes of the global water crisis – indifference, selfishness, and power-centredness – and to recognise the importance of togetherness towards a common interest and goal – water justice. This understanding indicates that a continuous flowing of water is significant in a variety of meanings and places such as flowing water, a continuity between awareness and practice, and flowing love and concerns for vulnerable living beings and places.

Those who believe that water is a gift of God cannot treat water as only a commodity or object for humanity; the life-giving water must be respected. However, some Christians and churches are unaware of water justice issues. Although the WCC and the EWN have worked hard in order to encourage churches to work for water justice, there are still gaps between global responses and local practices. Hence, ecumenical statements and programmes focusing on water justice must be written, revised and shared with all places and all churches in terms of communication between the global and local. The most important thing is to examine how global responses are linked to local responses, for example, to churches in South Korea. This chapter has presented examples of how to work for water justice in a local context or background. This allows for the recognition of local understandings of ecofeminist theological perspectives in relation to water

justice as well. This contributes to reducing the gap between local and global church responses to water justice.

Consequently, if human-centredness and the afterlife are highlighted, it is easy to disregard the value of creation, social issues, and in particular, ecological issues. Therefore, it is necessary to lead Christians to believe in cosmological salvation and to be concerned about a variety of alienated voices on earth. The most important fact is that churches should listen to public issues in contemporary society; “To preach the gospel, the church must be involved in public issues of justice and sustainability – in economics”.⁴¹⁰ McFague’s argument allows me to recognise a) context: a number of Korean churches are not carefully concerned about public issues and b) reaction: listening to public issues is a very important task for Christians in order to fulfil God’s life-giving mission. Recognising not only our own context but also requiring action, results in a better lifestyle and better world, which pursues justice and peace.

⁴¹⁰ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, 36.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

My aim in this thesis has been to develop a Christian theology of water within an ecofeminist theological perspective. As I have already mentioned in chapter 1, to date there is very limited available research specifically on the theology of water.⁴¹¹ I have wanted to demonstrate that ecofeminist theological perspectives enable Christians to gain new insights into how the meanings of water and water justice in this water crisis era might be understood. In general, ecofeminist theologians have identified ecofeminist theologies as ways of critically assessing the relationship between vulnerable women and nature. They do this by critiquing oppressions which cause dualism, hierarchy and patriarchy. My thesis has examined the relationship between women and water on the basis of that perspective. I have critiqued the fact that water has been indiscriminately used by humanity. There is a parallel with this in the position of women in a patriarchal society where they are less privileged than men and treated as an object.⁴¹² A dualistic view of matter/materiality often causes not only a water crisis by disregarding water, but also results in an inappropriate undervaluation of materials and bodies on earth. Hence, I have highlighted the necessity of ecofeminist theology, which seeks the liberation of nature and women, and furthermore affirms the integrity of creation.

My research has focused not only on the problematic issues in relation to water injustice but also on the recovery of the integrity of creation. I have argued for the integrity of creation in terms of contextual analyses, biblical texts, the sacrament of baptism, and a range of church statements about water and water justice. I have found that these resources have certain things in common, as follows: a) meanings of physical water tend to be underprivileged in comparison with spiritual meanings of water; and b) there is very little clearly articulated theological reflection on the global water crisis. These two points demonstrate why I have explored those resources in order to develop a theology of water. “If ‘salvation’ means the well-being of all God’s creatures—and not just eternal life in another world for a few chosen human beings—then issues such as climate

⁴¹¹ In section 1.3, the examination of different terms expressing a theology of water (hydrotheology, aqua-centric theology, and blue theology) has led me to consider what the diverse types of a theology of water might be.

⁴¹² Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 20-22.

change, food, energy, the consumer lifestyle, economics, and forest and water management become theological issues".⁴¹³ Based on McFague's argument, I affirm the necessity of developing theological reflection in relation to the current water crises, which is one of the significant global issues. It is important to emphasise meanings of physical water in line with spiritual meanings of water in Christian theology. These common concerns and supplementary points can be widely shared in order to communicate with and between a range of denominations even if their theologies and practices are based on different perspectives such as tradition- and earth-centric approaches. Therefore, I suggest that an ecofeminist theology of water should be concerned with the water crisis and should develop an appropriate framework of and for theological reflection.

My research has offered a new characteristic of ecofeminist theological perspectives by applying not only a tradition-centred approach but also an earth-centred approach. In order to demonstrate how a tradition-centred and an earth-centred approach of ecofeminist theology can be compatible, I have focused on a common concern to each – life and healing for the earth (section 2.1.1). Although traditional Christian sources have been influenced by hierarchical and patriarchal perspectives, they ultimately emphasise life and healing for the earth; for example, 'living water'. "The elemental interaction of airy spirit and living water infuses the process of genesis as a whole, and so of every new creation, every renewal of life, every new beginning – like that 'living water' of regeneration we glimpsed in the story of the woman at the well".⁴¹⁴ Hence, I have recovered genuine Christian values, in particular in relation to meanings of water, and have reconstructed them by using an earth-centred approach, which gives priority to the material and the physical. One thing I have learned from the earth-centred approach is to be suspicious and sceptical of the priority that the traditional approach gives to the spiritual over the physical and the material. I have insisted that Christians begin with the physical before they move to the spiritual; this is the same as beginning from the earth-centred approach and moving to the tradition-centred approach. There are also resonances here with the Christological 'from

⁴¹³ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, 58.

⁴¹⁴ Keller, *On the Mystery*, 54.

above' and 'from below' approaches. What I am interested in exploring are the resources for thinking about the relationship between the material and the spiritual in connection with water: scripture, the sacrament of baptism, and practice. The earth-centred approach has led me to value the meanings of physical water, thus this insight has helped me to discern the significance of both recovery of or resistance to Christian resources. Therefore, I have demonstrated not only the authority of Christianity but also the priority of meanings of physical water while most ecofeminist theologians choose between the two (Ruether and Primavesi in section 3.2.3).

I have proposed a praxis cycle together with five methodological steps, which have helped me not only to recognise the co-relationship between theory and practice, but also to find a new understanding of the resources and to engage in practical reflection. The 'see-judge-act' method in the praxis cycle connects well to the five-step process: step one (context, experience) is related to 'seeing'; steps two (methodology) and three (ecofeminist intersectional analysis) provide the tools and perspectives for 'judging', step four (scripture and tradition) is the actual 'judging'; and step five (church praxis and action) is related to 'acting'. Based on these methodologies and methods, my thesis began with the examination of context – a global water crisis, and in particular looking at the specific area of South Korea. This has allowed us to see what causes problematic issues on the local stage. This in turn connects to a variety of issues all over the world in terms of the interconnection between local and global. I have argued that theorising and acting on the basis of ecofeminist theological perspectives gives insights for Christians about how to seek and fulfil the integrity of creation.

Consequently, by applying these methodologies and perspectives, each chapter has enabled me to identify what the problematic issues are, why they have happened, and understand how humans repent of their arrogance and begin to learn how to seek water justice together as Christians. All chapters are interconnected by analysing the present (a variety of issues), the past (their fundamental reasons), and the future (hope for change towards water justice). The present issues can be a reference point that allows a comparison between the past and the future. Constant water pollution such as contaminated water, which has mainly been a result of

exploitative use, causes the destruction of ecosystems. This characteristic represents the interrelationship between human awareness and action throughout all ages and the value of water circulation, which is the key to enabling self-purification. It is also true that if someone uses water to get more profit, overall, vulnerable living beings do not have sufficient access to water. In order to overcome these crises, the most significant thing is to recognise the severity of the water crisis in contemporary societies and the degree to which our current attitudes are important to overcoming the water crisis together with suffering caused by the crisis in the future.

Therefore, my research, which has been based on the aim of my thesis and research questions (section 2.2), contributes to scholarship in three ways: a) the prioritisation of an ecofeminist theology of water; b) the demonstration of the interconnection between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water in Christian resources; and c) the recommendation of practical actions towards water justice for the ecumenical Christian community. Through subsections, I address which problematic issues I have found, what critical interpretations I have offered, and what practical reflections I have suggested. I propose that 'water-honouring faith' should be practised in this water crisis era and conclude with a hope of the establishment of 'a Christian Ecofeminist Theology of Water in the 21st Century'.

7.1 Problematic Issues

In my thesis, these problematic issues have revealed that: a) a number of (conservative) local churches in South Korea have been seriously concerned about individual salvation rather than cosmological salvation (section 1.2); b) the traditional Christian understanding of water has mainly focused on spiritual meanings and the after-life more than on ordinary meanings and our present life on earth (sections 4.2.1; 4.3.1; and 5.1); and c) secular or ecumenical organisations have made progress in practising actions towards water justice, yet there continues to be a lack of a fundamental conversion of awareness that results in a change of people's lifestyles (chapter 6.1 and 6.2). On the basis of ecofeminist theological perspectives (chapter 3 and section 4.1), I have demonstrated that these issues are not only problematic in superficial ways, they are caused by dualistic, patriarchal, and hierarchical worldviews. It is important to recognise these

structures of domination, which cause these problematic issues; that is why, throughout my thesis I have used a hermeneutics of suspicion to re-read biblical texts (sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.2) as well as to argue that the traditional Christian understanding of water leads Christians to be constantly indifferent to water injustice issues and the interconnectedness between all living beings, nature and this earth.

By examining water injustice in South Korea (section 1.2), I have revealed a tension between natural water preservation and development. Although it is clear that development has played an important and life-saving and life-giving role in human history, I have argued that acceptance is a more appropriate and effective approach which seeks natural preservation. In chapter 3, I have addressed ecofeminist scholars' arguments which critique development (progress, change, and control). For example, Shiva argues that "when development philosophy erodes community control and instead promotes technologies that violate the water cycle, scarcity is inevitable".⁴¹⁵ Her argument highlights how development tends to destroy life-giving water; despite giving the appearance of saving water. The way to control water is based on a hierarchical and dualistic approach: humanity can control the flow of water and the water cycle. This view is addressed by using ecofeminist theological perspectives in terms of this commonality (similarity): both women and water have been treated as objects and materials by men and 'humanity' in social frameworks. The other prominent commonality is that both women and water support lives (e.g., women giving birth and drinking water). Therefore, their works are regarded as life-giving activities (missions). Although they are treated as an object or material for privileged living beings, they continually help other living beings and nature to live or to be healed.

The Korean contextual analysis has also demonstrated that some Christians have attempted to seek a special personal relationship with God, rather than a co-relationship between God, all living beings, and this earth. The Christian perspective (which is sometimes identified with Christian conservatism and fundamentalism) stems from a misunderstanding of the Bible (e.g., Genesis 1:28) which focuses on the end of time and regards nature as secondary in comparison

⁴¹⁵ Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002), 12.

with heaven (afterlife). This results in Christians becoming indifferent to the physical earth and finally earth-denying. In a specific way, I have connected this indifference to water and water justice from the beginning of my thesis. Focusing too much on the spiritual meanings of water causes an imbalance between this and the meanings of physical water. Ecofeminist theological perspectives (section 2.1.3) have allowed me to recognise the unequal relationship between spiritual meanings of water and meanings of physical water presented by tradition-centred approaches (through a re-analysis of Christian scriptures and traditions) and the further relationship between humanity and nature, men and women, and rich and poor in contemporary societies. As well as this, these perspectives have led me to argue that traditional Christian theology should be reconstructed and reinterpreted on the basis of anti-dualistic, non-hierarchical, and non-patriarchal approaches. In so doing, Christian theology gives insights to Christians about why and how physical water should be valued in their lives (e.g. section 5.3.3).

7.2 Critical Reinterpretations

I have argued that John 4:1-42, Genesis 6-9, and the sacrament of baptism have to be reinterpreted through ecofeminist theological perspectives. In offering an interpretation of John 4:1-42, I have been critically concerned with the social system which allows women to use (or work with) ordinary water for household chores. Although a number of societies have attempted to move away from patriarchal societies, there are still inequalities between genders (e.g. the glass ceiling) and also anthropocentrism between humanity and nature. As I have highlighted in section 3.1, in some drought areas, it is still women who bring the water jars to their families in their daily life. I have made a connection between the current women (who suffer from the lack of water) and the Samaritan woman who brought a water jar in the stories of the Samaritan woman and Jesus in John 4 (section 4.2). In order to highlight the liberation of women and nature, I have focused on the Samaritan woman and the physical water that Jesus drank, while most theologians have prioritised Jesus' action and words as well as the spiritual meanings of water. This does not mean that I prefer to highlight the physical water more than the spiritual meanings of water. Rather, I emphasise the inter-relationship between them through the common

understanding of 'living' water (section 2.1.1), and highlight the significance of hearing from women and nature (water).

My thesis has not only focused on the relationship between genders in scriptural interpretations. It seeks the integrity of creation which stresses not only the intrinsic value of all creatures but also the interconnectedness between all creatures and God (section 3.4). This approach has led me to reinterpret the story of the flood in Genesis 6-9 and to extend it well beyond this one example of a flood, to water issues globally. Most theologians have focused on a sin-degradation-salvation framework in the flood and on Noah who was a "righteous man". Hence, they argue that the flood has a role to cleanse humanity's sin, to show God's punishment as a disaster, and to motivate people to follow the righteous Noah. I have argued that this approach is too human-centred, and requires a transformation of our perspective from human-centred to earth-centred. On the basis of earth-centredness, the flood has been interpreted as a blessing in terms of the recovery of the earth. This is also connected to salvation which enables living beings to live. The connection between creation and salvation in this story allows Christians to recognise the fullness of a diverse range of meanings of "water", both physically and spiritually, by emphasising life in abundance. In addition, the flood is a valuable part of creation which praises the creation of God. Muers asserts that creation (including floods) and creatures praise God: "Creation, in the *Benedicite* and its parallels (such as Psalm 148), praises God regardless of its utility or otherwise to humanity – or to other creatures. Scorching heat and freezing cold, as well as dews and rains, praise God; floods are as much part of creation as springs".⁴¹⁶ This argument may appear Theocentric in terms of its focus on praising God, yet this understanding ultimately allows all creatures to be honoured and respected, and the value and magnificence of God's creation (creatures and all living beings on earth, not only focusing on humanity) to be recognised.

Based on the same perspective, baptism has been reinterpreted in a new way that allows me to recover the integrity of creation. The traditional Christian understanding of baptism has focused

⁴¹⁶ Rachel Muers, "Creatures," in *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*, ed. Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott (Abingdon, OX: Routledge, 2014), 92.

on the cleansing of sin by highlighting the specific characteristics of water: meanings of purity and cleanliness. I have not disagreed with this crucial meaning of baptism, but I have suggested two alternative interpretations in order to correct and amplify this meaning: one (passive resistance) is to expand the meanings of sin in relation to water and water injustice and the other (active resistance) is to reconstruct the meaning of baptism by highlighting the restoration of a relationship between God, nature, and humanity. The former is related to a number of arguments found in contemporary theology such as liberation theology and feminist theology, which are commonly based on social sin or structural sin. My thesis has articulated the following as sin: the abuse of water, water pollution, and dualistic, hierarchical and patriarchal systems. This water-related understanding allows Christians to regard baptism as an event in which the varieties of corporate sin are confessed and the daily life of professing Christians is reoriented towards God's justice and peace on earth. On the other hand, the latter demonstrates that baptism is an event that celebrates life-giving water and spirit in the continuity between physical and spiritual meanings of water. This is a fullness of celebration which combines water and the Spirit. This interpretation of baptism is meaningful because it moves away from human-centredness and emphasises the integrity of creation by emphasising the earth (water) itself. While traditional Christian interpretations of baptism have focused on the spiritual salvation of human beings, I have argued for the significance of both "the well-being of all creatures" and spiritual salvation.⁴¹⁷

7.3 Practical Reflections

My thesis contributes not only to a theoretical reinterpretation of Christian scriptures and sacraments, but also offers a range of practical responses. I have addressed a number of ecumenical responses in relation to water justice (chapter 6), responding to my identification of two problematic issues in the current practical responses, as follows. First, although they have attempted to give some suggestions to Christians about how to support water justice issues in daily life, these responses have a limited capacity to transform the consciousness and actions of human beings because they focus on visible and superficial causes more than the fundamental conversion of awareness. Second, there is a lack of communication between secular and

⁴¹⁷ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, 58.

ecumenical organisations and local churches. Therefore, I have offered suggestions as to how Christians might transform their awareness and lifestyles towards water justice.

My deeper concern is how Christians might work together based on anti-dualistic, non-hierarchical, and non-patriarchal worldviews. My context in South Korea is overly divided into a number of protestant church denominations, so it is difficult for them to communicate with each other on the basis of different theological understandings and approaches (section 1.2). In addition, there still remains a strong male- and human-centredness, in particular in church communities. In order to offer a practical solution, I have tried to find a way that communicates between traditional Christian theology and a radical contemporary Christian approach (reconstruction). That is why I have applied both a tradition-centred and a reconstructive way of an earth-centred approach of ecofeminist theology throughout my thesis. Although churches and denominations have different opinions, some of the most common areas of differing views focus on Christian scriptures and the sacrament of baptism. Churches must work together by emphasising water justice as God's mission for this current water crisis era. Therefore, I have demonstrated that there is a significant possibility for churches to communicate. In so doing, churches are not focused just on Christians, but on peace on earth.

I have proposed a way in which churches may be able to agree on some points together and to pursue the common good on the basis of their Christian faith. First, I have examined the relationship between God, creation (water), and humanity. Based on the belief that God is the creator of this earth and of humanity, I have argued that God calls humanity as a co-creature and a partner (Gen 9). Water is a creation and a life-giving resource for all living beings and the earth. This understanding allows Christians to consider how to live as partners of God on earth in this water crisis era. Second, I have affirmed that the efforts of human beings that focus on caring for this earth are necessary in order to build an alternative society. For churches in South Korea, I have suggested practical perspectives and methods of how to do this in our ordinary presence in terms of ecumenical responses and contextual analyses (section 6.3). As dwellers on this earth, all humanity (not only Christians) is called to work together towards justice and peace with all

creatures. Hence, I have focused on a deep concern about water together with the unequal relationships in a variety of injustice-justice issues (including gender issues), not only considering water issues. Some argue that humanity should adopt a “responsible non-action” (e.g. Taoism), yet as God and all creatures are co-workers, I have insisted that humanity’s action is necessary.⁴¹⁸ However, the action must be eco- and water-centric, not human- or male-centric.

7.4 Conclusion: Towards a Christian Ecofeminist Theology of Water in the 21st Century

To develop an ecofeminist theology of water, I have suggested an alternative ecofeminist biblical hermeneutics and the praxis framework, both of which support “right action” and “right belief”. Faith *in* action and faith *and* action are given particular attention. As a further suggestion, I outline and affirm the practice of water-honouring faith which Christians are called to practise in the 21st century. This concept is developed by that of earth-honouring faith which seeks the renewal and rebirth of religious traditions in order to build a system of ethics and morality that stresses the abundant life of all creation.⁴¹⁹ Rasmussen promotes a web-of-life approach, which “includes global ‘commons’ such as the atmosphere and the oceans”, not only focused on human society.⁴²⁰ This is linked to an earth-centred approach of ecofeminist theology. An important topic in the web-of-life approach is the conviction that nature on earth is not an object. Rasmussen contends that this is a dimension of the pursuit of creation justice. However, for the purposes of my study Rasmussen’s perspective offers the possibility of developing a theology of water that respects water justice. Saving souls and saving our physical lives are important; it is hard to overvalue or undervalue both. Water-honouring faith focuses on life-giving water not only in a spiritual way but also in a physical way. This means that it highlights the continuity between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water, which is one of the main arguments of an ecofeminist theology of water.

⁴¹⁸ Russell Kirkland, ““Responsible Non-Action” in a Natural World: Perspectives from the Neiye, Zhuangzi, and Daode Jing,” in *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, eds. N. J. Girardot, James Miller, and Liu Xiaogan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 2001), 283-304.

⁴¹⁹ Rasmussen, *Earth-Honoring Faith*, 104-05.

⁴²⁰ Rasmussen, *Earth-Honoring Faith*, 260.

Water-honouring faith emphasises two imperative things: a shift of paradigmatic perspectives and structural changes. In relation to ecofeminist theological perspectives, I argue for the application of anti-dualistic, non-hierarchical, and non-patriarchal approaches. While Rasmussen applies an earth-centred approach to cross-cultural situations and to a variety of faith traditions,⁴²¹ I have focused on both a tradition-centred and a reconstructive way of an earth-centred approach, so Christian resources are reinterpreted using a water-honouring faith paradigm. Water-honouring faith, I argue in my thesis, is confined to dialogues between Christians and their resources in order to substantiate my arguments. I concentrate on Christians and churches to highlight the importance of biblical authority (section 4.1.1). However, this does not mean that I do not use an earth-centred approach. As I have made clear in my thesis, I highlight the significance of a reconstructive way of the earth-centred approach to prioritise earth (water). There are two specific characteristics of water-honouring faith: a) it incorporates the significance of physical and spiritual meanings of water by highlighting the honouring of water rather than only water justice; and b) it enables Christians to fulfil their Christian commitment to God and also to act in a way in which water is appropriately honoured. These characteristics are related to a 'water-conscious mission', which leads Christians to seek the honouring of water and water justice in a practical way (section 6.3). In short, my thesis enables us to recognise how to understand Christian resources and to practise actions. The key argument in my thesis is that water-honouring faith and action should be practised in our own contexts and in (ecumenical) churches.

Consequently, all these factors are related to answering my research questions which I introduced in section 2.2.1.⁴²² First of all, my thesis argues that ecofeminist theological perspectives contribute to the development of a Christian theology of water by: a) the critical deconstruction of a primarily human- and male-centred approach and a commensurate understanding of Christian texts and resources; and b) the reconstruction of the integrity of

⁴²¹ Rasmussen, *Earth-Honoring Faith*, 6.

⁴²² My research questions: 1) How might an ecofeminist theology develop a Christian theology of water? 2) How might an ecofeminist theology of water explore the tension between the physical and spiritual meanings of water? 3) How might the resulting ecofeminist theology of water inform Christian ecumenical responses on mission?

creation and water-honouring faith and action within Christian theology. Second, by focusing on water as life, meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water are interconnected. In the story of a Samaritan woman and Jesus (section 4.2), I have argued that the physical living water from the woman to Jesus is as valuable as the spiritual living water from Jesus to the woman. The story of Noah's flood (section 4.3) emphasises not only the water circulation between flood and rainbow, but also the interrelationship between sin and salvation. The sacrament of baptism (chapter 5) presents the fact that water has a role of being a mediator between physical and spiritual. That is, an ecofeminist theology of water affirms that the interconnected understanding of water not only frees Christians from the limited earthly understanding and indifference to other living beings and nature, but also helps them to recognise the interconnection between God, creation, creatures, materials, and life-giving substances on earth. Third, this research helps ecumenical missions to emphasise water-honouring faith and action together. Ecumenical movements should be "from below", but it is easy to adopt a "from above" approach, especially at the global level of organisations, which is not well communicated between the global, regional, and local levels of churches. My thesis has argued that, and demonstrated how, water honouring faith and action enable churches to be interconnected; and this allows them to overcome any distinctions or discontinuity between them in different contexts. The EWN asserts, "Water is central to our spiritual life" (e.g., baptism).⁴²³ This should be expanded to physical life as well. Water is central to both our physical and our spiritual life. My thesis contributes to the recognition of the fact that the interconnected understanding of water leads Christians to change both their consciousness and action.

An ecofeminist theology of water offers these two reinterpretations of water (water justice):

a) As a gift of God, water is a life-giving resource for all living beings on earth. Water saves all creatures in a physical way as well as helping people to know the presence of God in a spiritual

⁴²³ Secretariat of the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN), *God, Lead Us to Abundant Life and Peace through Water Justice: Statement of the Ecumenical Water Network, World Council of Churches* (Switzerland: WCC, 2013), 1, https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/EWN_statement_Strategic%20Consultation_15th%20July.pdf.

way. Meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water are interconnected; they cannot be separated and one must not prioritise either one over the other.

b) Vulnerable living beings are more liable to suffer from a lack of water, water-related disasters or water injustice. It is important (a) to supply water to all living beings on earth, and (b) to care for all living beings without disparities. Water is not only for privileged people, men, or the rich. Neither men nor women can take centre stage over nature and water. (This is particularly the case in developing countries where there is still a majority of male decision-makers in relation to the management of water.) In order to fulfil the equal distribution, Christians should recognise the fact that all living beings are a part of this earth, as well as change their actions in line with a water-honouring faith.

These two descriptions allow us to be concerned with not only water itself but also all living beings. I do not argue solely for the liberation of women and nature (in other words, the integrity of creation), for example. I have highlighted the liberation of women and vulnerable living beings on the basis of my critique of hierarchical and patriarchal perspectives. However, I consider that ecofeminist theological perspectives have a special responsibility and ability to focus on an inter-relationship 'between creation and salvation, between creation and humanity, and between women and men' (section 5.2). This is because the liberation of all living beings and nature is the ultimate pursuit for ecofeminist theological analyses by focusing more on vulnerable living beings such as women.

I have recognised that in my own context we have not thought enough about the connection between water justice and gender justice. As a result, I have highlighted some general local water issues in South Korea and churches' lack of responses to that. Although my point is not only focused on the relationship between women and water, I have critiqued human- and male-centred perspectives which are prevalent in interpretations of Christian resources and thus have emphasised the necessity of ecofeminist theological analysis. Depending on the context, the connection between gender and water justice is open to further investigation in a variety of ways. In addition, the search for water justice is not only an issue for Christians; this is for all living beings. For example, La Torre pays attention to the sacred respect for water (creation) from

churches. He compares indigenous religions which respect sacred creation and Christianity which is focused on humanity.⁴²⁴ Like him, some scholars have already addressed water justice issues on the basis of interfaith dialogue; further research still needs to be done on that. One particular area of potential interest is that of Taoism (Daoism), which is from ancient China and has thoroughly addressed the nature of water based on an East Asian philosophy. A comparative study of water (and water justice) between Christianity and Taoism would seem to be an interesting area to research in terms of the study of the relationship between Western religions and Eastern national beliefs.

In short, my thesis demonstrates and emphasises: a) the compatibility between the tradition-centred approach and the earth-centred approach of ecofeminist theology; b) the interconnection between meanings of physical water and spiritual meanings of water in the reinterpretations of the story of a Samaritan woman and Jesus (John 4:1-42), the story of Noah's flood (Genesis 6-9), and the sacrament of baptism; and c) the transformation of both consciousness and action towards the liberation of women and nature and the integrity of creation. Consequently, my study calls Christians to live a water-honouring faith in action in the 21st century.

⁴²⁴ De La Torre, "Chapter One: Water—A Living Spirit," 8.

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